

# Scholarly Services

## Strategic Digitisation Framework



October 2020

Research and Collection Stewardship

### Strategic context

Scholarly Services is a significant contributor to enabling next generation scholarship at the University of Melbourne, taking its lead and direction from the *Scholarly Information Futures 2020-2025* (SIF2025) and the *Advancing Melbourne 2030* strategies.

The *SIF2025* strategy has a sharp focus on innovation and the ways in which scholarly information, communications and technologies will motivate new and transformative changes for our University community. The inspired thinking and next generation scholarship that SIF2025 enables are key drivers that support the University's commitment to excellence in research, learning and teaching.

- The work of Scholarly Services is directly aligned with the University's purpose, which is to benefit society through the transformative impact of education and research. Dedicated to advancing and inspiring the scholarship experience, Scholarly Services supports the University to achieve the aspirations outlined in the *Advancing Melbourne 2030* strategy by: Providing an outstanding information environment that facilitates creativity and the development of critical thought and knowledge
- Disseminating the University's scholarship widely, at the local, national and global level
- Providing leadership for the stewardship and sustainability of the university-wide scholarly collection
- Optimising research infrastructure, collections technologies, and expert teams to support our researchers to address important questions and tackle grand challenges.

### Stewardship of scholarly collections

The University of Melbourne holds vast, rich and diverse collections that have been carefully and strategically acquired for generations to support, enable and inspire the creation of new knowledge. Scholarly Services is the custodian of a range of unique and distinctive collections of archival, rare and special collections, as well as the University's scholarly research collection which is part of the broader collections landscape at the University.

These collections are part of our identity and help to make the Melbourne scholar and student experience special and an enduring source of knowledge and creativity. We aspire to maximise engagement with, and use of, these collections for research, teaching and engagement via exhibitions, installations within spaces, and object-based learning. We further aspire to unlock the potential that the digital shift offers to make our content accessible for a globally networked audience, both now and for future generations.

Scholarly Services is also committed to ensuring there is comparable and equitable access to knowledge in a COVID new normal environment. As part of this commitment, we are investing in a strategic program of digital transformation through the digitisation of collections in our stewardship which:

- make a significant difference to the experience of learners and scholars at the University of Melbourne;
  - inspire the scholarship experience;
  - realise the value of archival, special and rare collections which we steward on behalf of the University;
  - widen access to, and global engagement with, our cultural heritage;
  - democratise knowledge and enrich local communities;
  - preserve, develop and re-interpret collections for the future;
  - enable engaging student learning experiences by enriching online courses and learning; and
  - build partnerships to allow sharing and re-use of content from different sources.
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This strategy and the underpinning operational framework will inform our approach to digitisation in alignment with the University's strategic ambitions and the aspirations of *SIF2025*.

Our approach to digitisation will:

- Be driven by the needs of the University and its diverse communities, teaching and research programs.
- Be flexible and responsive to changing academic and student needs, and evolving collections and technologies.
- Achieve an appropriate balance between strategic and reactive digitisation by identifying and collaborating with academic partners to ensure an audience and value has been created and realised.
- Build environmentally-sustainable, inclusive services that enable diverse users to identify and use trusted knowledge resources.
- Reflect best practice standards of user experience, curatorial management, conservation/preservation and digital preservation.
- Integrate an end-to-end perspective that encompasses the full lifecycle process of cataloguing, conservation, technical development, discovery and digital preservation, as well as the digitisation of content.
- Be open as far as is possible, with content that is freely discoverable and re-usable.
- Include regular evaluation of impact to support evidence-based decision-making.
- Be efficient, provide value for money, and support analysis of digitisation cost and resource implications.
- Take full advantage of opportunities for philanthropic and research funding to ensure sustainability and growth.
- Be ambitious, creative, and adopt a positive attitude to risk to take full advantage of new technologies, co-creation and anticipate new local, national and global trends.

## Prioritisation principles

In assessing priorities for the creation of new digital collections, consideration will be given to how the digital collection will:

- directly support the University's strategic vision for teaching and research, particularly online learning, digital education and digital scholarship, and actively facilitate student engagement with collections as part of this activity;
- support the preservation of at-risk material and those at risk of obsolescence to ensure continuity of use for research, teaching and/or community use;
- provide the University and its global communities with online access to resources whenever and wherever these are required, with the aim of increasing the number of potential users;
- promote the diversity and uniqueness of the University's collections;
- enhance programs that encourage users to explore and realise research or scholarship opportunities;
- attract philanthropic support for further digitisation activities; and
- prioritise open access materials over those with copyright restrictions, in line with the University's open access principles.

### Other considerations

- The potential complexity of copyright and legal issues associated with the collection, its digitisation, and/or its access via an online environment (whether open access or restricted) are acknowledged and will be managed in accordance with University policies and expert advice.
- We will not digitise materials which have already been scanned to international digitisation standards, are available in full text, or are freely available.
- We will not digitise materials where a lack of information around the item/collection [metadata] would compromise the authenticity or usefulness of the content to researchers or may cause cultural harm.

*Note: This does not apply to First Nations materials, which will be considered in consultation with traditional custodians of the materials and in collaboration with the Murrup Barrak Centre*

*An operational and governance framework underpins this strategy.*