

**Submission by
Museums Australia NSW Branch**

to the

**NSW Legislative Assembly
Public Works Committee
Inquiry into the
Development of Arts and Cultural Infrastructure
Outside the Sydney CBD**

Submission on behalf of
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and members of the NSW Branch Committee
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IN A NUTSHELL

Cultural infrastructure is more than buildings

“Strong communities are built through the combined actions of government, business and communities. Governments can help build and support partnerships and networks in local areas through relatively simple actions — such as supporting volunteering, investing in local leaders, creating safe and vibrant public places, and providing practical opportunities for involvement in sport, recreation and cultural activities.”

- Ian McShane, Bringing in the Public

Museums are vital components of cultural infrastructure

“Eden Killer Whale Museum is an excellent example of community spirit – Australia Day ceremonies are held at the museum, they loan equipment to other community groups, make donations to the upkeep of the cemetery, have a publicly accessible library, maintain archives for community groups, actively collect local oral histories, hold welcome parties for individuals new to the area and run familiarity tours for local tourist groups.”

- Maisy Stapleton, Big Impact from Small Budgets

Increased investment in skills and infrastructure is needed to maximise the ROI of digital content

Digital content involves investments linked to physical collections and facilities

There are educational and other pay-offs

Well targeted government spending on museums, for example, can have a significant impact on learning outcomes in schools.

The NSW Government needs to provide cross-sectoral mechanisms

to encourage collaboration between museums, galleries, archives and libraries and improve physical and virtual access to their resources & services.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Museums Australia appreciates the invitation to participate in the Inquiry. This submission has been prepared after limited research and limited consultation within the association. Its primary aims are to provide initial comments on the issues raised, point to research which may assist the committee in its deliberations, and flag our interest in continuing dialogue.

Cultural infrastructure concepts

Museums Australia supports the concept of infrastructure as outlined in the Public Works Committee's background papers. We believe infrastructure includes physical assets, information and communications technology and people. However, we urge the Committee to consider differentiating the concepts *arts* and *cultural heritage*. Although they share common ground and possess natural synergies, Museums Australia believes that, in developing infrastructure policy, different approaches may, in some circumstances, be required.

In this submission, we've used the term *cultural heritage* as shorthand and as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its *Arts and Cultural Heritage: An Information Development Plan*, in discussing issues relating to museums, art museums, libraries and archives. While cultural heritage is an important aspect of their function, their converging roles go beyond the preservation of cultural heritage. Museums and kindred organisations provide essential access to information, produce cultural content and experiences, and they contribute to social, scientific, educational, technological and economic agendas.

The cultural heritage sector and museums

Key needs call for strategically allocated funds on collections and facilities, skill development, and public programs that have an impact on the communities museums serve. They also call for special investments in managing born-digital and digitised material.

There is a perception that the New South Wales Government has a piecemeal approach in funding these converging interests, focussing on bringing facilities together. There may be grounds for the New South Wales Government, as the main investor in the state's cultural heritage, to consider new mechanisms and incentives for collaboration and cooperation, with responsibilities allocated according to the level of control able to be exercised by particular types of stakeholders over particular types of endeavours. In addition to more extensive adoption of regional cultural hubs, it may be desirable to consider wider use of major institutions in developing services regionally.

Funding and resources

In our submission, we provide data in relation to public and private funding and draw particular attention to the contribution of volunteers in the museums domain. In recognition of an equivalent dollar value provided by volunteers and order to

maximise their impact, Museums Australia believes there needs to be a greater investment in the development of their skills. A more strategic approach, involving collaboration between the Government, Government agencies, institutions and associations, is needed to position museums, archives and libraries as effective players in the digital economy.

Public infrastructure

The Committee, in its background paper, posed questions about the relative merits of culture-led regeneration and cultural regeneration. We have not explored these propositions in detail and therefore do not offer a well considered view. Our initial reaction is that it is word-play. Local circumstances will not doubt dictate solutions for the development of public infrastructure. Feasibility studies, business plans and value management studies are likely to take into account national and local contexts in arriving at solutions.

Hubs

Museums Australia notes the intention of the NSW Government to develop regional cultural hubs, modelled on the Western Sydney Arts Strategy.

It strongly supports this approach, which seems compatible with the Collections Council of Australia's regional hubs proposal and raises the prospects for integration of these two initiatives. Continued exploration of partnerships between the cultural heritage sector, creative industries, higher educational institutions, broadcasters, governments and other players is needed. We expect that local circumstances will dictate the precise nature of solutions for managing hubs, clusters and networks. Hubs, clusters and networks can be physically co-located or distributed as virtual enterprises. Maximising the impact of networks appears to revolve around defined national and local interests, appropriate business or funding models, and relationships between the partners.

Educational opportunities

As indicated in a number of international benchmarking studies and anecdotal evidence in other sources, museums and galleries have enormous potential as educators in school and higher education spheres and in continuing education settings. There is a link between museums, the digital economy and educational objectives.

Economic impacts

Discussion on economic outcomes, existing data and future research requirements appears in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Arts and Cultural Information Development Plan*. This is complemented by numerous international studies such as the Arts Council of England's *Measuring the Economic and Social Impact of the Arts*.

We would like to draw attention to the multiplier effect of museums on local economies and to the social factors underpinning economic outcomes.

Government plans and planning

Museums Australia supports the development of a NSW cultural plan as a way of clarifying perspectives and strategic direction. At the same time, we note the views of those who call for flexibility and ongoing consultations when implementing policy in areas as complex as the arts and cultural heritage. As Henry Mintzberg once observed: 'Strategy is a matter of learning, negotiation and adaptation. Strategy is a process.'

In its submission to the cultural grants review, Museums Australia expressed concerns about the proposal to gauge the success of cultural heritage programs through a single indicator.

We believe there is a risk this single number approach could lead cultural planners up questionable paths. Although increased visitation and participation is a worthwhile goal for arts and cultural heritage organisations, in an age when visitation and participation takes into account virtual engagement, it may be too simplistic.

In the same way as a computer for every student involves expenditure on associated services and training, increased physical and online visits necessitate expenditure on collections and people.

We point to reports, schemes and indicators that may be appropriate in developing metrics to clarify Government funding opportunities.

Related submission

The branch is preparing a comprehensive submission to Arts New South Wales in response to the cultural grants program, taking into account wider recommendations now available from inquiries on public libraries, heritage, tourism and regional areas.

We will send a copy of this to the Public Works Committee as soon as it has been completed and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to further consultative processes by the NSW Parliament and Government.

2. CONTEXTS

2.1 The purpose of the inquiry

The NSW Legislative Assembly Public Works Committee is inquiring into the development of an arts and cultural plan for NSW and the alignment of this plan to broad government planning strategies for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure outside Sydney CBD, including regional areas.

The committee views cultural pursuits as central to wealth generation. Infrastructure, it says, encompasses 'hard' elements (such as buildings) and 'soft' elements (such as social networks). It accepts that "the creative economy is a global economy but it also promotes a new localism due to the geographical clustering of sources of competitive advantage and cultural uniqueness becoming attractive to investors."

In the context of the NSW State Plan, which aims to increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10 per cent by 2016, the Government is (a) undertaking a Cultural Grants Program which offers financial assistance for professional arts and cultural organisations, (b) maintaining partnerships with local government through Cultural Accords, and (c) considering the importance of arts and culture in the lives of people and in developing local identity when planning new regional centres and urban consolidation.

Government planning places some importance on industry clusters and innovation as means of encouraging employment and economic growth. These plans, however, the committee points out, do not currently address cultural or artistic activities, services or facilities in any detail.

In exploring the developing of creative industry clusters, the Committee notes experiences in the UK and Australia, which seem to underline the importance of a good mix of activity and a good fit with the local circumstances.

It poses the questions: should these developments involve 'culture-led' regeneration or should they involve 'cultural regeneration'. 'Culture-led' approaches involve the use of cultural activity as the main driver of regeneration, with such activity taken on as a symbol of regeneration activity, tying 'cultural flagships' with museums, art galleries, restaurants and other services in mixed-use areas. 'Cultural regeneration, involves the integration of cultural activity into a broader strategy within which cultural uses do not have overall prominence. With 'cultural regeneration' approaches, cultural initiatives sit with other elements of regeneration and as such, cultural activities do not in themselves act as a driving force for regeneration.

With 'culture-led' approaches, the Committee notes, a policy method has been the designation of 'cultural quarters' where a centre of culture-related activity is seen as giving the anticipated regeneration outcomes. However, the value of cultural quarter designation has been disputed: for such quarters to be effective, it is argued, they need to take into account of the physical and design-related factors as well as broader issues such as relationship to local identity.

2.2 Cultural infrastructure concepts

Infrastructure

Museums Australia supports the definition of infrastructure as outlined by the Public Works Committee. We believe infrastructure includes physical assets, information and communications technology, and networks of people. Our colleague, Ian McShane, has drawn attention to the importance of social capital in his thesis *Bringing in the Public: Community Facilities and Social Value* (Swinburne University of Technology, December 2007). We comment further on ICT infrastructure and social capital below.

Arts and cultural heritage

The Inquiry is investigating arts and cultural infrastructure. The background paper provides a scope note about art, but does not elaborate on other aspects of culture.

Although arts and culture share common ground and possess natural synergies, Museums Australia believes that, in developing infrastructure policy, it is important to differentiate some of the elements because they may call on different approaches.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in its discussion paper *Arts and Cultural Heritage: An Information Development Plan* (2008), after defining culture, distinguishes between arts and cultural heritage in the following terms:

The arts refers to a sphere of artistic activities (e.g. literature, radio and television, film, performing arts, visual arts and craft, design, music). The output of these activities, such as stories, paintings, music, performances and films, may be referred to as 'arts products'.

Cultural heritage refers to the preservation of culture through the collection and management of objects and ideas that represent ways of life of particular groups of people. The sphere of cultural heritage activities includes activities generally associated with museums, art museums, libraries and archives.

Categorising museums, archives and libraries as 'cultural heritage' agents, though, distorts their overall purpose and value. While cultural heritage is an important aspect of their function, it is also important to emphasise their converging roles in providing access to information, producing cultural content and experiences. and contributing to educational, social, scientific, technological and economic agendas.

ICT infrastructure

The Inquiry refers to the 'new economy' and highlights the potential of 'creative clusters' as components of cultural infrastructure.

Forging directions for the new economy by Governments in Australia began in 1994 with Creative Nation, based on nurturing 'cultural production in an information age' through multimedia enterprises, the Australia on CD program and other initiatives. With the development of the Internet, the emphasis shifted to innovation and

productivity, involving attention to skills, ICT infrastructure, e-commerce, and Australian content, as expressed, for example, in *Backing Australia's Ability*.

Since then, the focus on collaborative networks and clusters has led us to current reports on culture and the digital economy, now available from the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. Museums Australia has not considered the detail of these reports in making recommendations to the Public Works Committee, but lists them in Appendix 1 as examples of Federal Government R&D worthy of further study.

We plan to present our views on this material in a separate submission to Arts NSW in response to its report cultural grants programs.

Social capital

The Inquiry has identified social capital as an important element of future infrastructure development. Ian McShane in his thesis, focusing on the experience in Victoria, says that despite statutory requirements for local authorities to balance financial, environmental and social goals in decision-making, a policy emphasis on economic efficiency and local authority discipline has dominated recent planning and management frameworks of community facilities. To address failures, he argues for three key policy actions:

- recognition of earlier community contributions to facilities
- re-positioning of community facilities to emphasise their public good outcomes, such as contribution to minimising expenditure on more expensive policy interventions such as health and justice
- re-conceptualising 'asset' to encompass both physical assets and social networks, thus emphasising the physical and social components of a civic ecology.

These appear to be compatible with the Public Works Committee's underlying philosophy, so rather than dwell on the issues explored by McShane, we simply draw attention to his thesis as a rich source of information on a range of related issues: the decline in public expenditure on infrastructure over the past four decades; concerns that local government is a failing operation; poor understanding of infrastructure issues; poor engagement with the public; and the importance of local capacity and supporting social networks.

Strong communities, McShane writes, are built through the combined actions of government, business and communities. Governments can help build and support partnerships and networks in local areas through relatively simple actions — such as supporting volunteering, investing in local leaders, creating safe and vibrant public places, and providing practical opportunities for involvement in sport, recreation and cultural activities.

3. THE 'CULTURAL HERITAGE' SECTOR

Overview

The Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Cultural Ministers Council provide statistical data on the Australian arts and cultural heritage sector. The importance of museums and galleries is indicated by the fact they attract bigger audiences than live theatre, opera, musicals, and dance. Only popular music concerts, libraries and cinemas attract more people.

Some of the complexities of shaping cultural direction are flagged in the February 2002 issue of *Media International Australia* — the competing logics of art as profit and art as identity, differences between cultural and creative industries, and the interplay of state-reliant and commercial enterprises. The same issue comments on the 'the continuities and differences between cultural development and creative industries'.

The Australian 2020 summit background papers on creativity raised a number of points for consideration. The current role of government in culture is highly fragmented. Funding is spread across all levels of government. This is a model that may need changing. Government spending on arts and culture trails Europe but is ahead of the USA, where private philanthropy is more significant. Digital technology is changing the industry rapidly and democratising content creation. Public broadcasters play important roles in the production and distribution of Australian culture.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in its *Arts and Cultural Heritage Information Development Plan*, reports on the scope and value of the arts and cultural heritage and on existing data and data gaps. Issues are explored under the headings cultural indicators, perceived value, economic outcomes, cultural outcomes, social outcomes and quality of life outcomes. Recommendations for future research and surveys relate the need for data on the health of the arts and cultural heritage in Australia, willingness to pay for services, private sector support, economic viability, impact of technology, contribution of the innovation, supply of skills, cultural tourism, impacts on cultural identity, awareness and relevance, accessibility, impacts on community networks, impacts on learning, motivations for consumption of arts and cultural heritage services, and impact on well-being.

Needs and trends

Key needs of the cultural heritage sector in Australia were identified in a report commissioned by the Cultural Minister Council in 2001, needs requiring additional personnel, equipment, advice, training, and information:

- provision of access through cataloguing and delivery systems
- conservation
- interpretation (eg exhibitions)
- professional development
- a wider understanding of heritage collections
- quality and consistency (eg benchmarking, standards, accreditation systems)
- a recognition of professional isolation and diversity
- nation-wide coordination.

The 2006 report by the Museum Library and Archive Council (MLA), *Cultural Spend and Infrastructure*, a comparative overview of the museums, libraries and archives sector in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, United States and Singapore, looks at the architecture of cultural policy and spending, the level of investment in the three domains, supporting infrastructure, and the following trends and issues relating to Australia:

- **Digital collections.** Approaches to digitisation and management of born-digital material by collecting organisations in Australia are uneven. Libraries and archives appear to be more alert to the challenges associated with the long-term management of digital repositories than are museums.
- **Copyright and licensing.** Compliance with complex legislation is an ongoing challenge for collecting organisations.
- **Skills.** The different professions within the collecting sector each seem to be grappling with the issue of developing and sustaining an appropriate skills base for the collecting organisations. The closure of respected educational courses has generated much comment. The opening of new sources in environments that seem under-resourced also attracts comment. In the museums domain, where there is a large number of volunteer-initiated museums, training is a perennial issue. Also in the museums domain, there is ongoing concern about the levels (vocational, undergraduate, postgraduate) at which educational programs should be offered.
- **Convergence.** This trend is typically manifested in the fields of exhibitions, digitisation of collecting items and information, online access to information and the use of multimedia display. (See further comment on this issue on next page).
- **An ageing voluntary workforce for community collections.** Collections that represent a community's history are frequently housed in museums, archives and historical societies that were initiated by volunteers. Typically these organisations were founded in the period 1960-1980, and the founding volunteers are ageing, retiring or dying. There is a real concern that this workforce is not being replaced, that information about the collections is being lost through lack of adequate documentation, and that the infrastructure necessary for the survival of organisations is neglected and not sustainable.
- **Collaboration between collecting institutions,** between different collecting domains and between collecting organisations and the higher education sector has been encouraged with the availability of government funds (through the Australian Research Council's linkage grants) to encourage and support such collaboration.

The MLA study also identifies the following issues in relation to museums.

- **Ownership and provenance.** The repatriation of human remains and cultural material to Australian Indigenous communities is an ongoing responsibility for collecting organisations (mostly museums).

- **The distributed national collection.** As each collection becomes more aware of the strengths of its own collection, the opportunity for mapping a nationwide and widely distributed collection of significant items is apparent, but not yet implemented.

Convergence

The issue of convergence in the cultural heritage requires some amplification because of its importance to the so-called digital economy and as a major issue for infrastructure development.

Leading US figures Kenneth Hama (J Paul Getty Trust), Clifford Lynch (Coalition for Networked Information) and Robert Martin (Institute of Library and Museum Services) have made the following observations:

- **The boundaries are blurring.** Libraries are behaving more like museums and museums are behaving more like libraries, but there is still some discomfort in some sectors about the digital adventure. When viewing convergence, it is important to remember that there are different kinds of libraries and different kinds of museums. Everyone is not moving at the same speed.
- **Convergence happens mainly at the network level.** The issue is not so much what happens in individual repositories as how we construct services across them. We need to think about content, rather than about institutions. At the same time, it is important to maintain contexts about individual documents and objects and to place more emphasis on interpreting them.
- **We need to manage the physical as well as the digital.** A Rembrandt painting is not well represented by a surrogate. Diverting resources from physical collections to online collections isn't necessarily a good strategy.
- **Metadata is the largest issue to be addressed,** but there are levels of complexity within the metadata debate. One area to address is facilitating unified federated searching. The other is to deal with the specialised data levels for different sorts of material.
- **The educational sector remains one of the main markets** for developing digital resources in libraries, archives and museums. The academy is hungry for visual material. There is scope for making more out of exhibitions.
- **The user's perspective** remains paramount.

A study of the Internet's impact on museums and libraries by the Institute of Museum and Library Services formed three broad conclusions. Libraries and museums are still the most trusted sources of online information. The explosive growth of information available in the "Information Age" actually whets appetite for more information from museums and public libraries. The Internet is not replacing visits to libraries and museums and may actually increase physical visits.

A companion study by the same institution, *Status of Technology and Digitization in the Nation's Museums and Libraries*, assessing the situation in the United States, but unveiling parallels that are likely to exist in Australia, concludes, in relation to the use of technology, that:

- Small museums and public libraries have made dramatic progress, although they still lag behind their larger counterparts.
- Insufficient funding and staff time are barriers to implementing technology. Almost two-thirds of museums, 31 percent of archives, 50 percent of large academic libraries, and the majority of small public libraries say their technology is less than adequately funded. They have less confidence in their ability to add new technologies to meet evolving needs. More than two-thirds of institutions among all the groups reported that they do not have enough skilled staff to accomplish their technology objectives.
- Assessment of user and visitor needs is strongest among academic libraries and state library administrative agencies and weak among other groups.

In relation to digitisation activities the report found that

- Digitisation activities have increased for all groups, with state library administrative agencies and archives leading the way.
- While more institutions have digitisation policies in place than was the case in 2001, many institutions that are digitising do not have digitisation policies.
- With a substantial number of materials left to digitise, institutions are held back by lack of funding, lack of staff time, and other pressing priorities.
- While collaborative digitisation efforts are underway, they are not yet widespread.
- Only a small portion of museums and libraries assess user and visitor needs for digitised collections and services.

An international forum, organised by the National Archives of Australia in September 2007 to explore collaborative challenges for creating, managing, preserving and providing access to digital information, emphasised the need for partnerships across sectors and international borders and increased investment in skills and infrastructure to maximise application and return on investment in digital content.

Although there has been substantial investment in this area in the United States and in Europe and some investment in Australasia, it claimed the uneven and often inadequate levels of investment are impairing not only access to this digital content, but its very survival. "There is substantial investment in the creation of digital content, as indicated by levels of investment in ICT systems and research projects that generate substantial quantities of data. However, matching proportional investments in preserving and providing appropriate access to this digital content is often missing. Managers of digital collections need to be able to tap into 'upstream' investment, for example, by ensuring that a proportion of the investment in creating

new digital content is set aside for providing for its preservation and for access to that content which is of enduring national and international significance.”

Michael Middleton and Julie Lee, in their report *Cultural Institutions and Web 2.0* (Smart Internet Technology CRC, November 2007), after consultations with representatives from major libraries, archives and museums, observed that:

- improvements in access will depend upon improving retrieval capabilities in repository software and rationalisation of descriptive metadata to permit unification of different types of information repositories;
- audience support may be fostered by the use of software that supports collaborative spaces in conjunction with information resources from institutional repositories;
- mechanisms for retaining and identifying the authority of institutional data must combine a management framework, a design framework, and a technical framework;
- collaboration by combining distributed collections through federated search mechanisms may be further pursued by inter-institutional development of educational products and extended public and professional participation;
- current awareness facilities need to be exploited more effectively;
- metadata continue to provide a foundation for effective retrieval;
- publishing opportunities are virtually limitless based upon the extent of collections;
- recordkeeping has the potential to become a process more prominent for all institutions;
- there is a great deal of potential for exploiting rich Web applications for associating material from distributed repositories, for bringing different metadata to bear on the information that it describes, and for introducing material to and from socially constructed avenues;
- although seeding of external social networks with information about repositories is a useful exercise, it is unlikely to be sustainable while the process is carried out manually on an *ad hoc* basis;
- cultural institutions have the opportunity to contribute to skills development by providing 'laboratories' for student projects;
- there is much to be learnt through social network analysis, supported by suitable metrics; and
- a flexible approach to management of digital content is desirable under the umbrella of wider sector strategy, which responds to the rapid environmental changes.

Personal digital collections present a major challenge of collecting institutions. The so-called democratisation of information, fashioned by the ubiquitous use of information and communications technology, has focussed attention on these digital collections and the implications for cultural heritage collections. People lose digital files in predictable ways: digital loss has a tendency to be an all-or-nothing proposition. They don't lose just a few images: they lose ALL of them. The Digital Lives Research Project, led by the British Library, is expected to publish its findings in March 2009.

them.

Museums & galleries

According to figures published by Museums and Galleries NSW, the museum and galleries sector in NSW consists of over 600 institutions and organisations — 540 museums (31 local government museums, 37 museums with paid staff, 462 volunteer managed museums, 12 university museums and 10 not-for-profit museums); 34 regional galleries, 9 university galleries and 27 artist-run initiatives; and 15 keeping places. In addition there are 175 historical societies (some of which run museums) and 97 library services (some with local history collections and exhibition services) operating 266 libraries.

These organisation hold more than 8,457,637 items (based on 160 responses to a survey conducted by MGNSW). NSW museums and galleries (including state and federal institutions), in 2003, had 183 full time positions, 280 part time and 3,788 volunteers. In 2004, they attracted 2,074,684 visitors.

Data on museums in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' survey *Museums, Australia 2003-2004*, is supplemented by an Australia-wide survey conducted by the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD) in 2005/2006. Reporting the activities of the 21 major museums it represents, the survey found that attendances had increased by 14.5% over the past four years. Other findings against museum objectives include the following.

- **To promote access**, CAMD's 21 museums had over 52.5 million engagements with the public with over 37 million of these interactions relating to visits to museum websites. Total attendances at the CAMD sites in Australia and New Zealand rose to 11.8 million (a 3.5 % increase on visits in 2004/05). Visits have risen steadily with a 14.5% rise since 2001/02. 198 new in-house exhibitions attracted over 6.7 million visitors. 17 museums answered over 353,857 enquiries relating to research or collections. More than 58,000 collection items were lent to other institutions, mainly for research purposes.
- **As cultural destinations**, close to 1 million interstate tourists and over 2.1 million overseas tourists made the major museums one of their key cultural destinations when they travelled in Australia and New Zealand.
- **In fostering learning and in building knowledge**, more than 1.4 million students visited CAMD museums. 1.3 million were school students while over 71,000 were enrolled in tertiary or adult education classes. CAMD museum websites recorded 37.8 million user sessions, a rise of 43% on user sessions in 2004/05. 2005/06 was a 'tipping point' as more than half of CAMD's members now attract more 'virtual' than actual visitors. CAMD museum talks and workshops reached an additional audience of at least 1.2 million. They produced 424 scholarly publications. They participated in a total of 191 grant-funded research projects and expended close to \$6 million on research. And almost 500 in-house curatorial/science research projects were completed.
- **In building cultural capacity**, 7 museums completed negotiations for 102 repatriation of indigenous materials requests in this period. 17 of CAMD's 21

members provided professional support and advisory services to smaller and regional museums in their areas. 12 members provided internships for small and regional museums. Together, the museums acquired more than 317,603 items for collections during 2005/06.

- **In building social capital**, around 4,000 volunteers contributed 433,317 hours to CAMD museums. And over 130 exhibitions and programs were held during the year which explored Indigenous, South-East Asian and other cultures from around the world.

The IBISWorld industry report *Museums in Australia* (October 2007) asserts the following trends and challenges:

- Many museums will continue to struggle financially if they do not tap into the significant changes which have occurred in what people now demand from museums (more multimedia and interactive educational displays).
- Museums are increasingly being recognised as having a role to play in attracting and holding domestic and international tourists. The industry has a major role to play in cultural tourism and this is expected to be assisted by the continuing expansion in international and domestic tourism.

Kindred 'cultural heritage' domains

Archives, historical societies and local records

Many community museums in New South Wales are run by historical societies.

Although there is no comprehensive survey of cultural heritage facilities and services in Australia, a survey conducted in 2007 by the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authority (CAARA) in partnership with Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and Archives New Zealand, provides some understanding of collections controlled by archives, historical societies and related recordkeeping agencies. In analysing the operations and use of collections, the survey suggests

- **Use.** There is an overall higher proportion of website visitors than in-person visitors.
- **Collections.** Most archives hold materials such as objects, art works, clothing, and books, suggesting the differences between smaller archives, museums, libraries and galleries are less distinct than it is for major archives. A large proportion (81%) also holds digital archives. A large quantity of archive materials are not documented.
- **Funding.** Donations and grants are a common sources of funding, but there appears to be confusion among archives about their eligibility for grants and sponsorships. Just over a quarter of respondents (28%) applied for grants or sponsorships in the three years prior to the survey, and there was an overall success rate of 83%.

- **Workforce.** 72% of archives employ only one full-time or part-time person. About half the employees have formal archival qualifications. Employees without formal archival qualifications may have qualifications in related areas such as librarianship, history, records management, museum studies and education. Volunteers are a major component of the workforce. Only a few volunteers have formal archival qualifications, or are studying for a qualification, but may have qualifications in other areas. Both employees and volunteers appear to rely heavily on professional development opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills. .
- **Major issues and challenges.** Coping with a lack of space and handling relocations of the archives were the major challenges over the previous three years and anticipated to be the major challenges for the next five years. Other challenges include gaining control over the collection, handling staffing changes or lack of staff, managing digital archives. There is a need for skilled staff, technology, and policies and procedures in relation to digital archives. Possible funding shortfalls are also of concern. On a positive note, many archives anticipate opportunities in the next five years to improve archive facilities, such as getting a new building, and improved management of digital archives and websites.

Libraries

The role and future of libraries is of interest to Museums Australia because of converging interests associated with the provision of online services, management of collections, use of facilities and preservation of cultural heritage. Local Government libraries maintain local history collections.

Museums Australia notes recommendations in the *Arts NSW Report of the Review of (Local Government) Public Library Funding* which urge the Government to:

- Introduce a funding model that: retains a per capita subsidy amount; contains a meaningful component that ensures an acceptable minimum level of access to library services across the State, with transparent allocation criteria the determination of which has input by key stakeholders, and retains a grant component that is targeted to strategic outcomes, including the reinforcement of cooperation between councils to deliver regional and State wide development outcomes.
- Review existing administrative processes to reduce unnecessary complexity and red tape in respect of the application and reporting processes for councils to receive State Government funding for library services.
- Consideration be given to a comprehensive review which explores the broader benefits of public libraries to the community.

We will be assessing the implications of these recommendations more fully against overall needs for funding regional museums, archives and libraries in a separate submission to Arts NSW.

Leading and supporting players

Government-funded agencies

The Collections Council of Australia (CCA) has been charged by the Cultural Ministers Council with responsibility for coordinating the work of the cultural heritage domains. In collaboration with Museums Australia and other stakeholders, it has responded to local needs by investigating a number of issues. These include

- **Collections and facilities.** Australia does not have a comprehensive survey of cultural heritage facilities and services, a deficiency the CCA is aiming to rectify. Until then, a recent survey conducted in the United States on conservation and preservation needs (the *Heritage Health Index*) provides grounds for local assumptions about some aspects. The Index reported the lack of comprehensive information about the cultural heritage sector, the need for cataloguing, the need for improved environmental and storage conditions, emergency planning, staffing and funding. Some of these findings are reinforced in CCA's Conservation Survey.
- **Conservation.** CCA's 2006 conservation survey concluded there is a shortage of funds for collecting organisations to achieve a range of reasonable conservation and preservation goals. Faced with competing demands of deteriorating collections, increased public access, and rapid technological change, it has recommended the development of integrated education, training and workforce planning by the four domains, promoting needs to appropriate stakeholders, and further research.
- **National standards for museums and galleries.** The CCA has been coordinating Museums Australia-initiated standards as an instrument for self review, identification of areas for improvement, promoting achievements, and advocating resources. The standards have just been published.
- **Significance.** The CCA is produce a new edition of *Significance*, a concept and publication relevant to all domains and an important consideration in relation to the quality of collections, funding decisions and online strategies.
- **A national strategy for digital heritage collections.** The CCA is preparing a Development Plan and an Advocacy Plan to assist the sector to managing their converging interests in partnership with governments.
- **CollectionsCare**, a proposal for \$50.5 million to be allocated to develop regional hubs to coordinate, promote and preserve Australia's regional history and facilitate the work of regional libraries, archive, galleries, and museums. The proposal calls for a trial regional hub in each state, based on the employment of regional collections co-ordinators, followed by a wider implementation. So far the Western Australian Government is the only state government to respond in a tangible way.

Museums & Galleries NSW (MGNSW) is funded primarily by the New South Wales Government as a single domain agency to support the development of museums and galleries across the state.

At the invitation of MGNSW, the NSW Branch of Museums Australia recently provided input on the role and services of MGNSW, which is currently updating its strategic plan. We acknowledged the progress MGNSW had made since its inception in addressing important issues relating to standards and skill development. We sought clarification of the overall role of MGNSW, the proportion of funds on MGNSW administration and on grants distributed to museums and galleries, and a clearer indication of fund distribution to indicate strategic intent. We also expressed interest in the need for more effective NSW Government policy in relation to the digital economy.

Major institutions

Major institutions have had different impacts on the sectors they serve.

Libraries lead the way, internationally and locally. The National Library of Australia, usually in partnership with state libraries and sometimes in partnership institutions from the other domains, has developed major online initiatives such as Libraries Australia, Music Australia, Picture Australia, Dancing Australia, and the Australian Subject Gateways. These initiatives have been well served by the involvement of libraries in the development of cataloguing standards and systems since the 1940s to manage vast quantities of material that are not unique.

With the arrival of the PC, the National Archives of Australia and state archive authorities were instrumental in responding to the threat of black holes in official recordkeeping systems through legislative changes, compliance regimes, and associated policies to guide practice. State Records NSW, now part of the Department of Commerce, has oversight of the management of recordkeeping and archival programs in local government. But it has no authority over other kinds of local records and archives.

Generally, national and state museums and galleries have had less of a role in the development of online resources and practices than major institutions representing libraries and archives. But they have lent their considerable expertise in leading and supporting other museums and galleries.

In New South Wales, the Powerhouse Museum Regional Programs and Services, despite limited resources, plays an important outreach role. Powerhouse museum staff and the staff of other major museums, including flagship institutions in Canberra, frequently contribute their expertise freely in workshops, seminars and other projects. The Museum also has responsibility for managing the federally-funded Collections Australia Network aimed chiefly at developing the online resources of small museums. CAN is a member, with the Powerhouse Museum, of the Federated Open Search Project, led by the National Library of Australia.

There may be a need to redefine the role of major museums and galleries in developing online resources and their role in facilitating knowledge and skill transfer.

The role of higher education institutions and other players also needs to be considered in developing regional strategies for cultural heritage organisations.

Professional associations

Museums Australia is a national professional association representing the interests of Australian museums and galleries. It runs the Australian secretariat of the International Council of Museums, representing museums worldwide.

The NSW Branch operates with 11 regional chapters throughout the state, representing 430 individual and institutional members. The branch contributes to the work of the national council of Museums Australia and maintains links with branch offices across Australia. The Hunter Chapter is producing the 2009 national conference in Newcastle.

Museums Australia is currently working on a national framework to guide its direction and further discussions with the three tiers of government in Australia. This is likely to capture, in an Australian setting, strategies and priorities expressed in museum policies in the United Kingdom, United States of America and other countries. Recent reports on the value of museums and funding priorities by the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport, for example, revolve around:

- developing the potential of museums as learning resources
- making museum collections more dynamic and better used
- developing the museum workforce
- increasing the role of museum governing bodies and workforces in the communities they serve
- linking museums with partners outside the sector.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services in the United States manages a US \$200-million grants program built around a four-pronged strategy — responding to broadly-based educational imperatives; preservation and digitisation initiatives; building workforce skills, capacity, and innovation; and boosting the role of libraries and museums within their local communities. Its encouragement of collaborative projects by libraries, archives and museums has been noteworthy

Leadership is required

Museum, archival and library institutions and agencies have limited control over their subsidised destinies because they are bit players in the digital economy. The Collections Council of Australia, with very limited funding and limited influence over the three tiers of government, is coordinating interests nationally.

In New South Wales, funding for libraries, archives and museums is handled in an apparently piecemeal fashion, although there has been some attention on integrating facilities in regional areas. There may be a case for the NSW Government, as the main investor in these services, to create more suitable mechanisms to help coordinate these converging interests and encourage collaboration in the manner of the Institute of Museums and Library Services.

The challenge should not be under-estimated. Abby Smith, in *Distributed Preservation in a National Context: NDIIPP at Mid-point* (D-Lib June 2006), commenting on progress in the 10-year, \$US100 million United States National Digital Information

Preservation program, reported that “simple operations can be hard” and “complex negotiations among partners even harder”. To compensate for the elusive nature of long-term goals, “there must be identifiable, short-term, immediate, and locally felt benefits to keep organisations in the game.” And “we have very much more to learn about the dynamics of recruiting organisations into the network and keeping them there over time. Some rewards may be financial; others will be prestige and reputation; still others will be survival-driven.”

4. FUNDING AND RESOURCES

Public and private funding and resources?

The MLA report, *Cultural Spend and Infrastructure*, noted that museums have, by and large, a more diverse funding base than libraries and archives which tend to be more dependent on public sector funding. It reported that all countries have experienced a considerable level of capital infrastructure investment in the cultural sector over the last couple of decades and that new or additional funding tends to be more readily available at national than at local and municipal levels. Funding as well as policy coordination between national, regional and local levels, it reported, tends to be very limited. It listed similarities in policy and funding priorities as follows

- consistently in recent decades, a greater focus on infrastructure investment or development than on supporting and funding ‘what’s where’
- a more recent but noticeable shift in emphasis from largely ‘supply driven’ policies (focussing on levels of provision) to policies defined in relation to public outcomes.
- a shift in the language of cultural policy to focus increasingly on the composition on cultural audiences, the need to ‘democratise’ the definition of, and access to, culture.
- policy language which instrumentalises cultural policy in the context of wider government agencies, appears to be shifting from the focus on economic impact (the buzz words of the 1980s and 1990s) to one linked to social value.
- a desire to diversify and draw in new source of funding, in particular from the private sector, in line with the so-called US model as a way to address fiscal challenges.
- different attitudes to volunteering and the role of volunteers in the delivery of cultural provision, particularly in museums.

It cautions against making international comparisons with straight, line-by-line benchmarking in mind. There will always be a need, it says, for appropriate reference to local contexts.

Public funding

Ian McShane, in his thesis, traces the history of public support for the arts and culture in Australia and assesses evolving government thinking about funding in relation to

culture and community planning. He notes the emergence of new models that connect intrinsic and instrumental outcomes and the emergence of digital content production supporting arguments for economic investment. The gross value added multiplier of investment in digital content, he reports, is estimated to be the second highest of any industry sector.

Currently, a total \$1.6 million is allocated by Arts NSW in its museums program (not including funds allocated to the major institutions). Approximately 50% of these funds is allocated to Museums and Galleries NSW. The bulk of MGNSW funds (over \$500K) is spent on administration and delivery of associated programs. Museums Australia is particularly concerned that grants respond to the needs for skill development in community and regional museums with few paid staff and volunteer workers.

Private funding

According to a survey conducted by the Australian Business Arts Foundation on private support for Australian arts and culture amounted to \$171.1 million in 2006/2007. Museums and galleries were the primary beneficiaries of private sector support (\$61.3 million), followed by the performing arts sector (\$54.8M). New South Wales (\$66.7 million) and Victoria (54.7 million) receive the lion's share of private sector support. Donations greatly outweigh sponsorship in museums and galleries, and donations are slightly more than sponsorships for state libraries. Sponsorships significantly outweigh donations in performing arts, festivals, and other arts. Smaller arts organisations derive a higher percentage of their income from private sector support than do larger organisations, although larger organisations receive more dollars.

Volunteer resources

Museums Australia highlights the significant work undertaken by volunteers, particularly in historical societies and museums in NSW. Statistics on employment levels in museums, including volunteer employees can be found in ABS and MGNSW reports on museums. The ABS survey *Volunteers* (4441.0) also provides relevant data.

There have been various attempts to quantify the value of volunteer contributions. The Independent Sector in the US, in its annual assessment of the value of the volunteer hour, suggests a dollar value at \$US19.51 or \$AUD20.83, while acknowledging that it is difficult to put a dollar value on volunteer time. Volunteers, its says, provide many intangibles that can not be easily quantified.

Additional work by Museums Australia

Museums Australia will be giving further consideration to financial issues in its submission to Arts NSW in late September, taking account questions raised by the Public Works Committee, particularly in relation to planned decentralisation modelled on the Western Sydney Arts Strategy and the projected increased responsibility for distribution of funds through Museums and Galleries NSW.

Funding strategies will be influenced by the things that no one can control, the things that only Governments can control and the things that the recipients of government funding must attempt to control.

A number of reports that tempt scrutiny in our deliberations include Bruce Seaman's *National Investment in the Arts*, published by the Center for Arts and Culture in the United States, which would investigate novel approaches by governments, partnerships between the non-profit and for-profit arts sectors, new funding sources, partnerships through tax and other policies, and technology initiatives.

5. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Suitability of public infrastructure for arts and cultural life?

The Inquiry posed questions about the relative merits of culture-led regeneration and cultural regeneration. We have not thoroughly examined these propositions and do not therefore offer well considered opinions.

Our initial reaction is that it is merely word-play. Local circumstances will no doubt dictate solutions for the development of local public infrastructure. Feasibility studies, business plans and value management studies are likely to take into account national and local contexts in arriving at solutions.

McShane, in his thesis, comments on the adaptive reuse of public buildings as a conservation measure and on the complex nature of social value and its optimisation in the operation of a public cultural facility. Issues of sustainability, he says, require renewed consideration within an inter-governmental agreement on sharing future costs.

We also draw attention to the Cultural Asset Mapping for Planning and Development in Regional Australia, 2008- 2012, being conducted by Regional Arts NSW in partnership with the University of Technology Sydney, University of Wollongong, University of New England and 10 other community partners with funding from Australian Research Council.

6. HUBS

Locating cultural facilities in proximity to create hubs?

Museums Australia notes the intention of the NSW Government to place importance on regional cultural hubs, based on the model of the Western Sydney Arts Strategy. It strongly supports this strategy which seems compatible with the Collections Council of Australia's regional hubs proposal.

The need for concerted infrastructure development has been a common thread in many government planning reports and presentations. Early government consideration of the issue drew on international attempts to generate wealth from the chemistry of creativity and technology, such as the Dublin Digital District.

Local creative precincts, involving partnerships with universities, cultural institutions (including libraries archives and museums) and other stakeholders, have been formed in recent years. The Creative Industries Precinct in Brisbane is one example. The success of these experiments, as going concerns, has not been evaluated by Museums Australia for this submission.

The continued exploration of partnerships between cultural heritage sector, higher educational institutions, broadcasters, governments and other players seems to be warranted. We expect that local circumstances will dictate the precise nature of local infrastructure and related solutions for managing hubs, clusters and networks. Hubs, clusters and networks can be physically co-located or distributed as virtual enterprises. Maximising the impact of networks appears to revolve around defined national and local interests, appropriate business or funding models and relationships with compatible partners.

7. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Accessibility of cultural and arts education

Museums and galleries have enormous potential as educators in the school and higher education sphere and in education which reaches beyond educational institutions.

The MLA study *Research on the impact of museums in education: Inspiring Learning, Building Communities: What did you learn at the museum today?* (2005), demonstrated that well targeted government spending in museums can have a significant impact on learning outcomes in schools. The report found that

Museums are providing increased and enhanced school services that are highly valued by teachers. Museums are contributing powerfully to government agendas. MLA funding has enabled increased provision for schools which on the whole remains of high quality. Museums are used successfully by schools across the social spectrum, but at the same time, disproportionately large numbers of pupils at risk of deprivation and with special educational needs are being reached by museums. Teachers from all types of school are convinced of the value of museums for their pupils' learning. Satisfaction levels of teachers remain very high, though it is not always easy for them to take pupils out of school and in some cases more could be done by museums to help. Pupils are very enthusiastic and more could be done by teachers to follow up on museum-based learning. This research shows clearly the enormous potential of museums to successfully generate the full range of learning outcomes; however, there is still a great deal more that could be done by museums, given the resources.

A companion study by the Institute of Museum and Library Services in the US, found that the percentage of annual operating budgets spent by US museums on K-12 educational programs has increased four-fold since 1996. The study also calculated that America's museums commit more than 18 million instructional hours every year on programs for K-12 schoolchildren and that, increasingly, museums use new technologies to bring their resources into the lives of American school children.

Macquarie University provides a good example of how museums can be stitched into learning environments. Its collections — the Australian History Museum, Museum of Ancient Cultures, Biological Sciences Museum, Earth Sciences Garden (assisting lessons on fossil history, flora and fauna), Art Gallery and Sculpture Park, and Macquarie University Library — are all integrated with the its teaching programs and are employed in its relationships with primary and secondary schools, the wider community and international relations.

The Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN), an independent educational charity which manages digital resources on behalf of Scottish libraries, archives, museums, galleries and other contributors, provides an example of cultural heritage collaboration to achieve educational objectives. SCRAN obtains and administers grants on behalf of members, creates content and controls IP rights. Although it receives grants, SCRAN is sustained largely by licences.

8. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Economic impacts on communities

A discussion on economic outcomes, existing data and future research issues are outlined the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Arts and Cultural Information Development Plan*. These are complemented by numerous international studies such as the Arts Council of England's *Measuring the Economic and Social Impact of the Arts*.

The multiplier effect of museums in the national capital was recently championed by Associate Professor Brent Ritchie of the University of Canberra and ACT business groups, who warned that inadequate funding for its cultural institutions will hurt the local economy. "We have lots of national institutions, and they have a broader role, not just a tourism role, but two-thirds of holiday leisure visitors have said they are coming to Canberra because of the attractions. We have been able to apportion their spending to the attractions here. That works out at about \$256 million per annum. Out of the \$256 million only \$18 million or 7 per cent is going to the attractions themselves. We also asked people if they would have visited if the attractions were not here, and 38.5 per cent said they would have gone somewhere else interstate or overseas."

9. NSW GOVERNMENT PLANS AND PLANNING

The adequacy of the NSW State Plan and desirability of a cultural plan to maximise diversity of access, with reference to the tourism masterplan and other relevant planning strategies.

Museums Australia supports the development of a NSW cultural plan involving consultations with stakeholders as a way of clarifying perspectives and strategic intent. At the same time, we note the opinions of those who call for flexibility in implementing complex policy areas. As Henry Mintzberg once observed: 'Strategy is a matter of learning, negotiation and adaptation. Strategy is a process.'

Museums Australia notes in the NSW State Plan that that Department of the Arts, Sport and Recreation is the lead agency for one of the four priorities under the theme Environment for Living (Priority E8 - More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity). Specifically, Arts NSW aims to

increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10 per cent by 2016 (to be measured by ABS surveys).

The Department has expressed a commitment to funding for State cultural institutions and partnerships with local governments. It says it will maintain linkages with other NSW Government programs revolving around education and lifelong learning, innovation in business, regional development, services for indigenous people and new community facilities. And it has flagged that it is considering arts and cultural initiatives relating to community activities, volunteering, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, tourism, innovation, infrastructure, lifelong education and training, and regional cultural facilities.

These broad contexts are compatible with museums and they provide an opportunity for Museums Australia, through its NSW Branch, to contribute to the success of Government strategies.

In its submission to the review about cultural grants programs, the Museums Australia NSW Branch recommended that Arts NSW

- improve the quality and accessibility of information about funding to the museum sector in order to flag strategic intentions, opportunities and performance
- review the proportion of funds allocated to museum strategies of high value and great need, to individual museums and to the administration of grants
- make more effective use of Museums Australia and its ready-made networks

In its submission, Museums Australia expressed concerns about the proposal to gauge the success of Arts NSW programs, particularly cultural heritage programs, through a single measure — increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10 per cent by 2016.

We believe there is a risk that the single number approach may lead cultural planners up a questionable path.

Physical visits and participation now compete with virtual forms of engagement with museums. The Australian Museum website now attracts 24 million visits annually, compared with 300,000 who come through the front door. This highlights the burgeoning role of museums as online information services. On the other hand, website visits don't always produce satisfied customers.

Reports and papers relating to the value of cultural programs associated metrics have been cited in earlier sections of these, notably the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Arts*

and Cultural Information Development Plan and Michelle Reeves' report for the Arts Council of England, highlighting current deficiencies and future challenges.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in developing its statistics for Australia's knowledge-based economy and society, adopted a suite of indicators after concluding that a single index presents an over-simplified and possibly misleading representation of the extent to which an economy or society is knowledge-based. It also said a number of conceptual and methodological challenges need to be overcome before a direct measurement approach could be adopted. Its suite, incorporating metrics around contexts, economic and social impacts, innovation and entrepreneurship, human capital, information communication and technology, may be relevant to questions of funding cultural programs in NSW.

The MLA paper *Developing Performance Indicators for Local Authority Museums, Libraries and Archives* (2005) put forward indicators for development of cultural heritage infrastructure, based on volunteering, participation by priority groups, participation in online access, learning, value for money, satisfaction and museum accreditation. A more recent paper *Securing Excellence: Delivering for Communities, a Museum, Libraries and Archives and the Local Government White Paper* (2007) endeavours to articulate an outcomes framework for community cultural heritage organisations.

Other indicators applicable to museum grants could include the ratio of centrally provided funds to locally provided funds, centrally provided subsidy per head per region, centrally provided subsidy per square kilometre per region, training days per employer per annum, average number of cultural opportunities per person, and percentage of customers local to visitors.

The New South Wales Government is now considering recommendations in number of reports relating to tourism, heritage, libraries and the regions.

Museums Australia is preparing a comprehensive submission in response to the cultural grants program, taking into account wider recommendations. We will send a copy of this to the Public Works Committee as soon as it has been completed.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute to further consultative processes relating to NSW Parliament and Government policy.

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