

Mr Greg Andrews
Director, Arts Sector Investment
Creative Victoria
Dept of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

By email: greg.andrews@ecodev.vic.gov.au
cc. christopher.mcdermott@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Andrews

Joint response to the National Arts and Culture Accord: Digital Technology Survey

We write as the peak representational bodies for the galleries, libraries, archives and museums of Australia and, for some of the bodies, Australasia. Our cultural institutions have a proud history of enabling access to and use of the nation's history and cultural heritage and of preserving it for future generations.

In response to the National Arts and Culture Accord: Digital Technology Survey, we thank the authors for producing this report which provides useful discussion topics and a series of interesting recommendations that merit further investigation.

At a meeting of peak bodies at the State Library of NSW on 30 July, 2015, the 15 recommendations were reviewed and this is our joint response.

- We welcome the recommendations relating to cross domain and cross jurisdiction strategies and collaboration. This is very much in the spirit of our roundtable approach which extends beyond digital collections to the broader GLAM environment. We also note that the acquisition and management of our digital collections and enabling digital access have become very much part of the mainstream activities of our institutions rather than separate streams.
- Investment in standards and benchmarking should be considered in the context of the existing range of international standards and benchmarking tools which are already widely used in the sector. We are concerned that further work should not only cover digitisation but also take into account the capture of born-digital materials, preservation, transformation and creating new content. We support the concept but suggest that any benchmarking tool be further refined with reference to established international models.
- While GLAM institutions make a significant investment in their individual online presence, we are also acutely aware that discovery occurs not only through our websites, but also through aggregator sites, search engines and social media sites. We actively promote accessibility but face significant barriers to achieving this ambition, some requiring legislative assistance. Embedded third party copyright is a major issue for collecting institutions and it is important to address copyright reform as a further stage of this discussion.


- We believe many of the discussion points raised in this survey are being addressed, at least in part, by our institutions both individually and working through peak bodies, and by other organisations including AusGOAL, who have published a comprehensive guide to open and accessible publicly-funded information and data http://www.ausgoal.gov.au/what_is_open; and the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) who also provides extensive guidance on the management of, and access to, data at <http://ands.org.au/>.
- There are issues around further investment in resources, skills and facilities but we see enormous potential for building on existing platforms rather than creating new ones.

The peak bodies also note that the survey covered only the major national and state/territory collecting institutions. We are aware that there was an intent to carry out a further survey of the smaller GLAM players in the sector, which between them hold a very large amount of material. Digital access to that material is extremely patchy and there is a great deal of uncertainty and lack of awareness of options among those smaller organisations. We believe that policy relating to digital access for smaller organisations needs to be established at all three levels of government.

If a survey of those bodies is proposed (which we strongly recommend) then we request that the peak bodies are involved in the survey design and implementation. If a survey is not now to be carried out, then we suggest that the Cultural Ministers' working party on digital access to collections works closely with the peak bodies in any policy formulation.

We would welcome government support and engagement with our roundtable of peak bodies, and we invite participation in future initiatives relating to this survey and the broader cultural agenda.

Yours sincerely



Dr Alex Byrne
Chair, National & State Libraries Australasia
14 August 2015

On behalf of:

Australian Library and Information Association
Australian Society of Archivists
Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities
Council of Australian Art Museum Directors
Council of Australasian Museum Directors
Council of Australian University Librarians
Federation of Australian Historical Societies
Museums Australia
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