

# *reCollections*

**Caring for Collections Across Australia**

## **MANAGING PEOPLE**



**HERITAGE  
COLLECTIONS  
COUNCIL**

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Detail of bark painting, *Lightning Snake Story*, Douglas (Nawurapu) Wununmurra.  
Photograph courtesy of Karen Coote, Australian Museum.

Detail of photograph courtesy of Artlab Australia.

Detail of hand-coloured 19th century children's book. Photograph courtesy of Vicki Humphrey.



HERITAGE  
COLLECTIONS  
COUNCIL

There are an estimated 41 million objects held in Australian museums, art galleries and historical collections. Collectively they tell the story of our history and our country and contribute to our sense of identity and national pride. Increasing the conservation skills of people who care for these collections is an important factor in protecting this heritage, and is a key goal of the Heritage Collections Council.

**reCollections: Caring for Collections Across Australia** has been developed with this goal in mind. This set of practical guidebooks is designed by the Council for use principally by non-conservators who are working with Australia's cultural heritage. The guidebooks are also a teacher-friendly resource which can be used in professional development workshops.

Many of Australia's most experienced conservators have been involved in researching, writing and editing **reCollections**, through the Conservation Training Australia consortium, led by Artlab Australia, which first developed the package, and through the Collections Management and Conservation Working Party of the Council.

The Heritage Collections Council's mission is to promote excellence in the management, care and provision of access to Australia's heritage collections so that together, they reflect Australia's cultural and natural diversity. The Council is a collaboration between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the museums sector, and comprises people working in a wide range of cultural heritage institutions across the breadth of urban and regional Australia. **reCollections** is an important component of the Council's National Conservation and Preservation Strategy for Australia's Heritage Collections.

**Rob Palfreyman**  
Chair  
Heritage Collections Council

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## A note to readers

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***reCollections: Caring for Collections Across Australia*** has been written by practicing conservators and is intended to provide a sound guide for the preventive care of cultural items. Active conservation treatment of cultural material should only be undertaken by, or on the advice of, a trained conservator. Before relying on any of the material in this guide, users should check its accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for their purposes and should obtain appropriate professional advice.

***If in doubt,  
consult a  
conservator***

To obtain the names of accredited practicing conservators who are in a position to meet your particular conservation requirements contact the **Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (Inc.)** a national organisation for conservators and people interested in the preservation of cultural material.

AICCM  
GPO Box 1638  
Canberra ACT 2601  
National Secretary Phone: (02) 6254 8695  
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~conserv/aiccmhc.htm>

# *reCollections*

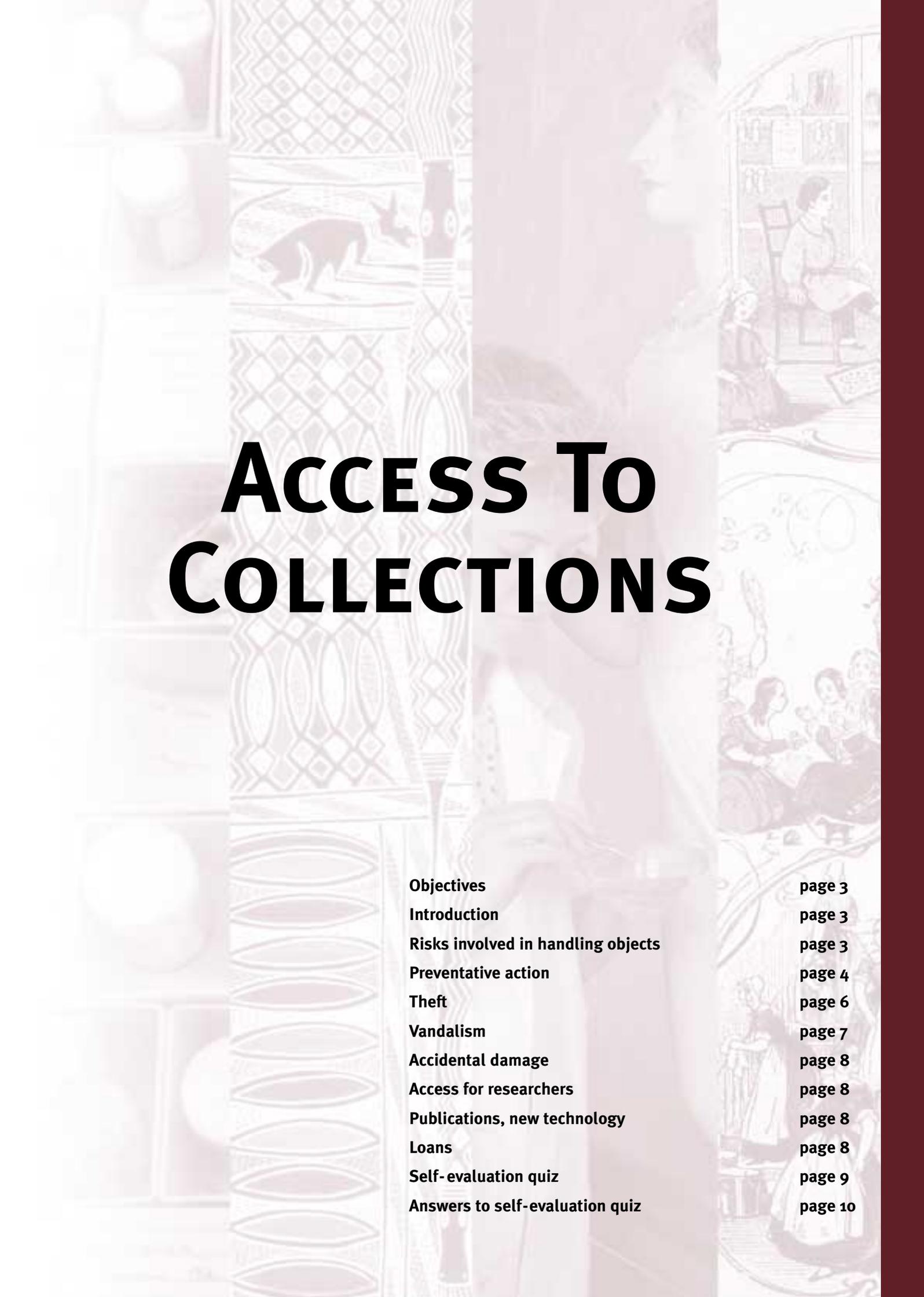
## Caring for Collections Across Australia

Our heritage is represented by a vast array of cultural material, from established national icons holding pride of place in major museums and galleries, to everyday items such as household appliances or newspapers which carry meaning for local communities or families. Yet so often the links to our heritage are tenuous because the objects which represent our culture are in danger of decay. However, there is a lot we can do to protect valued objects and collections and so prolong the life of our cultural heritage. ***reCollections: Caring for Collections Across Australia*** provides practical advice and guidance designed to help the reader care for their heritage.

***reCollections*** explains how to apply preventive conservation techniques to cultural objects and collections. Preventive conservation optimises the environmental conditions in which objects and collections are housed. Controlling light and ultraviolet radiation, humidity and temperature, biological pests, and dust and pollutants helps to prevent damage and decay to cultural material. Preventive conservation also means ensuring that good handling, transportation, storage and display techniques are used at all times. Applying preventive methods to the care of cultural artefacts and collections can prolong and protect their life for current and future generations of Australians.

While ***reCollections*** provides conservation information about the care of cultural objects and collections, it is important to recognise that all except the simplest conservation treatments should be undertaken by trained conservators. Active conservation treatment is a response to the damage of cultural artefacts, a highly skilled field which often involves the use of chemicals and complicated technical procedures. Unless performed with a thorough knowledge of appropriate techniques and with the right equipment and materials, conservation treatments can do more harm than good to the objects being worked upon, and can be hazardous to the people performing the work. Conservation treatments should only be conducted by, or on the explicit advice of, a trained conservator.

To complement the preventive conservation advice contained in the volumes *Damage and Decay* and *Handling, Transportation, Storage and Display*, ***reCollections*** supplies detailed information concerning the care of some of the most common cultural materials. These range from the paper and other materials on which so much of Australia's cultural history may be seen, to special considerations in caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural artefacts. In addition, modern practices concerning the management of collections and of the people who look after those collections are outlined.



# ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS

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## Objectives

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At the end of this chapter you should:

- understand how to facilitate access to your collections, while ensuring the safety of the objects;
- be able to assess the risks to your collection caused by public access;
- be familiar with a variety of display techniques which can help minimise the risks caused by public access;
- be able to explain to the public the need for care when in your museum, gallery or library;
- be able to devise strategies to protect items in your collections while they are being used by researchers and readers;
- understand the risks involved in lending works, and the need to agree on the lender's and borrower's responsibilities; and
- devise simple security systems to minimise the risk of theft and vandalism.

## Introduction

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Museums, galleries and libraries exist to collect and care for objects which are deemed important because of their natural, cultural, historic and aesthetic significance; preserve material heritage for future generations; and provide the general public and individuals with access to those collections.

Providing access to your collections presents you with exciting opportunities for exhibition design, historical and cultural research, educational programs, publications and many other activities. It also provides your visitors with a valuable resource for recreation, exploration and the pursuit of their interests.

Unfortunately, access to collections can also lead to deterioration. However, the dangers posed by allowing public access to the collections can be minimised by a mixture of display, educational and procedural techniques.

Regional museums, galleries and libraries do not always have the resources to make major changes

to their display techniques and procedures, but there are simple and inexpensive display techniques that can help to lessen risks to collections. It is also possible to raise public awareness of their role in the preservation of collections: by being careful when visiting the museum, gallery or library; by cooperating with the measures you have taken to protect the collection; and by not handling the objects in the displays unnecessarily.

This section makes some suggestions on how to minimise handling problems in general, and outlines preventive action you can take against theft, vandalism and accidental damage. It also provides guidelines for the safe use of collections by researchers, donors, staff and other museums.

## Risks involved in handling objects

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Many people believe that a museum experience should involve a number of senses, not just sight. Many visitors have an instinctive desire to touch objects as well as look at them, so they can feel their texture, density and weight. Indeed, some exhibitions encourage the hands-on experience. But handling objects over long periods does present some risks.

Most items sustain some damage from handling. Some are more vulnerable than others, for example:

- objects with powdery painted surfaces, such as Aboriginal bark paintings and decorated sculptures;
- breakable objects such as glass or ceramic items;
- fragile items such as paper and textiles; and
- items which are already damaged.

Even the cleanest hands have natural oils, salts and acids which can attack the surface of many materials, particularly metals.

Unintentional damage can be caused by the inexperienced handling of fragile or vulnerable objects.

If the public is allowed to handle parts of the

collection on display, there is an increased risk of theft.

Unfortunately, many museum visitors are not aware of these risks and can see no harm in handling an everyday object—after all, it had been handled for many years before coming to the museum. The following suggestions for preventive action will help you to balance providing access to your collection with taking practical steps to protect it from damage.

## Preventive action

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### Get your message across by talking to your visitors

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Most damage to collections on display is unintentional and occurs because the public are unaware of the dangers that inappropriate handling poses. Education and public relations are powerful tools for making the public aware of the damage that can result from inappropriate handling.

Most museums, galleries and libraries have attendants, custodians or volunteers who open up the museum, greet visitors, take admission fees and provide information. These people are also in the perfect position to provide information about care of the collections.

To be effective, this information must give the reasons for your rules in a positive manner which does not belittle or alienate the visitor. This is particularly important with school groups, who are often judged to be guilty before they enter the museum.

Your attendants could weave the following message into their greeting or introduction to the museum, gallery or library:

*We ask you not to touch the objects on display because, even if you have just washed your hands, you naturally have oils, acids and salts in your skin which will attack the surface of the objects you touch. Please help us take care of our collections!*

It is also important to point out that museums intend their collections to last for many generations.

### Get your message across using signs and display labels

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When it is not possible to greet all visitors, signage becomes very important in raising visitor awareness of the problems involved in touching objects. The signs should be positive rather than negative, and educative rather than threatening. 'Keep off the grass!' types of signs tend to be counterproductive.

#### **PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH**

Even if you have just washed your hands you naturally have oils, acids and salts in your skin that will damage the surface of the objects or artefacts that you touch.

An increasing number of visitors to museums in Australia do not speak English or are from a non-English speaking background. It is important to consider translating your signs so that **all** visitors are aware of your concern to preserve your collection. You can discover, through surveys or through local tourism associations, which countries your tourist visitors come from, and then develop bilingual or multilingual signage explaining how their behaviour can assist you in caring for your collections. Similarly, if your region or community has significant numbers of non-English speaking residents, translations can provide them with the same information as that provided for all your other visitors. This can lead to a greater sense of ownership and involvement.

Translations of your signs are important, because to date no accepted international symbol has been developed for indicating a prohibition on touching objects in museums, galleries and libraries. There are commercial translating services in most metropolitan areas or, if you are affiliated with the government, you may be eligible to use the Commonwealth Department of Immigration's translating and interpreting service. Check your telephone directory for contact numbers for the appropriate service near you. Be aware that even the Commonwealth's service charges for translations.

#### **Let people know what can be touched safely and what cannot**

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If you want to include a hands-on display in your museum, gallery or library, it is important to distinguish clearly—through signage and display

techniques—which items can be touched and which cannot.

Items which can be touched could be marked with appropriate signage, perhaps featuring hands or ‘touch me’ symbols. These objects should be easily accessible to touching, in clear contrast to the rest of the display.

### **Use your display furniture to protect vulnerable items**

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Even with the best educational and public relations strategies, it is still essential to develop displays which discourage the over-curious from touching objects, and which provide some protection against malicious or criminal damage. There are different ways of achieving this. Most involve keeping the collections at arm’s length.

Display cases and cabinets are an ideal way of showing valuable or vulnerable objects. Not only are the objects protected from inappropriate handling and casual theft, but they are also protected from environmental hazards, especially dust.

Unfortunately display cases are usually expensive; and regional and community museums have often been dependent on hand-me-down cases from major museums and government offices. These are better than nothing, but if they are not all of one design, your exhibitions can lack a sense of unity.

Funding for major items, such as sets of display cases, can sometimes be provided through local service clubs or through government grants. One advantage of sponsorship is that the finished product can look very attractive and a sponsor may be proud to have his or her name associated with the product. Remember also that you may have the expertise within your local or regional community to make display cases to suit your needs. It is not always necessary to buy display furniture from the major cities.

Contact your State or Territory regional museum programs for advice about various sources of funding, as well as for help writing applications for funding. They may also be able to help you locate display furniture no longer required by the State museums and art galleries, furniture which you can then acquire.



A display case can be purchased or constructed.

*Photograph courtesy of the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory*



This simply constructed pole fence creates a barrier between museum visitor and the object on display.

*Photograph courtesy of the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory*



Plinths can effectively isolate an object on display.

*Photograph courtesy of the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory*

Plinths and barriers are much cheaper and easier to make than display cases. They offer less protection than display cases, but they can offer protection to objects not easily displayed in cases.

Plinths, barriers and demarcation lines—often tape on the floor—come in a variety of designs; but care must be taken to ensure that they do not become a hazard, particularly if the display area is already congested. Plinths are low, raised bases which surround a display stand. They can be a particular problem for people with impaired vision or bifocals, who may misjudge where the plinth is or be unaware of it and trip and fall into the display. This could cause injury to someone and result in a public liability claim, as well as damage to the collection. Consideration of traffic flow and the placement of items away from narrow or high traffic areas, is important when planning displays.

If you use plinths in your exhibition, be aware of the items you display near the plinth. If you hang small items or display labels which require close scrutiny near or behind the plinths, people will be tempted to move too close. This will make it more likely that the plinth will be knocked, damaging the object being displayed.

### Use display design and layout to protect collections

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Ramps and walkways are an effective way of allowing access to large but fragile or dangerous machines or to sites which can easily be disturbed. Ramps and walkways may seem ambitious, but are not necessarily expensive and can be constructed by local contractors.



This ramp provides viewers with a view of the exhibit, which they could otherwise only get by climbing on it.

*Photograph courtesy of the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory*

The placement of objects in exhibitions can also be used to protect them. Large objects which do not require close scrutiny can be placed out of reach of the public. This may mean that the objects are hung high on the wall, or are placed behind smaller items that do not obscure them but block access to them.

Ensure that these objects and their labels can be read properly and that the objects are not forgotten when it comes to cleaning and conservation.



Items can be hung out of reach by using all your wall space. Note also that the breakable objects are protected in a display case.

*Photograph courtesy of the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory*

### Use security equipment to warn you that items are at risk

Electronic security beams are a relatively cheap method of providing some security against people touching objects. These, usually infrared, are available commercially, and sound an alarm when someone moves too close to the object and breaks the beam.

Care must be taken to ensure that the beam is not too easily broken, because numerous false alarms cause frustration and embarrassment, and can lead to a real threat being ignored.

## Theft

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Encouraging public access to collections inevitably involves some risk of theft to some parts of those collections. Thefts are generally of two types: the planned break-in, in which works are stolen and generally sold; and the impulse theft by a visitor.

## Preventive action

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While the likelihood of a planned break-in can be reduced through properly securing the building, the chance of an impulse theft by a visitor can be minimised by carefully considered display techniques and visitor procedures.

No objects should be displayed unsecured.

If it is not possible to have objects in lockable display cases, then they should be secured to the display with clamps or armatures. Care must be taken to ensure that such devices do not damage the object itself. Perspex clamps and armatures are effective because they are relatively soft and non-reactive, and do not intrude aesthetically.

It is common museum practice to ask visitors to cloak all bags bigger than a normal handbag, and all heavy coats or bulky objects. This is partly for the visitor's convenience, but also minimises the risk of accidental damage or theft.

Framed works are harder to steal if the frames are screwed to the walls rather than hung on nails or brackets. Mirror plates can be screwed to the backs of frames with the extended part of the plate screwed to the wall and painted the same colour as the wall.

## Vandalism

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Vandalism is an ever-present threat to the preservation of collections. Whatever the motivation, the damage to the collection is the same.

### Preventive action

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Assess the risks. It is important to assess the probability of vandalism. You do not want to turn your museum, gallery or library into a fort needlessly, nor do you want to be caught unawares.

If you are mounting an exhibition which is potentially controversial, you can expect a reaction. However, if you use signs and labels to explain the point of the exhibition, you may diffuse some of the problems. You should also take steps to protect objects which may be at risk. Remember that issues can become controversial

suddenly, so an object that was not considered at risk when first displayed may become at risk.

In some cases, you could be displaying items which are culturally sensitive, for example, sacred objects and some indigenous art. It is important to respect these cultural differences. These objects should be removed from display and treated according to the custom of the people who produced the objects.

Damage to objects generally requires an implement. If the Vatican attendants had demanded that Lazlo Toth place his hammer in the cloakroom, he would have had difficulty smashing Michelangelo's *Pieta*.

Outdoor exhibits, sculpture and graves are very much at risk from graffiti or malicious damage which is at times politically motivated. Such vandalism is very difficult to combat, though strategic placement of lighting can reduce the risk of vandalism.

If riotous behaviour is known to occur in the local community, again, assessment of when potential trouble may occur should be made and procedures adopted to counteract this danger.

Secure the building. If there is a possibility that rioting may occur in the local community, the museum should be made secure not just against burglary but against mass break-in. This may require bars or arc mesh over all windows and doors. Although not aesthetically pleasing, such precautions may prevent the destruction of irreplaceable elements of the collection.



Mesh over the glass helps prevent break-ins.

*Photograph courtesy of the Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory*

## Accidental damage

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Unintentional damage to collections can be caused by staff or the public accidentally knocking objects. If your display areas are too cramped or poorly or confusingly lit, or if there is no facility to cloak bags, umbrellas and so on, then the risks of this type of damage will be greater. Backpacks are a particular problem, because the wearers are often unaware of how close they are to the displays.

### Preventive action

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Good display design and good traffic flow will minimise the chances of accidental damage. This is particularly valid if the museum attracts tourist buses.

Avoid creating narrow or congested spaces.

Ensure that people do not have to backtrack to progress through or leave the museum, gallery or library.

Do not position popular displays where they will cause congestion.

Ensure that all large bags, umbrellas, overcoats and backpacks are cloaked. Provide a secure space for cloaking.

## Access for researchers

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Access to collection material may be requested by researchers, donors, students, staff from other museums and members of the public.

### Prevention of damage

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Museum collections will deteriorate more quickly if they are handled often. Following the guidelines below can help minimise the damage that may occur through repeated access and handling.

Encourage people to search the catalogue, photographic records and published material before you allow access to collections. After a full investigation, they may find they do not need access to the original object.

Set up procedures that minimise handling of the object. Museum staff should locate requested

material prior to the visitor's appointment, and have it laid out on a cleared bench or table.

If visitors need to touch or move items as part of their research, issue them with white cotton or latex gloves, depending on the type of material to be handled. The natural oils from hands can cause deterioration of many materials, as well as transfer dirt; so if gloves are inappropriate, the visitors should wash and thoroughly dry their hands.

Visitors should be supervised by staff when handling items from the collection; and you should give them some basic instruction in handling items gently, properly supporting them and keeping movement to a minimum.

You can restrict access to very fragile material, such as very old paper or textile items. These should not be handled at all by visitors. Storage supports which allow viewing can provide access.

Photographs can be made of fragile documents or artworks, and these made available instead of the original items.

Specify that researchers make notes in pencil, not ballpoint or ink. Keep a supply of pencils for researchers to use.

## Publications, new technology

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Making your collections available in published form is a way of maximising access to the collection without direct handling. Increasingly, major institutions are also looking at electronic media such as CD-ROM to provide wider access to material from their collections.

Publications in printed form or in CD-ROM need not be considered difficult or beyond your budget. You may be able to get grant funding for this type of project.

## Loans

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Access to collections may be sought by other institutions in the form of loans. Collection items are at risk each time they are moved, handled, transported, subjected to changes of temperature and humidity, or exposed to light for long periods. Before agreeing to a loan, the following criteria should be considered.

Is the item strong enough in structure or composition to withstand travel?

Would the size and weight of the item create packing and transport problems?

Can the borrowing institution provide appropriate climatic and lighting conditions and an adequate level of security?

Will the item need conservation before it can travel, and can the borrower pay for this?

Before agreeing to the loan, you should also:

- have the item valued for insurance purposes; and
- find out as much as possible about the borrower's storage and display conditions, so that methods of minimising deterioration through changes in temperature, humidity and light can be devised.

A museum, gallery or library may decide that very rare or fragile material should not be made available for loan. If it is agreed that collection material may be lent, the following guidelines apply.

You should prepare a condition report, including photographs if possible, of the items to be lent. Any wear marks or damage should be recorded as accurately as possible. It is important to have a detailed record of the item before it is lent, so that on the item's return it can be checked against this report to find out if travel or display has caused any additional damage or deterioration.

#### For more information

For more information on condition reports, please see the Collection Surveys and Condition Reporting chapter in *Managing Collections* and the Transportation chapter in *Handling, transportation, storage and display*.

A loan agreement setting out the conditions of the loan and specifying the borrower's responsibilities, including insurance cover, should be signed by both parties.

Items for loan should be packed securely, so that they are fully supported and protected during transit.

Records of loans should be kept so that you know how often particular items have been lent. This

may affect decisions on future loan requests, because repeated exposure to transit and different display conditions will adversely affect an item's condition.

**If you have a problem relating to the access of collections, contact a conservator. Conservators can offer advice and practical solutions.**

## Self-evaluation quiz

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### Question 1.

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If you do not want people to touch objects in your museum you should:

- arrange your display in such a way that it discourages handling of objects;
- put everything high on the walls, out of reach;
- use signage to explain why you don't want them to touch things;
- put everything behind security mesh.

### Question 2.

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In order to protect your collection, it is advisable to:

- deny access to backpackers;
- provide a secure store for items such as backpacks, bags, coats and umbrellas;
- stop tour buses coming to your museum, gallery or library;
- design your exhibition with good traffic flow, also avoiding congestion.

### Question 3.

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Which of the following statements are false?

- All researchers must have unlimited access to the collections when they require it.
- If researchers examine all the supporting material first, they may not need extended access to original material.

- c) Publications and CD-ROM productions are a means of providing access to your collections.
- d) It is not polite to give people instructions on how to handle the items that they are consulting for research.

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#### Question 4.

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Which of the following statements are true?

- a) Before you agree to a loan, you should check on the display conditions at the borrowing institution.
- b) Items for loan should be packed securely.
- c) Objects are placed at risk each time they are moved, handled, transported, exposed to light for long periods of time or subjected to fluctuations in relative humidity.
- d) Records of loans should be kept so that you can monitor the number of times each item is lent.
- e) All of the above.

## Answers to self-evaluation quiz

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#### Question 1.

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Answer: a) and c) are two of the methods you can use to discourage people from touching items. b) and d) will not provide good access to the collection—measures will not allow people to see things easily and will not provide a visitor-friendly environment.

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#### Question 2.

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Answer: b) and d).

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#### Question 3.

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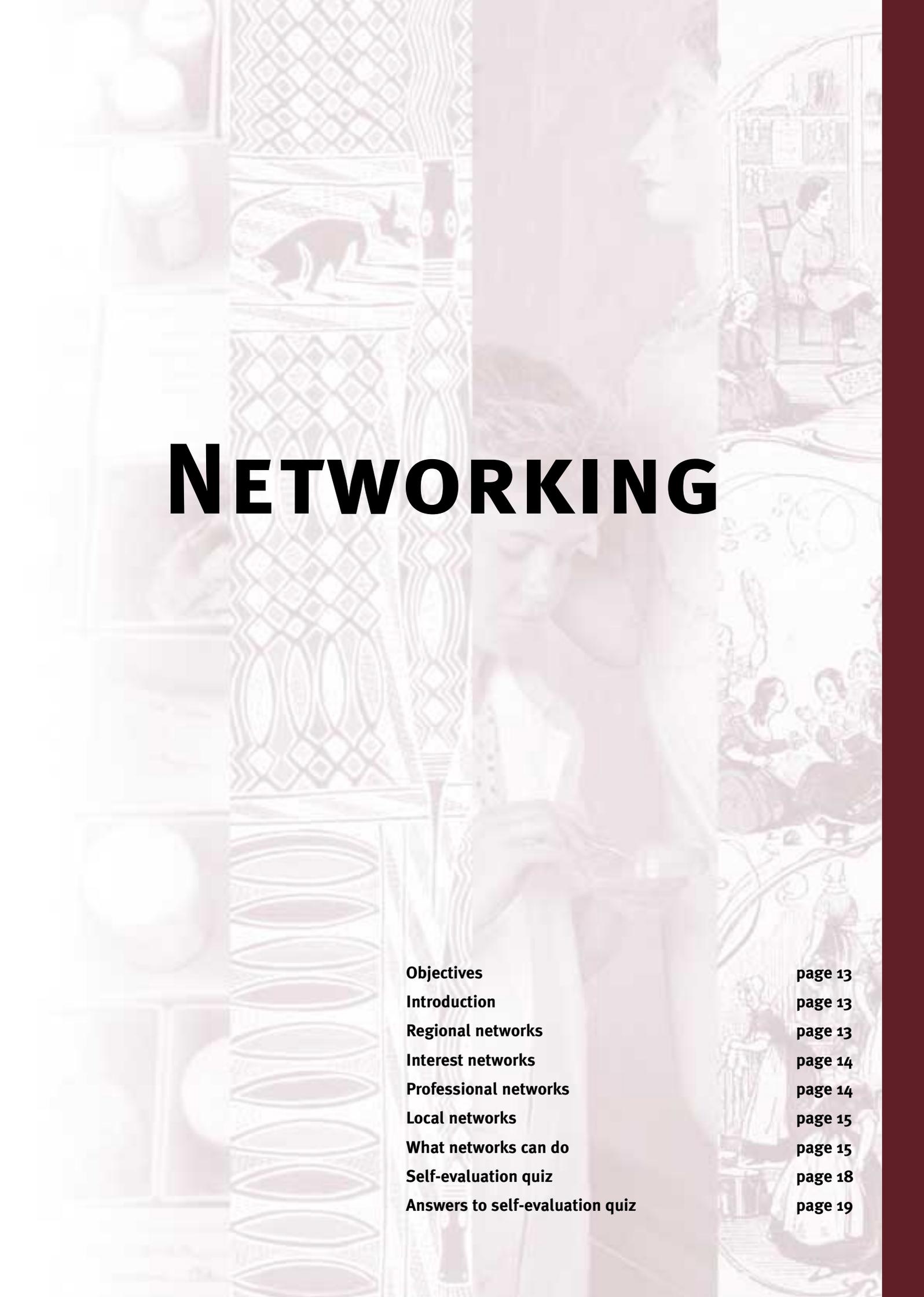
Answer: a) and d) are false. It is important to provide access to your collections; but if items are particularly fragile or if they are undergoing conservation treatment it is reasonable for you to restrict access. Access to some culturally sensitive material should always be restricted. People will generally appreciate that you are concerned with the care of your collections. If you give them handling instructions in a positive, polite and constructive way, they should not take offence.

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#### Question 4.

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Answer: e).



# NETWORKING

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## Objectives

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At the end of this chapter you should understand:

- what kinds of networks exist; and
- how particular networks can help you.



State History Conference delegates enjoy the Mine Interpretation Centre at Kapunda, South Australia, October 1995.

*Photograph courtesy of K. Crilly*

## Introduction

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No matter where you live, there is always someone you can contact who has the skills you need to solve a problem. Sometimes that person can be found in the neighbourhood, or in a community of fellow enthusiasts. At other times you may have to call on someone with specialist knowledge and expertise.

In order to draw on this knowledge and expertise, you have to know it exists, and whom to contact to gain access to it. Networking provides this sort of information exchange. Networking puts people with similar interests, but perhaps different backgrounds, in touch. It provides opportunities for sharing and the exchange of knowledge, expertise and resources.

Establishing good networks gives you access to a pool of specialist people and services, which you might not normally find in a small museum, gallery or library. Networks enhance the effectiveness of your museum by increasing your opportunities and enriching your resource base. They can also be a useful way of strengthening the ties between your museum, gallery or library and your local community.

## Regional networks

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There are museums, galleries, libraries, local history collections and private collections in every region of Australia. It is useful to know which of these are in your region, how they can be contacted and what sort of collections they hold. It is also helpful to know what problems you have in common and how others work to overcome these problems. You may be able to help each other with new ideas, buying materials cooperatively, swapping skills and pooling resources.

Directories are useful for finding out about collecting institutions and, therefore, are good sources to consult when you are building your networks of contacts. There are nation-wide as well as State directories covering museums and galleries, art institutions and libraries.

Australian Museums On Line (AMOL), the Internet Web site devoted to museums and galleries, contains the *National Directory of Australian Museums and Galleries*. This directory provides details for more than 800 museums and galleries of all types and sizes, and expects to eventually include all museums and galleries in Australia. Entries are continually added to the Directory, so it is always up to date. The Australia Council, about every two years produces the publication *Ozarts*, a directory of art institutions and people. The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) publishes the *Directory of Australian Special Libraries* (now in its 9th edition) every two to three years; and national directories of public libraries and reference libraries are produced by Auslib Press in Adelaide.



Museum directories.

*Photograph courtesy of the History Trust of South Australia*

Most States have, or are preparing, directories of museums, grouped by region. Some have also prepared directories of historical societies and other collecting agencies. These directories are not always updated regularly, so you should check for the latest editions. If you wish to obtain copies of these directories, simply contact the relevant State branch of Museums Australia Inc. The branches will either be able to supply you with a copy of their directory or put you in touch with a supplier.

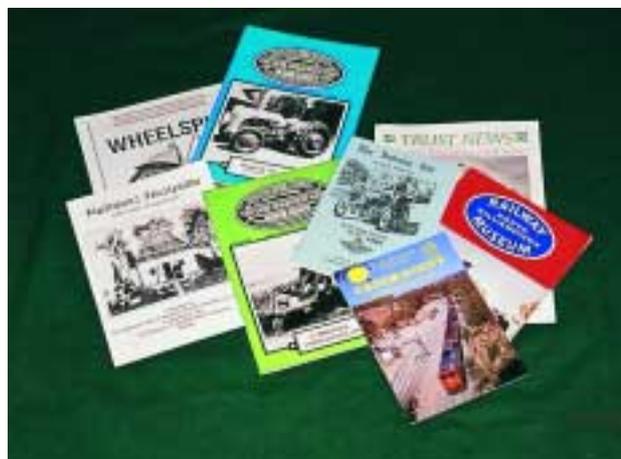
Libraries, too, have established very good networks throughout the country. If you wish to know more about library networks, contact your State branch of ALIA.

There are a number of other regional networks operating at both formal and informal levels. Some State branches of Museums Australia have set up regional chapters to assist those who are distant from metropolitan centres. The Regional Galleries Association has branches in New South Wales and Queensland; and there is a Public Galleries Association of Victoria. There are also branches of the Royal Historical Society and the National Trust in most States. The Australian Museums On Line Internet site includes the Australian Museums Forum, which acts as an electronic network. Users can make contact with other museum workers, share common problems and solutions, or discuss issues of concern. To find out more about Australian Museums On Line, contact the AMOL Coordination Unit at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, or your State branch of Museums Australia Inc.

## Interest networks

Whatever you collect—art works, costume, dolls, militaria, phonographs, porcelain, objects associated generally with local history, sport, medicine, transport and so on—other people and institutions collect them as well. They have a specialist interest in the subject and some will have expert knowledge about the management and conservation of these collections. Often a casual conversation can save you many hours of work by putting you in touch with just the person or supplier you have been searching for.

Many groups of enthusiasts have already formed associations, and meet regularly and hold functions and events, as well as exchange information and ideas through publications. There is a myriad of



Museum publications.

*Photograph courtesy of the History Trust of South Australia*

specialist organisations you might be interested in joining. Perhaps the easiest way of determining which ones are most relevant to you would be to make use of your local library or council. They often maintain lists of local associations and interest groups.

## Professional networks

There are also professional networks you can turn to for help. Professional networks are made up of, and include:

- professional associations such as: Museums Australia; the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM); the Australian Registrars Committee; the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA); and the Art Libraries Society of Australia/New Zealand (ARLIS ANZ). Most



Delegates mingle informally at the Museums Australia National Conference, Fremantle, Western Australia, 1994.

*Photograph courtesy of the Western Australian Museum*

professional associations have national headquarters and representatives in various States;

- State and Commonwealth collecting institutions, such as museums, galleries and libraries. Within these institutions you will usually find curatorial, registration, design and conservation expertise. While the staff of these institutions may not be able to provide extensive help, they can generally provide basic advice, and point you in the right direction to get further support and assistance. Examples of such institutions are the museums and art galleries of the Northern Territory, the History Trust of South Australia, the Western Australian Museum, and the State Library of New South Wales;



Delegates visiting the Fremantle Arts Centre during the Museums Australia National Conference, Fremantle, Western Australia, 1994.

*Photograph courtesy of the Western Australian Museum*

- other government agencies, private companies and consultants who carry out specialised work on a fee-for-service basis. Usually you have to pay for work to be done by these organisations; but you can generally get good advice and they will point you in the right direction if they are unable to give you further support and assistance. Examples of such organisations are Artlab Australia; the State Library of New South Wales Conservation Access, and the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne.

## Local networks

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Within every local community there are potential networks for collecting institutions. These may well overlap with the networks we have described as regional networks and interest networks. There are



Adelaide students enjoy a display on the exploration of South Australia at Old Parliament House, Adelaide, South Australia.

*Photograph courtesy of Alexander Makeev*

also other groups whose primary interest is not museums, galleries or libraries and their collections, but who are very interested in the role your museum, gallery or library plays in the local community and who want to make a contribution to this. Some examples are:

- sister institutions, such as a local museum and local history collection;
- local councils;
- schools, secondary and primary;
- local businesses which may be prepared to promote museums, carry displays and provide sponsorship;
- churches, government agencies, sporting associations, and allied groups such as field naturalists;
- service clubs such as Apex and Rotary; and
- correctional services institutions.

## What networks can do

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### Sharing information

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Some organisations make a point of publishing information, particularly on more complex matters. For example, the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society recently restored to operating condition Car No. 90, a narrow-gauge, wooden-bodied passenger car which once served on the northern railway division in South Australia.



Restoration at Pichi Richi, South Australia—refitting the roof to Car No. 90, after body repairs.

*Photograph courtesy of Carl Cedarblad*



Restoration at Pichi Richi, South Australia—Car No.90 substantially re-assembled and ready for internal fitting out.

*Photograph courtesy of Carl Cedarblad*

The Society produced a detailed report of the project, including photographs at every stage showing the dismantling of the carriage, repairs to the steel underframe, the replacing of structural timbers and studwork, refitting the roof and external cladding and painting and refitting the interior, including specifications for matching timber.

This report now forms part of the Society's permanent records, and is available for loan to other railway historical groups.

Within communities, it should also be possible to build up information about local tradespeople and the particular skills they can bring to conservation projects. Local historical collections and local museums could work out the areas in which each will collect. They could then exchange objects, where appropriate, and refer donations to the most suitable of the organisations.

## Sharing resources

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By combining and pooling resources, collecting institutions can achieve together what they could not achieve individually. Below are some projects which a network may well be able to achieve:

- sharing the cost of bringing a specialist conservator to a region for a workshop, or for visits to each participating institution;
- purchase of equipment for conservation, for example, bulk-buying of acid-free tissue, archival boxes, UV-treated acrylic or low-UV fluorescent lights, polyethylene film, acid-free mounting board, mannequins and leather dressing, all cheaper when purchased in bulk;
- clubbing together to buy a large freezer for fumigation purposes;
- thermohygrographs, UV light monitors and light meters;
- constructing major capital facilities, such as a large storage shed, which can be shared by participating institutions; and
- sharing in the cost of items, such as the purchase or leasing of photocopiers, computers or drafting equipment.

## Providing local expertise

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Local expertise is particularly useful when museums want more information about some of the objects in their collections. Normally there are people in any community who have personal memories of many unidentified or poorly recorded objects in museum collections. Interviews with those people will quickly overcome this problem.

There are also people with useful trade and craft skills such as masonry, carpentry, electrical work, building maintenance or display construction work, or more esoteric knowledge, for example, about Victorian gardens, or local history generally.

Schoolteachers are often invaluable, not only for their help in historical research but also in scriptwriting, an essential skill not used to the full in many local museums. Science teachers could help identify chemical damage to objects.

Council staff may well have useful information on early surveys, subdivisions and settlement of towns

and districts. They can also give practical advice on such matters as stormwater disposal, accounting and contract tendering. Further, they can make museums aware of relevant planning regulations, main street programs, funding sources and potential donors to museum collections.

### Providing voluntary labour

Over ninety per cent of local museums rely entirely on voluntary labour. In the case of local history museums, this labour is drawn predominantly from the local community. Some of the tasks volunteers may do:

- carry out research on the collections;
- plan and set up displays;
- develop a conservation plan and implement it;
- restore objects in the collections, for example, horse-drawn vehicles, farm machinery, costumes or stationary engines; and
- share the roster in the shop or on the front desk.

Local museums could not function without this volunteer support. All sections of the community contribute, but statistics show that it is mainly those in the 50-plus age-bracket.

In addition to voluntary labour, museums can often gain access to unskilled labour through



Kristin Phillips, an Artlab Australia textiles conservator, demonstrates the making of padded coathangers for costumes at a regional workshop in Melrose, South Australia, 1995.

*Photograph courtesy of Artlab Australia*

Correctional Services programs. Under these programs, people who are required to undertake a prescribed number of community service hours work for approved community groups.

Provided appropriate supervision can be found, this can be an invaluable way of getting done those difficult jobs that require extra assistance: shifting heavy machinery and equipment, grounds maintenance or some conservation work, for example.

School students also are often willing to provide unskilled labour. Museums have developed useful links with schools whereby students carry out restoration work on, say, a selected piece of farm machinery.

This is a marvellous way of encouraging students to develop interest and pride in their own heritage, particularly when the finished exhibit is placed on display with acknowledgment of the people who restored it.

One museum which has established very strong links with its school community is to be found at Kimba, on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia. All Year Nine students undertake a local history project, whether it be a biography of a local person or business, oral history interviews, recording a small collection of historical objects or a family history project. When the project is completed, the student makes a presentation, at the museum, to the rest of the class and members of the museum. The project is then marked and handed to the museum for safekeeping.

This program has been a great success for the museum and students alike.



Leigh Fitzgerald hands over a project to museum secretary Molly Eatts at the Presentation Day, Kimba Museum, South Australia, 30 June 1993.

*Photograph courtesy of Gloria Norsworthy*

## Providing facilities for displays

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Often local museums have very restricted space for exhibitions. One solution has been for museums to set up temporary exhibitions in local businesses: in restaurants, banks, post offices, dry cleaners, estate agent offices and the like.

These displays can be marvellous conversation pieces; they are good for business, as well as useful for promoting the museum within its own community and serving to reinforce the notion that history is part of the life of the community.

Displays like these can also give messages to customers about the role of history in their everyday lives, and the importance for everyone of conserving the things that matter to them.

It should be borne in mind when considering setting up such an exhibition that the conservation and security risks should be assessed first. Light sources, fluctuations in relative humidity, whether or not locked showcases would be necessary and whether the objects are too fragile or valuable are all points to be considered.



Display at a Commonwealth Bank branch in Adelaide celebrating the evolution of the telephone for the launching of phone banking. The exhibition was installed by the Curator of Technology for the History Trust of South Australia.

*Photograph courtesy of the History Trust of South Australia*

**If you have further problems relating to networking in a museum environment, contact a conservator. Conservators can offer advice and practical solutions.**

## Self evaluation quiz

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### Question 1.

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A regional museum network is useful because:

- a) it gives you information about all the museums in your region and who the contact people are;
- b) it will help you cut down on the duplication of collections;
- c) it will allow museums to club together to buy conservation supplies or hire expertise;
- d) it will help promote a regional identity as well as a local identity;
- e) all of the above.

### Question 2.

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What local institutions are there beside museums which could form part of a museum's network?

### Question 3.

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Yours is one of three museums in the same region which collect costume. You can each allocate \$1,000 towards improving the way they are cared for. What would be the best course of action for you to take?

- a) Each buy in supplies of acid-free tissue, Dacron, boxes and shelving.
- b) Pool resources and buy the supplies in bulk.
- c) Remove all objects from direct or reflected sunlight.
- d) Pool resources and hire a textiles conservator to help each museum set conservation priorities for its own costume collections.
- e) All of the above.

# Answers to self-evaluation quiz

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## Question 1.

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Answer: e). It is important to know what other museums exist in any region and who runs them. It will provide better knowledge about each other's collections and provide opportunities for economies of scale and joint ventures. Regional networks can also broaden the way we view community history, which can be seen in a regional context as well as a local one.

## Question 2.

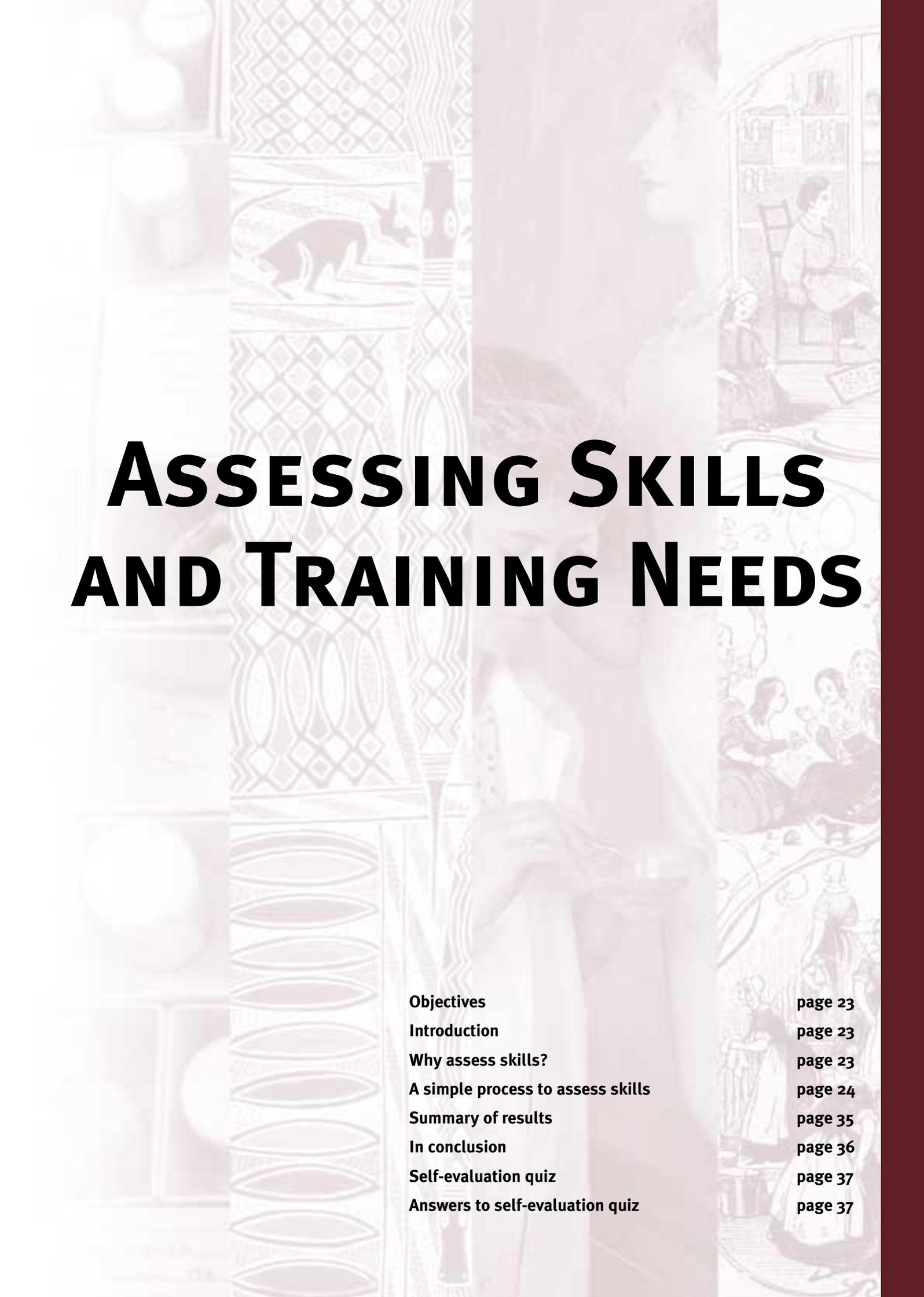
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Answer: Some examples include local councils, schools, local businesses churches and service clubs. All of these can provide people and resources useful to local museums. For example, councils may be prepared to meet some of the museum's administrative costs, on the grounds that they are providing an important community service. Schoolteachers have valuable skills, as do service clubs.

## Question 3.

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Answer: d). All these steps would improve the situation, but networking provides an opportunity to obtain expert advice on site. Museums acting individually are less likely to be in a position to do this.



# **ASSESSING SKILLS AND TRAINING NEEDS**

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## Objectives

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At the end of this chapter you should:

- understand how the skills of the people who work with your collections can best be used to help the organisation meet its objectives;
- be able to assess the skills of your people in a simple and supportive way; and
- be able to match the skills of your people with the requirements of your organisation, and identify any training needs.

## Introduction

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People are an organisation's most valuable resource. They are the source of creativity and inspiration that keep your organisation alive. It is, therefore, essential that museums, galleries and libraries understand how to bring out the best in people and how to employ them to achieve the collective aims of the organisation.

The people who work in museums, galleries and libraries, whether in a paid or a voluntary capacity, possess a diverse range of skills and abilities. Many of these skills can go unrecognised by the organisation, because people may work in narrow fields that do not fully use all their skills. Sometimes even the person does not recognise all his or her own skills; for example, someone who has raised several children may have tremendous organisational skills but not think of these skills as useful to the organisation for which he or she works.

By carrying out a skills assessment, you will be able to identify what skills you already have and recognise where there are gaps that may need to be filled by training, networking, or hiring people with specific expertise.

## Why assess skills?

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Carrying out a skills assessment finds out what skills people have. Then give them jobs, projects or a series of tasks that more fully use their range of skills. Assessing skills is about recognising the talents you already have and putting them to good use. The value for the people being assessed is that they should end up with a more fulfilling role in the organisation.

Before you undertake a skills assessment, it is useful to have a plan for the organisation as a whole. The plan should state the aims and objectives of the organisation, and outline what the organisation will do to meet these aims. With this plan in place, it will become apparent what skills are needed. If you then assess the skills of the people working in your organisation, you can match their skills with the skills that are needed.

Be aware that undertaking a skills assessment can be a difficult process. It may be viewed by some people as threatening—why do you have to check up on me, aren't I good enough? As the purpose of skills assessment is to create a better organisation, which will in turn benefit the people who work there, the fear is unfounded. Nevertheless, it is important to handle the process with a great deal of care and consideration.

Some organisations undertake skills assessments for all staff members, whether paid or voluntary, when they join the organisation. This makes the assessment process a normal part of the introduction to the organisation; it ensures that new staff are used to their fullest potential as early as possible, and reduces the idea that an assessment is making value judgements or criticising the quality of one's work.

If a skills assessment is carried out as a one-off exercise, it is important to explain to all involved what the assessment is, why it is important, and how it will benefit both the museum and each individual. Everyone should be aware of the exercise, even if they do not take part, to avoid those being assessed feeling that they have been singled out. Keep the atmosphere informal and relaxed. If possible, conduct the assessment away from the person's or group's normal work area, so that it is clearly seen as a special activity, and people are encouraged to focus on thinking about what skills they have to offer.

A skills assessment should be led by an assessor, whose function is to draw out information from those involved. The sample assessment provided can be used as a guide to the types of questions to be asked, and as a checklist for responses. Although the sample records responses as a simple yes or no, you should encourage those being assessed to answer as fully as possible. Often a short discussion or an explanation of an answer reveals abilities which could be of value to your organisation, and which their possessors had not felt were important.

## A simple process to assess skills

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A skills assessment can be done:

- as a one-to-one exercise, for example, between a manager and staff member, or a committee member and volunteer; or
- as a group exercise, where the team from a particular area of the organisation does the assessment together.

The approach you choose depends very much on your organisation and what people feel most comfortable with. The following process, based on a fictional organisation, Small Museum, can be applied in either situation. It examines a fairly typical small museum run by volunteers. Four stereotypes are used to illustrate the point that everyone has useful skills to contribute to the museum, even if these are not always obvious.

Small Museum is a small country museum with a diverse collection of local social history material, archival material, mining technology, an important collection of early photographs, and unrelated memorabilia donated by the town's population. The museum is run by a dedicated group of volunteers, and receives some financial support from the district council and from visitors' donations. The museum is suffering from dwindling visitor numbers, and the number of volunteers is also starting to decline. Financial support is not enough to look after the collection adequately, and the building needs urgent repairs.

Given this situation, the museum's management committee has decided to turn it into a specialist mining museum, to reflect the rich history of mining in the region and to increase visitor numbers by attracting tourists. The museum will divest itself of all material which does not fit the new collections policy.

With this simple plan, the museum's management committee has identified the following skills as essential to the redevelopment of the museum and to its continued survival:

- the ability to promote the museum to the local tourist authority and to tourists directly;
- the ability to write grant funding applications;

- the ability to liaise with State and Commonwealth museum support organisations;
- metal and woodworking skills;
- mechanical maintenance skills, particularly mining equipment;
- financial planning skills;
- basic display design skills;
- public speaking skills—being able to make visitors feel comfortable while taking tours of the museum;
- the ability to write engaging and informative display labels;
- building skills—being able to undertake some of the building repairs, or to direct builders in these repairs;
- organisational skills—being able to coordinate the redevelopment plan;
- basic preventive conservation skills;
- documentation and record-keeping skills;
- skills related to mounting and framing photographs;
- negotiating skills—being able to trade with other museums so that the museum's unwanted material could be swapped for more relevant material; and
- research skills—being able to research the provenance of items in the collection.

If the museum had all these skills available to it, its management committee would be confident that it could redevelop the museum and increase visitor numbers.

The museum's volunteers have vast experience in a diverse range of occupations, from farmers to cafe owners, miners to teachers.

A typical skills assessment for Small Museum might look like this:

**The ability to promote the museum to the local tourist authority  
and to tourists directly**

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Have you had much to do with the local tourist authority?	no	yes	no	no
Do you know Jo Bloggs who works there?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you know about the district Council's plans for attracting more tourists to the town?	no	yes	no	yes
Have you had much contact with tourists who visit the town?	no	yes	yes	no
Have you done any promotional work, like promoting the school fête or advertising in the paper?	no	yes	no	yes
Do you feel comfortable talking to strangers about the museum's activities?	no	yes	yes	yes
Are you a member of Rotary, Lions, Apex, CWA or any other clubs that have connections with towns across the State?	yes	yes	no	no
Have you done any work with the tourist industry, or do you know how the tourist industry works?	no	yes	no	no

This group of people does have some of the skills necessary to promote the museum, particularly the cafe owner. It would make sense to give this activity to the cafe owner, who has the greatest knowledge and experience in this area.

**The ability to write grant funding applications**

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Are you comfortable filling out official forms?	yes	yes	no	yes
Have you ever successfully applied for a grant from a government agency?	yes	no	no	no
Do you believe that you know enough about the museum's plans to be able to articulate them in a grant application?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you know about what grants are available to small museums in this State?	no	no	no	no

In this case the farmer has the most experience in grant applications and, with some additional knowledge about what grants are available, could possibly take on this task.

### The ability to liaise with State and Commonwealth museum support organisations

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Do you think it would be beneficial for the museum to seek advice from other museum professionals?	yes	no	yes	yes
Do you know of organisations in this State which the museum could contact for advice?	no	no	no	no
Do you believe that you know enough about the museum's plans to be able to work out what advice it needs?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Are you comfortable talking to other museum professionals about what our museum needs?	yes	no	yes	yes

The farmer, the miner or the teacher could each take on this activity. The cafe owner, who may have the skills, does not think it would be beneficial to talk to other museum professionals, and so may not take this activity seriously.

### Metal and woodworking skills

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Are you good at working with your hands?	yes	no	yes	yes
Do you have much experience of working with wood or metal?	yes	no	yes	no
Do you have trade qualifications in carpentry or metalwork?	no	no	yes	no
Do you know how to operate power tools for metal or woodworking?	yes	no	yes	no
Have you ever made simple wooden furniture?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Are you good at using hand tools such as chisels and saws?	yes	no	yes	no
Have you ever made high-quality wooden objects such as furniture or sculpture?	no	no	no	no
Have you ever made precision metal objects such as mechanical parts?	yes	no	no	no
Do you believe that you could make good display cases for the museum?	yes	no	yes	no

The farmer and the miner both have good skills in this area, and both are confident they could make some of the display cases the museum needs. They may well be able to take on a role where they contribute to the construction of new display furniture and/or assist with the maintenance of the building and, with advice from a conservator, some of the collection.

### Mechanical maintenance skills—especially mining equipment

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Are you good at working with your hands?	yes	no	yes	yes
Do you have much experience in working with machinery?	yes	no	yes	no
Do you have trade qualifications in mechanical work?	no	no	yes	no
Have you ever made precision metal objects such as mechanical parts?	yes	no	no	no
Are you familiar with the museum's collection of mining equipment?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you understand the maintenance requirements for this collection?	no	no	yes	no
Are you familiar with the museum's conservation policy?	yes	yes	no	yes
Do you understand how this policy restricts the sort of maintenance work that can be undertaken on the collection?	no	yes	no	yes
Do you feel that you could undertake some of the maintenance tasks in accordance with the conservation policy?	yes	yes	don't know	no

The miner has the experience and knowledge to look after the mining collection, but does not understand the conservation policy. The miner would be the most appropriate person to put in charge of the maintenance of the mining collection; however, he needs further training in the museum's conservation policy so that he clearly understands what is acceptable maintenance from the museum's point of view. Remember that the mining collection is now a museum collection, not a collection of equipment used for working in a mine.

<b>Financial planning skills</b>				
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Do you have much experience in budgeting?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you know much about the museum's finances?	no	yes	no	yes
Do you have much experience in costing, such as planning the costs for an event?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Have you ever costed any of the museum's projects?	no	yes	no	yes
Would you know how to set up budgets for the museum?	no	yes	no	yes
Would you know how to monitor the museum's performance against these budgets in order to report back to the committee?	no	yes	no	no

The cafe owner and the teacher should both be able to look after the museum's financial planning; but the teacher would need some further training in financial reporting to the committee.

<b>Basic display design skills</b>				
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Have you had any experience in designing an exhibition, say in a shop window?	no	yes	no	no
Have you ever worked in an area that required the design of public exhibitions?	no	no	no	no
Have you any formal design training?	no	no	no	no
Have you ever worked with a museum designer or had any training in museum exhibition design?	no	no	no	no
Do you understand the purpose of exhibitions and how the design of the exhibition influences the message that the exhibition gives to viewers?	no	no	no	no
Do you know about the conservation issues related to museum exhibitions?	no	no	no	no
Have you looked closely at the exhibitions in the State museums, and do you think you understand some of the basic techniques they use to get their message across?	no	no	no	yes

The museum has a shortage of exhibition design skills. It should try to recruit someone who has these skills, or else find training for one or more of these four. The teacher may have the basic understanding, and so may be worth persuading to undertake some basic training.

**Public speaking skills—being able to make visitors feel comfortable whilst taking tours of the museum**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Have you done much public speaking in the past, for example, to school groups or local clubs?	no	no	no	yes
Are you comfortable speaking to groups?	yes	no	no	yes
Do you believe that you are a good speaker?	yes	no	no	no
Do you think you could talk to visitors and make them feel comfortable in the museum?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you think you could tell people about the museum's collection and answer their questions?	yes	yes	no	yes
Do you enjoy talking about the museum to visitors?	yes	yes	no	yes

Good public speakers must feel comfortable about talking to groups of people. Ideally, all museum staff should be able to speak to visitors and tell them about the collection. Apart from the miner, the others could play a role in conducting visitors through the museum.

**Building skills—being able to undertake some of the building repairs or direct builders in these repairs**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Have you ever done any building work such as home renovations?	yes	no	yes	yes
Do you have any building trade qualifications?	no	no	no	no
Have you had any building work done for you recently where you were closely involved with the work?	no	no	no	yes
Have you ever planned a building project, for example, the family home?	yes	no	yes	yes
Are you comfortable working with building trades people?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Are you aware of what repairs are needed for the museum building?	no	no	no	no
Do you know where to get advice on what repairs the museum building needs?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you think you could plan these repairs and supervise builders doing these repairs?	yes	no	yes	no

Because none of the team understands what repairs the museum needs, it is difficult to assign this responsibility to any of them. The farmer, the miner or the teacher could all take on the task; however, from the answer to the last question, it seems that the farmer and the miner would be more comfortable with the task.

<b>Organisation skills—being able to coordinate the redevelopment plan</b>				
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Are you familiar with the museum’s overall redevelopment plan?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Have you ever had responsibility for organising people for a long project, for example the town’s Main Street project, or the local Scout group?	yes	yes	no	no
Are you comfortable coordinating people to work to a plan?	no	yes	no	yes
The museum’s redevelopment will take a long time and there will be many difficulties. Do you think you know how to motivate people over this time?	no	yes	no	yes
Do you feel comfortable in a leadership role?	yes	yes	no	yes
Do you believe that the museum is doing the right thing with its redevelopment plan?	no	no	yes	yes
Do you think you could convince the more sceptical members of the museum that the redevelopment plan is a good thing?	no	no	no	yes

Coordinating the redevelopment plan is probably the most important responsibility of the museum committee. While the committee as a whole should retain this responsibility, it should know who can play a leading role. The teacher and cafe owner could take this role; but remember that the miner and farmer, who are much more reluctant, should still be involved. The committee needs to do more to convince museum staff of the importance of the plan.

### The ability to write engaging and informative display labels

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Do you have basic typing skills?	no	yes	no	yes
Have you any training in exhibition display label writing?	no	no	no	no
Do you think our display labels could be more engaging and more informative to visitors?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Have you ever done any writing, such as short stories?	no	no	no	yes
Do you think it is important for the museum's display labels to tell a story rather than just identify the object?	don't know	yes	yes	yes
Do you think you could write informative and engaging display labels for the museum?	no	no	no	yes

The teacher would be most comfortable with this activity, but may need some simple training in museum display labels.

### Basic preventive conservation skills

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Are you familiar with the environmental factors that affect the physical condition of the collection?	no	no	no	no
Do you know how we could change our storage and display practices to improve the overall condition and survival rate of the collection?	no	no	no	no
Have you ever done any training in preventive conservation techniques?	no	no	no	no
Do you know about the conservation Code of Ethics and how it may apply to our museum?	no	no	no	no
Do you know how to store and display the museum's photographic collection so that it will last for several generations?	no	no	no	no
Do you know where to get information on preventive conservation that we could apply to the museum?	no	yes	no	yes
Do you think it is important that future generations have the opportunity to see the museum's collection?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you know about the effects of sunlight on the collection?	yes	yes	no	yes

All these people need training in basic preventive conservation. Since preventive conservation is inexpensive and can lead to major benefits in terms of preserving the museum’s collection, it would be worthwhile having these people attend conservation training courses.

<b>Documentation and record-keeping skills</b>				
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Do you have much experience in keeping official records, such as the records department of a company, government agency or library?	no	yes	no	no
Do you understand the importance of documentation in a museum?	no	yes	yes	yes
Have you ever set up a filing system that allows a range of people to get easy access to the information?	no	yes	no	no
Have you ever set up forms or processes for documenting activities, for example, stock control in a shop?	yes	yes	no	yes
Are you aware of what types of information the museum needs to document and record in order to work well?	no	no	no	no
Would you be comfortable being responsible for ensuring that the museum documentation is of a high standard and that records are made accessible?	no	no	no	no

Clearly the museum has a weakness in this area. The cafe owner has the most experience, but is not comfortable taking on this responsibility. The museum should either try to recruit someone who is able and willing to do this job or persuade one of the four to take some training and do the job.

### Skills related to mounting and framing photographs

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Do you know much about conservation standards for storing and displaying photographs?	no	no	no	no
Have you done much picture-framing work?	no	no	no	no
Are you aware of the extent and importance of the museum's photographic collection?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Do you know how to make paper hinges or photo corners for mounting photographs?	no	no	no	yes
Do you know about the effects of acidity, relative humidity, adhesives, sunlight and frequent handling on the condition of photographs?	no	no	no	no
Do you know the difference between archival albums and non-archival albums?	yes	yes	no	yes
Would you feel comfortable rehousing and framing the photograph collection to conservation standards?	no	no	no	no

Again, this set of questions highlights a need for training. The four people don't know enough about mounting and framing photographs, without additional training.

### Negotiating skills—being able to trade with other museums so that the museum's unwanted material could be swapped for more relevant material

Questions	Farmer	Cafe Owner	Miner	Teacher
Have you any experience in trading, bartering or selling?	yes	yes	no	no
Do you think the museum should trade objects with other museums in order to acquire more relevant objects and get rid of less relevant objects?	no	no	yes	yes
Are you familiar enough with the collection to understand which parts are essential to the museum and which parts are not essential?	no	no	yes	yes
Would you feel comfortable trading with other museums?	no	no	yes	no
Do you know of other museums which might be interested in trading with our museum?	no	no	yes	no
Do you think the museum should keep objects which it cannot look after properly?	yes	yes	no	no
Are you aware of any objects that the museum could try to acquire, that would enhance	yes	yes	yes	yes

The miner, who may have a personal interest in seeing the museum specialise in the mining history of the region, is keen to take on this activity. Because the miner is also aware of some of the trading possibilities, it would make sense to assign this activity to that person.

<b>Research skills—being able to research the provenance of items in the collection</b>				
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Farmer</b>	<b>Cafe Owner</b>	<b>Miner</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Have you ever undertaken any historical research such as a family genealogy?	no	no	no	yes
Do you know what historical research resources are available to assist in research into the museum's collection?	no	no	no	yes
Do you think it is important to have information about the provenance of the objects in the museum's collection?	yes	yes	yes	yes
Are you comfortable researching the collection?	no	yes	yes	yes
Do you have much knowledge of the history of the town and region?	yes	no	yes	yes
Do you like historical research?	no	don't know	don't know	yes
Do you know of any organisations that might assist the museum in its research?	no	no	no	no

The miner and the teacher would make a good team to undertake this activity, with perhaps the teacher taking a somewhat larger role. Researching the collection, so that visitors can be better informed and so that the history of the region can be better documented, will be a major function of the museum.

## Summary of results

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### **The ability to promote the museum to the local tourist authority and to tourists directly**

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This group of people does have some of the skills necessary to promote the museum, especially the cafe owner. It would make sense to give this activity to the cafe owner, who has the greatest knowledge and experience in this area.

### **The ability to write grant funding applications**

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In this case the farmer has the most experience in grant applications and, with some additional knowledge about what grants are available, he could possibly take on the task.

### **The ability to liaise with State and Commonwealth museum support organisations**

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The farmer, the miner or the teacher could each take on this activity. The cafe owner, who may have the skills, does not think it would be beneficial to talk to other museum professionals, and so may not take this activity seriously.

### **Metal and woodworking skills**

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The farmer and the miner both have good skills in this area, and are both confident they could make some of the display cases the museum needs. They may well be able to take on a role where they contribute to the construction of new display furniture and/or assist with the maintenance of the building and, with advice from a conservator, some of the collection.

### **Mechanical maintenance skills—especially mining equipment**

---

The miner has the experience and knowledge to look after the mining collection, but does not understand the conservation policy. The miner would be the most appropriate person to put in charge of the maintenance of the mining collection. However, he needs further training in

the museum's conservation policy so that he clearly understands what is acceptable maintenance from the museum's point of view. The mining collection is now a museum collection, not a collection of equipment used for working in a mine.

### **Financial planning skills**

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The cafe owner and the teacher should both be able to look after the museum's financial planning, but the teacher would need further training in financial reporting to the committee.

### **Basic display design skills**

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The museum has a shortage of exhibition design skills. It should try to recruit someone who has these skills, or find training for one or more of these four. The teacher may have the basic understanding, and so may be worth persuading to undertake basic training.

### **Public speaking skills—being able to make visitors feel comfortable whilst taking tours of the museum**

---

Good public speakers must feel comfortable about talking to groups of people. Ideally, all museum staff should be able to speak to visitors and tell them about the collection. Apart from the miner, who seems not to want to participate in this activity, all the others could play a role in conducting visitors through the museum.

### **Building skills—being able to undertake some of the building repairs or direct builders in these repairs**

---

Because none of the team understands what repairs the museum needs, it is difficult to assign this responsibility to any of them. The farmer, the miner or the teacher could take on the task; however, from the answer to the last question, it seems that the farmer and the miner could be more comfortable with the task.

### **Organisation skills—being able to coordinate the redevelopment plan**

---

Coordinating the redevelopment plan is probably the most important responsibility of the museum committee. While the committee as a whole should

retain this responsibility, it should know who can play a leading role. The teacher and cafe owner can play this role. But the miner and farmer, who are much more reluctant, should still be involved. The committee must do more to convince museum staff of the importance of the plan.

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### **The ability to write engaging and informative display labels**

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The teacher would be most comfortable with this activity, but may need simple training in museum display labels.

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### **Basic preventive conservation skills**

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All these people need some training in basic preventive conservation. Because preventive conservation is inexpensive and can lead to major benefits in terms of preserving the museum's collection, it would be worthwhile having these people attend conservation training courses.

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### **Documentation and record-keeping skills**

---

Clearly the museum has a weakness in this area. The cafe owner has the most experience but is not comfortable taking on this responsibility. The museum should try to recruit someone able and willing to do this job—perhaps the local librarian—or persuade one of the four to receive training and do the job.

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### **Skills related to mounting and framing photographs**

---

Again, this set of questions highlights a need for training. The four people do not know enough about mounting and framing photographs, without additional training.

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### **Negotiating skills—being able to trade with other museums so that the museum's unwanted material could be swapped for more relevant material**

---

The miner, who may have a personal interest in seeing the museum specialise in the mining history of the region, is keen to take on this activity. Because the miner is also aware of some of the trading possibilities, it would make sense to assign the activity to this person.

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### **Research skills—being able to research the provenance of items in the collection**

---

The miner and the teacher would make a good team to undertake this activity, with perhaps the teacher taking a somewhat larger role. Researching the collection so that visitors can be better informed, and so that the history of the region can be better documented, will be a major function of the museum.

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## **In conclusion**

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The summary of the results of the skills assessment gives you a fairly clear indication of who is best suited for each area of activity within the museum. It also indicates the areas where training is needed.

This example has been simplified greatly in order to demonstrate the principles and benefits of skills assessment. In practice, the questions will not have simple yes or no answers, and some interpretation will be needed. There are also cases where information about people's skills has to be coaxed out of them, usually because they are unaware of, or underrate, their skills.

The example is also unclear as to whether the process was undertaken in a group situation or in one-to-one interviews. Either could have taken place; the actual method depends on what individuals feel comfortable with. But be careful—don't just hand out questionnaires for people to fill out. The benefits of this process will come only through talking.

In summary, a skills assessment process can be used to build a strong sense of teamwork and commitment, while at the same time organising people to take on important tasks.

Before you undertake a skills assessment of the organisation, it is critical that you have a clear idea of what skills the organisation needs. Once you have this list of skills, it is a fairly simple matter of writing a series of questions for each skill. These will help to draw out of people information about their experience, knowledge and abilities relevant to that skill.

**If you have a problem relating to the skills and experience of individuals in storing, handling or displaying important artefacts, contact an experienced and respected conservator or speak with your local personnel officer. He/she can offer advice and practical solutions.**

# Self-evaluation quiz

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## Question 1.

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By carrying out a skills assessment you can:

- a) help people to recognise the skills they already have;
- b) work out what training programs you may need;
- c) find out what skills are available in your organisation;
- d) match people with tasks that need to be done;
- e) all of the above.

## Question 2.

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When carrying out a skills assessment you should:

- a) create an atmosphere to keep people on their toes;
- b) have a plan for the organisation so that you know what skills you need;
- c) be quick, to save as much time as possible;
- d) handle the process with care and consideration.

## Question 3.

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Which statements below are false?

- a) People are an organisation's most valuable resource.
- b) Everyone knows what their skills are.
- c) You can get the skills you need only by hiring experts.
- d) A skills assessment should be carried out face-to-face because the benefits come from talking together.

## Question 4.

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Before carrying out a skills assessment you should:

- a) have a plan for the development of the organisation;
- b) know what skills are needed by the organisation;
- c) discuss the purpose of the skills assessment with the staff so that they understand why it is important;
- d) all of the above.

# Answers to self-evaluation quiz

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## Question 1.

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Answer: e).

## Question 2.

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Answer: b) and d). A skills assessment should be something that benefits the organisation by matching what you have with what you need. By approaching this with sensitivity, you are more likely to get the information you need and create a feeling of goodwill. A little time spent at this stage could save time later.

## Question 3.

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Answer: b) and c) are false. Many people underrate their skills. If they do something every day, they often don't recognise it as a skill. Everyone has skills, and you can often find just what you need within your organisation.

## Question 4.

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Answer: d). It is important that everyone understands what the organisation is trying to do, what skills the organisation needs in order to achieve its objectives, and that each can play a more meaningful role as a result of the skills assessment.

# MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

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## Objectives

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At the end of this chapter you should know:

- why people volunteer;
- the importance of effective volunteer management;
- the importance of a team approach, using volunteers and paid staff;
- the need for clear, common goals for paid staff and volunteers; and
- the potential advantages of having volunteers in your organisation.

## Introduction

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The assets of cultural organisations are not only the buildings and the collections, but also the people who work in them, both paid staff and volunteers.

In museums, galleries and libraries, volunteers form a significant part of the work force. The volunteer component of organisations varies, from a small number, to the entire staff. Effective management is essential if the full potential of both voluntary and paid staff is to be realised. How this is done will, to an extent, depend on the composition and size of the organisation.

The subject of volunteer management is of crucial importance, whether you are:

- a member of the board or executive;
- a volunteer;
- a volunteer or a paid worker responsible for supervising or managing volunteers; or
- a paid member of staff working alongside volunteers.

Each of you will have a different but essential contribution to make. Each of you will benefit from:

- targets being achieved;
- a harmonious and productive environment; and
- a stable and contented work force.

## Aims of volunteer management

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The aims of volunteer management are to:

- recognise and fully utilise the time, skills, experience and commitment of volunteers;
- adopt a management style which is effective, simple and open, and retains spontaneity;
- develop policies and practices based on a good understanding of volunteering and related issues;
- encourage cooperative working relationships that facilitate mutual trust and enjoyment between volunteers, paid staff and management; and
- ensure achievements match the agreed targets of the organisation.

## Definition of volunteering

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While definitions vary slightly, any definition needs to contain three essential elements. Volunteering is done by choice, without monetary reward, and for the benefit of the community.

Without monetary reward does not exclude the payment of out-of-pocket expenses, which are a reimbursement for actual costs incurred rather than a reward.

## Roles, involvement and profile of volunteers

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Volunteers working within museums, art galleries and libraries perform a huge range of duties, including:

- policy formation and management, for example, serving on boards and committees;
- practical tasks—renovating buildings or artefacts, arranging displays, collecting items of historic interest;
- interaction with the public—reception, guides, public speaking;
- administration—cataloguing, recording, bookkeeping;

- publications—newsletters; and
- fundraising—special events, trading tables.

In country areas and in small metropolitan organisations, the majority of workers is likely to be volunteers. The extent to which large city museums, galleries and libraries involve volunteers varies from place to place, although the majority of staff are likely to be paid workers. Both large and small organisations frequently include volunteers on their boards and committees.

While no definitive across-the-board survey has been conducted, indications are that many of the volunteers are women in the older age-bracket. However, this profile does appear to be changing, with more men and young people becoming involved.

### **Attitudes to volunteering**

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Volunteering is, of course, not new. What is new is:

- increased attention to the concept and practice of volunteering;
- recognition of the contribution of volunteers;
- acknowledgment of the advantages of developing joint partnerships between paid and voluntary workers;
- the fact that volunteers are generally more selective about where they volunteer and what they do, so that their own interests are being met while doing something worthwhile;
- an acceptance of the fact that effective management is essential if the knowledge, skills and experience of volunteers are to be put to the best use; and
- some museums and galleries do not discriminate between paid and non-paid staff and refer to all staff as workers.

### **Benefits of volunteer involvement**

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Volunteer involvement benefits an organisation as it:

- encourages community participation;
- initiates, enhances and extends services; and
- provides a cost-effective service.

Benefits for the individual volunteer include opportunities to:

- get with the action and become involved in new areas;
- advocate change and seek more say in decisions;
- improve and extend services;
- pursue a long-term or new interest;
- maintain existing skills or develop new skills; and
- increase social contacts.

Effective volunteer management brings benefit to:

- the project;
- the organisation, including the paid workers;
- the volunteer; and
- the community at large.

### **Dangers of volunteer involvement**

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Whatever the activity, exploitation can occur. Volunteers can be exploited if:

- they are allocated inappropriate tasks;
- they are allocated a task which is not done of one's own free will—an occurrence in some organisations;
- the program is inadequately planned or poorly managed and resourced; and
- attention to the task at hand is so rigid that volunteers are prevented from putting forward their own ideas.

Paid workers can be exploited if:

- they are expected to work alongside, and perhaps supervise, volunteers without account being taken of the additional time and skills involved; and
- they are replaced by volunteers to save money when, in fact, the job requires the services of paid workers.

When funding sources are cut, both paid staff and volunteers are faced with the dilemma of deciding which is the best way forward. Not only are paid workers in danger of losing their jobs, volunteers may be expected to perform tasks and roles which they do not choose to do and which have been deemed to be the province of paid workers.

The risk of conflict between paid and voluntary workers increases when volunteers are thought of as angels and paid workers are thought of as interested only in the wage package.

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### Costs of volunteer involvement

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Volunteer involvement is not free. Direct monetary costs to the organisation include:

- reimbursement of volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses;
- public liability and personal accident insurance;
- supervision and/or management by paid staff;
- training costs;
- facilities; and
- miscellaneous costs, for example, newsletters, catering for special events.

Direct monetary costs for the volunteer include:

- travel to and from the work-site; and
- expenses incurred in the conduct of the job.

While not all volunteers will wish to claim out-of-pocket expenses, some people are precluded from volunteering if reimbursement is not offered.

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### Prerequisites for success

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- Identify your goals, that is, what you want to achieve.
- Think through how these goals can be achieved.
- Develop policies to guide practice.
- Examine the situation as it stands at present.
- Establish structures which ensure the flow of information and enhance decision-making.

- Institute strategies and establish who is responsible for what, to be done by whom, and when.

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### Identify your goals

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Whether you are considering your organisation as a whole or just a project within it, everyone involved will want to know where they are heading, that is, what outcomes you are all hoping to achieve from your efforts.

These outcomes can sometimes be measured quantitatively, for example, 1,000 visitors viewed the exhibition; or qualitatively: visitors were spread across all ages and ethnic groupings.

The clearer your goals, the easier it is to plan and review progress. Any proper review or evaluation is possible only when results can be placed alongside goals.

Of course goals can change as your ideas, experiences and situations change, so a regular review of goals keeps an organisation on track.

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### Develop policies to guide practice

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Whether your organisation is large or small, staffed by a combination of paid and voluntary staff or entirely by volunteers, development of a policy document will clarify the ground rules. These ground rules will guide your practice.

The policy document could include why volunteer involvement is welcomed, for example, to involve the community, to enhance or extend services; and a commitment to:

- providing volunteers with a clear idea of their duties;
- ensuring volunteers are given the necessary facilities, orientation and training to enable them to perform their duties adequately;
- developing a team approach, with all volunteer and paid staff aware of each other's particular contribution;
- providing reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, insurance cover, and safe working conditions;
- providing opportunities for information exchange and involvement in decision-making processes and review;

- providing adequate support and supervision; and
- identifying the person responsible for coordinating or managing the volunteers.

### **Understand the work environment**

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It is necessary to have a clear understanding of:

- the fact that effective volunteering is a reciprocal arrangement, with the volunteer both giving and receiving;
- available resources;
- facilities and funds;
- staff, both voluntary and paid—numbers, attitudes, skills, attributes and availability;
- political factors;
- the need for accountability; and
- the community served by the organisation, for example, its make-up, interest in your project, attitudes to volunteering.

### **Organisational structures**

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Structures should incorporate:

- the provision of relevant, up-to-date information and the opportunity for feedback and review;
- mutual knowledge and respect for the different roles undertaken by various staff members;
- a close relationship between management and the staff team;
- involvement in decision-making processes that affect the volunteer's job and work environment;
- acceptance that everyone, management and staff, paid and voluntary, is working toward a common, overall goal; and
- integration of paid workers and volunteers into the one staff team.

### **Strategies**

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Planning strategies will be much easier once:

- goals have been identified;
- volunteer policies are in place;
- the environment within which the organisation operates is clear; and
- structures that facilitate communication have been established.

Strategies are needed for:

- recruitment and selection;
- orientation;
- training—initial and ongoing;
- a team approach; and
- supervision, support and review.

### **Recruitment and selection**

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Before recruitment begins, thought should be given to the profile of the volunteer team. Are you seeking a cross-section of ages and backgrounds, and both male and female volunteers, so that the team is representative of the general community; or is this immaterial?

Clear job descriptions must be in place before recruitment begins. Each job description should include the overall job as well as detailed tasks, for example, a receptionist who will greet visitors, answer queries made personally and by phone, and operate the word processor. The person to whom the volunteer will be responsible should also be named.

Thought should also be given to:

- required skills, current or to be acquired;
- personal attributes; and
- time commitments.

Potential volunteers should be informed of:

- the organisation's expectations of them, for example, attendance at a training course for museum guides; and

- what the volunteer can expect from the organisation, for example, out-of-pocket expenses and insurance cover.

As in the case of paid staff, haphazard selection will assist neither the organisation nor the person recruited.

Successful selection involves matching both:

- the volunteer's skills, attributes and time availability with the job description; and
- the needs and expectations of the volunteer with the needs and expectations of the organisation.

## Orientation

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If recruitment and selection procedures have been well devised, orientation will have begun before the volunteers begin work. New volunteer staff will know and accept the purpose of the organisation and the job expected of them. After recruitment, they will want further details about the organisation: about the management and service personnel, organisational structures and further details of their particular job.

Areas which could be included during orientation are:

- introductory reading material about the organisation;
- a tour of the organisation, its services, programs and facilities;
- an introduction to staff—paid and voluntary;
- personnel matters;
- the organisation's systems of operation, including communication channels;
- details of the job for which the volunteer has been recruited; and
- occupational health and safety, and evacuation procedures.

A staff handbook can facilitate the orientation process. If the handbook covers the needs of both paid and voluntary staff, then a team approach is encouraged from the outset.

## Training

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While orientation to the organisation and the job is a must for all volunteers, training will depend on the job to be done and the current level of knowledge and skills of the volunteer. Often volunteers are recruited because they already have the experience and skills to do the job: a retired shipwright could take on the job of refurbishing a sailing vessel, for example. On the other hand, volunteers may not have the necessary skills. The important thing for both the organisation and the volunteer is to ensure volunteers are prepared, so that they can adequately perform their work.

Remember that there are many ways of learning and of training people. Look to options such as a buddy system, mentoring, modelling good practice, and guided reading.

Further training may be necessary if the volunteer wishes to take on additional or different jobs, or the organisation introduces a new program.

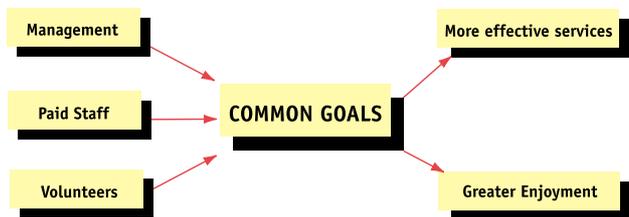
## A team approach

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Good teamwork and a feeling of mutual trust and respect rely on:

- a firm commitment by management and paid staff to volunteer involvement;
- particular roles, expectations and responsibilities of all parties being clearly defined;
- recognition and appreciation of each other's different but valuable contributions;
- a willingness to accept and work within the advantages and constraints posed by volunteer involvement; and
- all parties seeing themselves as working toward a common goal.

The understanding, approval and involvement of paid staff at all levels is crucial to effective teamwork. If this is missing, further consultation and discussion will be necessary. Any problems must be dealt with as they arise, and appropriate action taken.



Teams are built as volunteer and paid staff work together from the planning stage through to the review of achievements.

## Supervision, support and review

Supervision, support and review strategies are as necessary for volunteers as they are for paid staff.

Provision must be made for the dissemination of adequate information, an appropriate place in which to work, necessary equipment, and the establishment of clear communication channels and supervision between those doing the work and the person ultimately responsible.

Support does not preclude constructive advice or criticism. At times and in certain circumstances, constructive criticism may be the most valuable form of support.

Regular reviews of how individual volunteers, and the staff as a whole, are feeling and operating are a must. They will provide the opportunity for the necessary adjustments to ensure satisfaction with job performance and a happy and dynamic team.

## Other entitlements

Volunteers do not expect a monetary reward for their efforts but, in addition to an enjoyable and worthwhile experience, they do expect:

- recognition of, and feedback about, their performance;
- satisfactory and safe working conditions;
- the right to claim out-of-pocket expenses; and
- public liability and personal accident insurance cover.

If the organisation has decided not to offer out-of-pocket expenses, or not to take out insurance cover, volunteers should be made aware of these facts before they begin work.

## Resources to tap

Over the last few years, every state and territory in Australia has established a state/territory volunteer centre. Regional centres have also been established in some country areas.

Ring the centre closest to you for advice or information about:

- training opportunities—one option is a nationally accredited course in volunteer management, available both on-site and through distance learning;
- conferences; and
- publications—books, newsletters, videotapes, the *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, the Australian Bureau of Statistic's surveys on volunteering.

Information and assistance is at hand. Please use it!

### Australian Volunteer Centres

#### Volunteer Centre of SA Inc.

1st Floor, 155 Pirie Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Phone (08) 8232 0199, Fax (08) 8232 5161

#### ACT Volunteer Association Inc.

30 Storey Street  
Curtin ACT 2605  
Phone (02) 6281 6669, Fax (02) 6282 2200

#### Northern Territory Council for Volunteering Inc.

Shop 1, 1st Floor Paspalis Centrepoint  
Smith Street Mall, Darwin  
PO Box 36531, Winnellie NT 0821  
Phone (08) 8981 3405, Fax (08) 8941 0279

#### Volunteer Centre of New South Wales Inc.

2nd Floor, 105 Pitt Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Phone (02) 9231 4000, Fax (02) 9221 1596

## Checklist to assess your organisation's management of its volunteer program

	Rating Scale 1–10 1 = lowest 10 = highest	Action Plan for Improvement
Organisation has a good understanding of volunteering and related issues.		
Management and paid staff are strongly behind volunteer involvement.		
The volunteer selection profile is in place and is being implemented.		
Planning and review of progress is a joint effort between paid and volunteer staff.		
All parties are clear about why volunteers are involved, and their respective roles.		
Both volunteers and paid staff see themselves working toward a common goal.		
There is an overall acceptable turnover of volunteers, with a stable core group.		
Channels of communication are clear and open to both paid and volunteer staff.		
Volunteers are receiving adequate training and supervision.		
Volunteer staff feel they are valued by paid staff.		
Paid staff feel they are valued by volunteers.		
Staff are enthusiastic and creative.		
Add any other points which are relevant to your organisation.		

### **Volunteer Centre of Queensland Inc.**

Room 415, 4th Floor Renney's Building  
155 Adelaide Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
GPO Box 623, Brisbane QLD 4001  
Phone (07) 3229 9700, Fax (07) 3229 2392

### **Volunteer Centre of Tasmania Inc.**

167 Campbell Street  
Hobart TAS 7000  
Phone (03) 6231 5550, Fax (03) 6234 4113

### **Volunteer Centre of Victoria Inc.**

2nd Floor Ross House  
247-251 Flinders Lane  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Phone (03) 9650 5541, Fax (03) 9650 4175

### **Volunteer Centre of Western Australia Inc.**

79 Stirling Street  
Perth WA 6000  
Phone (08) 9220 0676, Fax (08) 9220 0617  
or 9220 0625

## **In conclusion**

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Volunteers represent a huge human resource, which in the past has been largely hidden and undervalued. This situation is now changing. Along with the increased recognition of volunteers, the importance of effective management is also being acknowledged.

Effective management is the key to ensuring that the time, skills, experience and commitment of volunteers are put to the best possible use, that organisational goals are achieved and that everyone enjoys the experience.

Meeting this challenge requires a joint effort by:

- the management of the organisation;
- the person appointed to manage or coordinate the volunteers;
- paid staff who work alongside the volunteers; and
- the volunteers themselves.

**If you have a problem relating to adequate skills in conservation, contact a conservator. Conservators can offer advice and practical solutions.**

## **For further reading**

---

Kupke, Diana, 1991, *Volunteering: how to run a successful volunteer program with happy volunteers and how to get more satisfaction out of being a volunteer*, Elepahs Books, Perth.

Millar, Sue, 1991, *Volunteers in museums and heritage organisations: policy, planning, and management*, Office of Arts and Libraries, London.

Noble, Joy and Rogers, Louise, 1998, *Volunteer Management: An Essential Guide*, Volunteering South Australia, Adelaide.

## **Self-evaluation quiz**

---

### **Question 1.**

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Should every person who seeks a voluntary job be accepted?

### **Question 2.**

---

Name three strategies which will help meld long-serving volunteers with new recruits, and volunteers with paid staff.

### **Question 3.**

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In order to be successful, does every volunteer program have to be managed in exactly the same way?

## **Answers to self-evaluation quiz**

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### **Question 1.**

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Answer: No. If both the organisation and the volunteer are to benefit, then a double match is necessary. An inappropriate match is a liability to the organisation and is likely to destroy the volunteer's enthusiasm. It may be possible to refer the potential volunteer to an area more in keeping with his or her skills or interests. If the person is obviously not ready to volunteer, for example,

recovering from trauma or illness, referral to a social or support service may be appropriate.

### **Question 2.**

---

Answer: Possible strategies include:

- involving a volunteer and paid staff in the planning, recruitment and selection of new volunteers and in the orientation process;
- asking a long-serving volunteer to buddy a new volunteer for the first few months;
- when reviewing progress, involving the whole staff team;
- seeking perspectives and suggestions from long standing and new volunteers as well as paid staff.

### **Question 3.**

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Answer: No. The size of the organisation, its function, the make-up of staff—paid and voluntary or entirely voluntary—its location and geographical spread will all have an influence on the manner in which the program is managed. However, every program needs to establish its goals, as well as structures and strategies, to achieve those goals.



# HEALTH AND SAFETY

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## Objectives

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At the end of this chapter you should be:

- aware of the range of health and safety issues;
- aware of your responsibilities in relation to health and safety issues;
- familiar with the types of legislation, standards and guidelines dealing with health and safety;
- aware of the risks involved in caring for collections;
- familiar with strategies for providing a safe environment; and
- familiar with ways to develop a better understanding of the issues, including ways of seeking assistance.

## Introduction

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Cultural material is not usually considered dangerous. However, there are potential dangers in almost all activities associated with caring for cultural material, for example, lifting heavy objects in storage areas, using a Stanley knife to make boxes, or eradicating insect pests.

Health and safety issues are complex; and it is important that everyone is aware of their responsibility to others and to themselves. If your collection is on public view, you must consider public safety. Where you have staff or volunteers working within your organisation, occupational health and safety issues must be understood by all. Even if you are looking after your own private collections, there is much you need to know to ensure your own and other people's health and safety.

## Responsibility

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Health and safety issues are complex and this section is provided only as a guide. You should become familiar with all health and safety issues that may affect you. If you have a collection that is open to the public, or if you have staff or volunteers working with the collection, you are subject to State and Commonwealth statutes and laws. It is critical that you understand your responsibilities and liabilities in relation to them.

The welfare of paid and volunteer staff is a joint

responsibility. Each staff member should be aware of the correct ways of handling material and protecting themselves from hazards in the workplace. Management has a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for staff, as well as to provide information and training to enable staff to act in a safe and responsible way.

You should, therefore, become familiar with any Workcare or similar schemes in place in your State, as well as legal requirements for the purchase, storage and disposal of chemicals and solvents you may need to use, any requirements for signposting, and other areas of legal responsibility.

Consideration must be given to providing health and safety training to staff and volunteers, and to the preparation of a disaster preparedness plan. You should also assess the building and the storage of the collection, giving thought to emergency access and similar issues.

For more information

For more information on counter disaster planning, please see *Managing Collections*.

## Legal issues

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The types of regulations and guidelines which may relate to you include Occupational Health and Safety Acts and Regulations, Dangerous Goods Acts, Codes of Practice and Australian Standards.

### Occupational Health and Safety Acts and regulations

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Occupational Health and Safety Acts and Regulations govern the use of machinery, solvents and sprays.

### Dangerous Goods Acts

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Dangerous Goods Acts govern the use of pesticides or other poisons.

### Environmental Protection Acts

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Environmental Protection Acts govern:

- the handling of dangerous goods and substances, especially in public places; and
- the disposal of wastes in laboratories and other work sites.

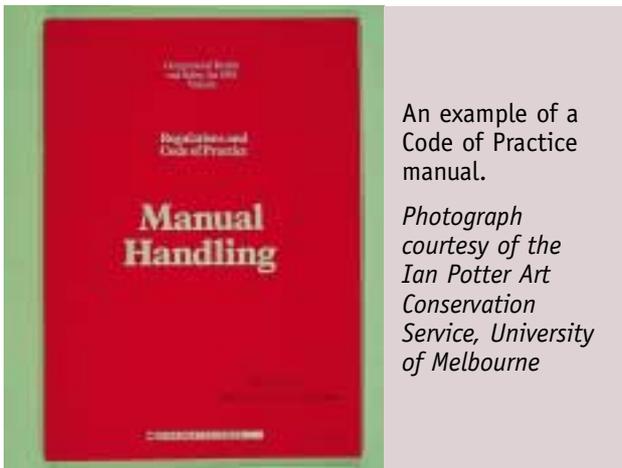
## Codes of practice

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These are issued under state and national legislation. They encompass first aid, labelling of workplace substances and determining and classifying hazardous substances.

### CAUTION:

Know your responsibilities under the law.  
Ignorance is not recognised as  
an excuse by the law!



## Australian standards

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These set out standards for specific areas such as 1319-1983 *Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment*; 1470-1986 *Health and Safety at Work*; 1940-1988 *SAA Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code*; 2444-1990 *Portable Fire Extinguishers*; 2466-1981 *Guide to the Design of Microform Workstations*; 2865-1986 *Safe Working in Confined Space*; 3590-1990 *Screen-based Workstations Part 1-3*.

## Sources of help

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You can get copies of acts, regulations and other publications from the following sources:

- State and Territory government bookshops—for State acts, regulations and codes of practice under your State or Territory Occupational Health and Safety Acts;
- Australian Government bookshops—for Worksafe Australia publications; and
- Australian Standards, Clunies Ross House, 191 Royal Parade, Parkville, VIC 3052—for copies of Australian Standards.

## Danger! How to recognise it, how to avoid it

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Although there are potential dangers in most activities associated with collections, we can become very blasé, especially when doing something we do often. The following notes are guides to good practice, and should also act as reminders that we must take care and act responsibly, even when under pressure.

### Manual handling

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Lifting, carrying, moving, relocating, hanging exhibitions—people who work with collections are constantly involved in handling objects. In some cases these objects are heavy, in other cases simply awkward. The kinds of problems that can occur when undertaking these tasks are obvious. Nevertheless, they are common. Back problems, pulled and strained muscles, torn ligaments, bruises, cuts and similar injuries can all result from inappropriate handling techniques. Lifting loads that are too heavy is only one aspect of this story. Injury also occurs when the body is stressed—when it twists, bends or reaches in an inappropriate manner.

To ensure that you do not have these problems, check the following points.

Be prepared. When you move an object, know where it is going and have that area prepared. Also have the path between where you are and where you are going clear of obstructions.

Seek assistance. An object may not look heavy or awkward but, after you have held it for a short time, you may find it is increasingly difficult to hold. Awkward objects may not be heavy, but may cause you to twist or turn inappropriately. You are better off not moving an object than moving it without proper assistance. Not only can you hurt yourself, you may also damage the object.

Check the object. Is it secure and stable, or are there sections which may detach or loosen as you carry it? Can you grip it securely? Are there sharp edges? Is it top-heavy?

Plan before you start. If you are going to hang the object, make sure you have padding on the floor so that you can rest it and position yourself

properly before lifting it. Check that the hanging system is appropriate and that you have a third person to help position the object, if necessary.

Work out what else you need to assist you. Will you need gloves to protect either you or the object? Do you need to have padded surfaces ready? Will you need equipment, such as trolleys, to assist you? Do you need to make ramps so that you don't have to lift an object?



Correct handling to protect the artwork and the carrier.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

For more information

For more information about handling objects, please see the chapter on Handling in *Handling, transportation, storage and display*.

## Dust masks and respirators

There are a plethora of substances that can threaten health through inhalation. Such threats may be short or long term and can result in mild aggravation to, for example, the respiratory tracts or be life threatening.

Airborne substances include dust and particulates—organic and inorganic—vapours and gases. A broad range of safety equipment is available for protection against these substances including dust masks which cover mouth and nose for protection from particulates, respirators with filters for dust and specific groups of solvents and full face masks which may be fitted with their own air supply.

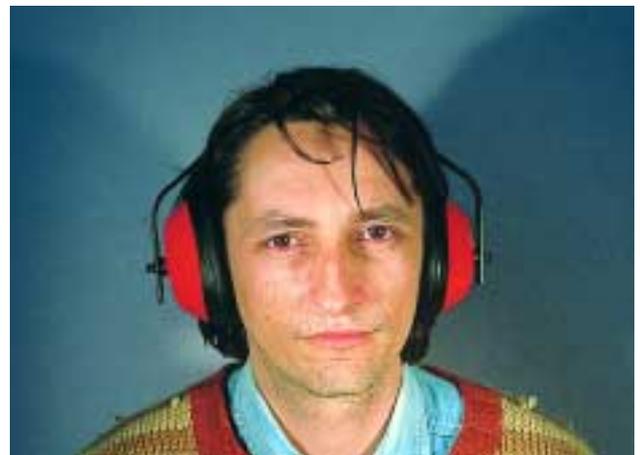
Before undertaking any activity which may cause or use potentially harmful substances including

paints, varnishes, corrosion inhibitors and pesticides, seek appropriate technical advice from a qualified bureau or government agency.

## Protecting your hearing

In working with a collection, you may use, or may be near people who are using, noisy machinery. Floor polishers, drills, saws, grinders are all examples of machinery that produce noise levels that can damage hearing. If a noise is loud enough to be irritating, it is worth protecting yourself by wearing ear plugs or ear muffs. Such protection should be provided for staff and volunteers as well.

Some equipment in conservation laboratories has no audible sound but can be potentially damaging to your hearing. Ultrasonic welders, for example, can be a problem. Ear muffs should be provided and the equipment should be well-maintained.



Protecting hearing with ear muffs.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

## Eye protection

There are many ways in which eyesight can be damaged. Splintering glass, dust, sprays, solvents and mould spores can all enter the eyes and cause damage. In cases where there is likely to be material which could enter the eyes, safety glasses should be worn.

In some situations UV lights are used for examining objects. These lights can cause irreparable damage if not used properly or used without the appropriate eye protection.



Protecting eyes with goggles.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne.*

### Protective gloves

Some tasks require you to use solvents, pesticides or other chemicals. If you are handling any substance which you think may be harmful, wear protective gloves. There are many different types of gloves, from those that provide a physical barrier to those that provide complete solvent-protection. Chemical suppliers will be able to give you advice about the best types of protection.



A variety of gloves is available for protecting your skin.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

### Protective footwear

In some instances, problems can be caused by inappropriate footwear. Injuries can be caused by slipping, by dropping heavy or sharp objects, by corrosive chemicals or hot water, or by stepping on sharp objects.

Where possible, footwear should be solid, closed at the toe, and cover the whole foot; and if you are working with electrical tools, it should have non-conductive soles.

### Dangers associated with tools and machines

In any operation using tools, it is possible to cause or sustain serious injury. Even seemingly harmless tasks such as mount cutting, drilling, screwing and hammering are potentially dangerous. To avoid injury and accident, make sure you know how to use the tools properly, and that anyone else who uses the tools also knows how to use them properly.

Don't allow a person to undertake any task unless you are confident that they have the skill, experience and understanding to tackle it safely. Provide people with training where necessary.

Make sure tools are in good condition. If you have electrical tools, undertake regular safety checks of cords, plugs and switches. It is worthwhile considering having an earth leakage circuit breaker or other safety switches installed. A qualified electrician should be able to advise on your requirements.

Check your first aid knowledge, so that you feel confident to deal with an emergency. Refer to section on first aid training later in this chapter.

### Chemicals and solvents

Chemicals and solvents are dangerous on several levels. They may be carcinogenic or genotoxic, flammable or poisonous. Most states and territories have acts and regulations that define dangerous goods and outline their correct storage and handling.

#### CAUTION:

If you have chemicals and solvents, you must be familiar with the relevant acts and regulations, particularly if you have amounts stored for use. You may be legally liable if you do not conform with the appropriate acts and regulations.

Chemical companies also provide safety data sheets. These should be filed and made available to people who will be using the chemicals. In some states, you are required to have material

safety data sheets available for staff to read. You should check your legal obligations with regard to safety information. Be aware also that you need a special licence to be able to purchase and use some chemicals.

Chemicals can affect the human body in many ways.

They can locally irritate the skin.

They can enter the body through the skin, eyes or lungs, or be ingested through the mouth, enter the bloodstream and damage internal organs.

They can have immediate effects, or they may have no immediate effects yet cause problems some time after the initial contact.

At low exposure levels they may produce no problems, but their effect may be cumulative, resulting in major damage that may be life-threatening.

Once you are sensitive to one chemical, you become more susceptible to allergic reactions to others.

Solvents can dissolve the oily barrier in the skin, allowing open sites for entry of bacteria, leading to possible infection.

In some cases one person may have no reaction, yet another may have a severe reaction to the same chemical.

#### CAUTION:

When handling chemicals, including pesticides, solvents and glues, ensure that you are properly protected with necessary protective clothing, including, if appropriate, solvent-proof gloves, goggles, a solvent-vapour or particulate-matter respirator, depending on the chemical, and appropriate shoes and clothing.

You should always check the labels for special instructions about the use of chemicals and solvents. Check their flammability and toxicity. Make sure you understand how to read the label and that, if you direct someone else to use the chemical, they also understand how to read it.



Be aware that there is health and safety information on solvent bottles.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

### The do's and don'ts of using chemicals

In order to avoid problems with chemicals, the following commonsense rules should be observed.

- Become familiar with the chemicals you use and find out the potential dangers. Keep safety data sheets in a file readily available to anyone who may need the information.
- Don't use a chemical unless you have checked the health and safety data relating to it.
- There are rules for the storage and disposal of chemicals. Some of these are legal requirements. Ensure that you are familiar with these rules and that you can abide by them.
- Proper labelling is critical. Make sure that all chemicals are properly labelled and that the label is as informative as possible.
- Never decant chemicals into containers that can be mistaken for food or drink containers.
- Make sure you understand the particular hazards of the chemicals you are using. For example, if you are using solvents, ensure you are working in a well-ventilated area with an extraction unit, if necessary. You may also need to use a respirator.
- Remember that chemicals can work through the skin, so ensure you cannot inadvertently come into contact with the chemicals.
- Food and chemicals should never be near each other. If you have been using chemicals, always wash your hands before eating.

- In particular cases and for certain amounts of chemicals, you are required to provide special storage. Check with the relevant authorities, including local councils, regarding requirements in your area.
- If you are having an area sprayed for pests, check the health and safety data on the chemical. If necessary, clear the area of people while the spraying is done, and for the appropriate time afterwards.
- Display a notice or notices prominently warning the public and staff of any work being carried out that may present a danger or hazard.

### Packing and display material

Packing and display material may contain irritants or chemicals that are dangerous. Plywood and masonite, for example, contain chemicals which can be irritating and dangerous if they are inhaled or ingested into the body, as they can when you are sawing or sanding them. Glues and resins can also be dangerous; for instance, epoxies may be carcinogenic.



Examples of glues and solvents with health warnings.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

### Moulds

Often individual items or whole collections are subject to mould attack. Mould can be dangerous and precautions should be taken when dealing with it. Ensure that you have proper protective clothing, including eye protection and a respiratory mask, and that you are wearing gloves.



Properly dressed to handle mouldy items.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

Where possible, you should contact a conservator to either undertake the treatment for you or to provide advice on how to deal with the mould.

For more information

For more information about moulds, please see the Biological Pests chapter in *Damage and Decay*.

### Hazardous items in your collections

Collections, particularly museum collections, may contain objects that are dangerous or unstable, or which have been treated in such a way that they pose human-health risks. There are many examples of this type of material. These few give an idea of the types of hazards:

- asbestos, common in domestic items of the early 20th century;
- old ammunition, which may be unstable;
- animal and bird specimens treated with arsenic or formalin as part of the original taxidermy process;
- cellulose nitrate film, which can spontaneously combust;
- poison darts;
- allergen products in natural history collections;
- lead items; and
- some mineral specimens.

If you are in any doubt as to the stability or safety of items in your collection, consult a conservator. Specialists at relevant state institutions will be able to provide initial advice.

Also bear in mind that if you want to deaccession material that is a human-health threat, such as old X-ray equipment, you may be subject to health and safety laws relating to the disposal of such items.

### **Hazards of office equipment**

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Often cataloguing and condition reporting require the use of computer and photocopy equipment. Prolonged use of such equipment can have serious health ramifications. For example, photocopiers produce ozone; and inappropriately set-up computer workstations can lead to muscle, back and eye strain.

Many publications relate to the safe use of such equipment, for example, Australian Standard 3590-1990 *Screen-based Workstations* Part 1-13. The relevant State and Territory occupational health and safety departments will be able to provide advice.

### **First aid training**

---

The St John Ambulance Association provides various first aid courses, and awards certificates indicating successful completion. A first aid course is a useful way of ensuring workers are prepared to deal with potential problems.

There are also sheets available that outline first aid procedures. It is best to check with the St John Ambulance Association or your local doctor or hospital that these sheets are correct and up to date before you use them or make them available to others to use.



An example of a first aid kit.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

It is useful to have first aid guidelines on file or on display, providing these have been approved by a relevant expert.

You should also have a first aid kit. A basic first aid kit should include:

- bandaids;
- sterile eye pads;
- sterile covering for serious wounds;
- triangular bandages;
- safety pins;
- disinfectant or antiseptic;
- adhesive tape;
- crepe bandage;
- scissors;
- disposable gloves;
- eye module;
- burns module;
- a fire blanket;
- extra bandages and dressings; and
- dressings suitable for small and large wounds.

### **Emergency procedures**

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All museums, galleries and libraries should have a clear set of emergency procedures known to all staff and volunteers. These procedures should be printed clearly and displayed, so they can be referred to when necessary.

As part of your emergency procedures, ensure that you have a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of the nearest doctor and hospital, and emergency services including police and fire stations. This list should be kept close to the telephone in a highly visible position.

Your disaster preparedness plan should cover evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency, including fire, gas leaks, dangerous chemical spill and similar situations. Once you have drawn up your plan, it is worthwhile having it checked by your local hospital, police and fire departments.

For more information

For more information on disaster plans, please see Counter Disaster Planning in *Managing Collections*.

## Signposting for safety

There are regulations governing signposting in public places. These ensure that in the event of an emergency the public can move quickly away from the danger. If you manage an area with public access, it is important you understand the requirements of these regulations.



An example of clear standard signage.

*Photograph courtesy of the Ian Potter Art Conservation Service, University of Melbourne*

## Contacts for State and Commonwealth authorities

### ACT

#### **ACT Occupational Health & Safety Office**

1st Floor, North Building,  
London Circuit, Canberra, ACT 2601  
PO Box 224, Civic Square, ACT 2608  
Phone: (02) 6205 0736  
Fax: (02) 6205 0797

### NSW

#### **NSW Worker Authority**

Level 4, 400 Kent Street, Sydney, NSW 2000  
Locked Bag 10, Clarence Street, Sydney, NSW 2000  
Phone: (02) 9370 5303  
Fax: (02) 9370 6107

### NT

#### **Work Health Authority**

Minerals House, 66 The Esplanade, Darwin, NT 0800  
GPO Box 2010, Darwin, NT 0801  
Phone: (08) 8989 5010  
Fax: (08) 8989 5141

### QLD

#### **Dept of Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations Workplace Health and Safety**

2nd Floor, Forbes House,  
30 Makerston Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000  
GPO Box 69, Brisbane, QLD 4001  
Phone: (07) 3227 4728  
Fax: (07) 3220 0143

### SA

#### **Workcover Occupational Health and Safety Division**

1st Floor, 100 Waymouth Street, Adelaide, SA 5000  
GPO Box 2668, Adelaide, SA 5000  
Phone: (08) 8226 3215  
Fax: (08) 8212 1864

### TAS

#### **Tasmanian Development and Resources**

2nd Floor, Reece House,  
46 Mount Street, Burnie, TAS 7320  
GPO Box 287, Burnie, TAS 7320  
Phone: (03) 64346 378  
Fax: (03) 64311 606

### VIC

#### **Health and Safety Organisation**

World Trade Centre, Building B, Ground Floor,  
Cnr Flinders and Spencer Streets, Melbourne, VIC 3005  
Phone: (03) 9628 8188  
Fax: (03) 9628 8397

### WA

#### **Dept of Occupational, Health, Safety and Welfare of Western Australia**

West Centre, 1260 Hay Street, West Perth, WA 6005  
PO Box 294, West Perth, WA 6005  
Phone: (08) 9327 8700  
Fax: (08) 9321 2148

**If you have a problem relating to health and safety when storing, transporting or displaying objects, contact a conservator. Conservators can offer advice and practical solutions.**

## For further reading

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Department of Labour, Victoria 1988, *Occupational Health and Safety (Manual Handling) Regulations and Code of Practice 1988*, Department of Labour Victoria, Melbourne.

Hall, Bob, 1993, *Chemicals and the Artist, A health and safety handbook for students, teachers and artworkers*, 3rd edn, Bob Hall, Ballarat VIC 3350, Phone: (03) 5336 2891.

McCann, Michael, 1979, *Artist Beware*, Watson-Guptill Publications, New York. 2nd ed. 1992, Lyons & Burford, New York.

Safety data sheets, available from companies which supply the chemicals.

*The Merck Index*, Merck & Co. Inc., Rahway, New Jersey, U.S.A. New editions appear regularly.

There are a number of other regulations and codes of practice in this series. Although they relate to the Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985*, they provide some useful hints and guidelines. Similar publications may be available in other States and Territories. Contact your State Department of Labour or Department of Industrial Relations for information about health and safety publications.

## Self-evaluation quiz

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### Question 1.

---

It is important that you are aware of health and safety issues because:

- a) they help to ensure that accidents do not happen;
- b) there are many instances where you are responsible in a legal sense for health and safety issues;
- c) many tasks and materials with which you are involved in collections, care and management are potentially dangerous;
- d) you need to be aware of potential dangers, and of your legal responsibilities;
- e) all of the above.

### Question 2.

---

What kinds of legal issues can affect you?

### Question 3.

---

Where can I find out what health and safety issues affect me?

### Question 4.

---

There are a number of potential dangers in working with collections of cultural material. Name three.

### Question 5.

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The St John Ambulance Association provides:

- a) safety data sheets;
- b) gloves and goggles;
- c) proper first aid training;
- d) earth leakage circuit breakers.

### Question 6.

---

As part of your first aid emergency procedures, what should you have?

- a) A first aid kit.
- b) A disaster preparedness plan.
- c) Evacuation procedures.
- d) Contact numbers for local emergency services next to the phone.
- e) All of the above.

## Answers to self-evaluation quiz

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### Question 1.

---

Answer: e).

### **Question 2.**

---

Answer: Issues relating to the purchase, storage and disposal of chemicals and solvents, signposting for safety, and work involving manual and mechanical practices are all dealt with under relevant acts and regulations, and Australian Standards and Codes of Practice. Ignorance is no excuse under the law.

### **Question 3.**

---

Answer: You can contact the relevant department in your State or Territory. Government bookshops provide copies of State and Territory Acts and Regulations. Australian Standards are available from Australian Standards, Clunies Ross House, 191 Royal Parade, Parkville VIC 3052.

### **Question 4.**

---

Answer: Answers include:

- mechanical operations, particularly with sharp tools or electrical tools;
- danger to eyes through contact with harmful materials or rays;
- high noise levels;
- fire;
- long-term health problems such as the development of allergies or cancers through contact with dangerous substances;
- immediate damage to the skin or organs through contact with dangerous substances;
- manual handling, particularly lifting; and
- health problems resulting from contact with moulds.

### **Question 5.**

---

Answer: c).

### **Question 6.**

---

Answer: e).

# Acknowledgments

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