

Meeting the demands of digitisation: case studies from New Zealand and Australia

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ABSTRACT

Digitisation of collections materials for preservation and access reasons is a strategy that has been used by many cultural heritage institutions for some time now. With frequently constrained resources and yet greater demands for instant and remote access to collections, the push for digitisation of more and larger quantities of material becomes increasingly prevalent.

Digitisation policies or strategies can greatly assist in planning and carrying out sustainable, high-quality programs. However, in reality many preservation and conservation departments may be faced with demands for preparing collections for digitisation that can require significant compromises as well as creative solutions.

How can conservators and preservation managers maintain ethical standards when there may be conflicting digitisation goals within an organization? Where should compromises be made and who decides? How does the use of volunteers impact conservation and preservation, especially in regards to projects that would otherwise not be financially viable? How do we maintain the importance and relevance of the original artefact when digitisation can sometimes be regarded as an end in itself, rather than just a means to an end? What solutions can we find through sharing of our collective experiences and knowledge?

In examining these questions and others, case studies of digitisation programs and projects at a range of New Zealand and Australian cultural organizations (including libraries, museums and archives) will be discussed that focus on looking at the challenges, issues and successes of various current models of digitisation.

BIOGRAPHY

Jennifer Koerner is Conservator at Archives New Zealand. She has also worked for a number of cultural institutions including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Intermuseum Conservation Association, and the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Jennifer has completed internships and fellowships at the National Archives of Canada, the National Gallery of Canada, the New York Botanical Garden Library and the Canadian Centre for Architecture. She has a Masters Degree in Art Conservation (specialising in paper conservation) from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and a Master of Non-profit Organisations from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

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