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Queensland Public Library Standards and Guidelines

Local Studies Standard
June 2010

8 Local Studies Standard

Revised June 2010

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8.1 Objective

To provide standards and guidelines for the maintenance and provision of access to a continuously developing library collection which documents, preserves and presents the historical and contemporary development of the local community. Local studies collections and services assist in ensuring that the history of a region is recorded, for the benefit of local, state and national heritage.

8.2 Local Studies Standard

8.2.1 Standard for Service Planning

Local studies collections provide communities with special resources that document and illustrate their history and cultural heritage, offering a dedicated repository for significant material over time. Each library service should define the scope and role of its local studies collection and associated services within the long term strategic planning of the library. Essentially, local studies collections should provide access for the community to materials of local interest and relevance, both historical and current. The library's role usually includes collecting, indexing, housing, promoting and facilitating appropriate access to resources.

Where resources, staffing and facilities allow, libraries may also take on a role in the identification and preservation of any significant, fragile, valuable or rare materials. (See 8.3.2). Libraries may also choose to digitise relevant fragile material, where equipment and support is available, to preserve content and broaden access to information.

Once the scope and role of the collection and services are defined, planning should be undertaken to support these services. Staffing, budgetary allocations and the provision of appropriate facilities are essential elements in this planning.

8.2.2 Standard for Local Studies facilities

Local studies materials should be housed or shelved separately from the general collections with special attention given to:

- suitable shelving for the variety of physical items;
- adequate space for long term storage and expansion;
- proximity to any equipment required to use the collection;
- adequate tables and seating in close proximity to the collection.

It is important to balance optimal access to the collection with the need to ensure the preservation of significant items. Libraries should consider both the desirability of a visible local studies collection and the need to keep valuable and vulnerable items protected.

Wherever possible, collections should be secured appropriately and housed in an environment that supports their preservation. The level of security and atmospheric control should depend on the historic value and size of the collection. For advice on security of items and atmospheric conditions required for preservation, specialist consultants in the

State Library of Queensland Conservation and Heritage units may be contacted. See also 8.3.2 for further information.

8.2.3 Standard for staff management

Local studies collections should be managed by appropriately qualified staff capable of answering research queries, developing and maintaining collections, and liaising with stakeholders, community groups and management. Additional skills in preservation and conservation techniques appropriate for the materials in the collection would be an advantage if required within the scope of the library's local studies services. For larger libraries, consideration should be given to the allocation of specific staff responsibility for local studies.

For more information on staff, please refer to the Staffing Standard:
<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>

8.2.4 Standard for Collection Management

The selection and management of the library's local studies collection should be specifically detailed in the Collection Development Policy. This section of the policy should support the role of the local studies within the library as a whole and determine the geographical area, chronology and guidelines for collection building. The collection may include both current and retrospective materials which relate to, or have influence upon, the development of the community. The collection should be thematically comprehensive, with resources relating to the natural and built environment as well as the social, economic, political and cultural life of the community.

In developing local history collections, it is important to recognise that cultural diversity is a significant feature of many communities and that collections should reflect this. Material relating to all cultures represented in the community, both historical and contemporary, should be collected. Consideration for inclusion should be given to any items of particular historical significance including those from local Indigenous communities, past and present. For more information on collecting and managing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander items, please refer to the Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/ind> and the Library Services Standard for Aboriginal People and Torres Strait Islanders <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/publib/policy/guidelines>.

Where items of unique historical value are included, contact can be made with the State Library of Queensland's Conservation Service to discuss options for their long-term preservation and storage.

The library and/or other relevant authorities should provide an annual budget for the purchase of relevant local studies materials in all formats (eg. images, manuscripts, published materials, cartographic materials, online resources, audiovisual items etc.) and for the development of resources such as databases, digitised materials, multimedia and on-line resources.

Clear guidelines should exist in the policy regarding the retention of duplicates and their availability for interlibrary loan. Local history collections in libraries should avoid competing to acquire archives with existing programs responsible for the collection and management of archives. e.g. council archives. Collection building should be done co-operatively, and all programs responsible for the collection and management of archives should exchange information freely and fully to ensure this. Copies of locally published materials should also be directed to Legal Deposit facilities such as the State Library of Queensland for permanent retention.

8.2.5 Standard for acquisition of materials

Acquisitions can be by purchase, donation, copying or transfer from local organisations, according to the Collection Development Policy. The library should have a clear and accessible policy on donations and it should state that the decision to accept a donation is at the discretion of authorised library staff and that the library is not obliged to accept all donations. Donation procedures should also be included within the Collection Development Policy of the library as a whole. A sample donation form can be found at <http://fhr.slq.qld.gov.au/lhsa/>.

8.3 Guidelines

8.3.1 Guidelines for collection development

Local studies collections should include a wide range of materials and formats, both historical and contemporary, relating to the local area and reflective of the various communities within it. Examples may include:

- books, reports and pamphlets;
- photographs and postcards;
- local newspapers and newsletters;
- oral histories;
- materials from local writers;
- flyers for community events, elections etc;
- ephemera.

Collections may also include materials to assist in tracing local family histories, such as Births, Deaths and Marriages records.

Active collecting of contemporary material should be a high priority to ensure the preservation of an accurate reflection of the community for the future.

8.3.2 Guidelines for preservation and conservation

In local studies collections containing items of significance or unique historical value, the provision of a controlled environment and correct storage conditions to permanently preserve materials is desirable.

A preservation plan for the collection that outlines relevant correct storage and handling procedures should be prepared. Depending on the resources and the facilities available, the plan may also cover issues such as digitisation for preservation and access, the digitisation standards required, procedures for the repair of items, and definition of the responsibilities for managing the physical care of the collection.

In addition to the preservation plan, a disaster control plan should be developed, usually in conjunction with council staff, and this should be updated regularly for the protection of the collection.

Professional advice can be provided by specialist consultants and the State Library Conservation Service on the conservation of materials and the preservation of digital resources.

8.3.3 Guidelines for services

Services provided by local studies staff should include reference and research work, assistance with enquiries, advice on sources available elsewhere and assistance on how to use equipment and materials in the collection. The role of the collection, the availability of staff and the library's client service policy will determine whether in-depth reference or research queries can be answered.

Information services should be supported by application of new technology, ongoing building of the collection and current awareness of user needs.

Copying of material should be undertaken in accordance with copyright legislation and regulations. Care should be taken to ascertain whether the physical act of copying has potential to damage the item and alternative options such as photographic copying should be considered where necessary. The library should have a policy available for all users regarding the commercial copying of original materials and the reproduction rights for commercial use.

8.3.4 Guidelines for access

Wherever possible, optimal access to the collection should be a priority. However, access to rare and fragile materials should be carefully managed. Copies in alternative formats such as digitised media or microfilm should be considered for public use where appropriate. In particular, access to records of a sensitive nature and manuscripts donated to the library should be governed by clear guidelines.

Wherever possible, resources should be organised according to standardised library or archival practices. Specialised subject indexes can enhance accessibility and, where used, should conform to library practice as much as possible. They should also be tailored to reflect local requirements and vocabulary. The Australian Pictorial Thesaurus - <http://www.picturethesaurus.gov.au/index.html> is an example of a specialised subject index used for describing Australian pictorial and object collections.

8.3.5 Guidelines for promotion

The local government and library staff should not only promote the significance of the collection and services, but should actively seek to raise the level of heritage awareness within the community. The library can act as a catalyst in the identification of resources of permanent significance and the monitoring and documentation of life in the community. This should include its historical, natural and built environment features as well as the social, economic, political and cultural aspects.

Methods of promoting the collection and disseminating the information held in the collection could include exhibitions and displays inside and outside of the library, web-based projects, electronic and print publications and audio visual presentations for groups both inside and outside the library. Local studies collections can also showcase highlights of the local area to tourists and visitors through displays in facilities such as tourist information centres.

8.3.6 Guidelines for networking

A close working relationship should be developed with all cultural groups in the local area, including Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities. Library staff should work with traditional owners and/or elders to ensure the content of collections is appropriate.

Special co-operation with local historical societies, museums and other collecting agencies in the community is important to minimise duplication of resources and services and to build awareness of respective roles and strengths. The library should also liaise with any local tourist information agencies to promote local studies resources and services.

The library should also participate in any co-operative networks, including mailing lists such as the Queensland Local Studies list, at regional, state and national levels as appropriate. These networks provide information about resources of local heritage value, and about the availability and preservation of those resources. Where possible, items of significance should be digitised and original items contributed to larger public collecting institutions.

8.4 Performance Indicators

- Scope and procedures of local studies collection clearly defined in library plans and Collection Development Policy
- Provision of appropriate accommodation and preservation methods to suit the collection and its role
- Proportion of users who rate the relevance, quality and adequacy of local studies collection as satisfactory.
- Appropriate accessibility to resources
- Effective promotion and management programs

8.5 Definitions and References

8.5.1 Definitions

Archives: The noncurrent records of an organisation or institution preserved because of their continuing value, or the agency responsible for selecting, preserving, and making available records determined to have permanent or continuing value.

Copyright: The exclusive legal right to reproduce, publish, sell, or distribute the matter and form of something (as a literary, musical, or artistic work).

Conservation: Conservation has become an accepted term to describe the preservation of our natural environment, but it applies equally to our cultural heritage. Conservation is a highly technical task based on knowledge of the structure and chemistry of the materials involved. It includes preventative action through the creation of a safe environment for storage and display and treatments to stabilise and repair objects. Where needed restoration techniques are employed to enhance the aesthetic nature while preserving the historical integrity of the item. In Australia, conservators are guided by the [Code of Ethics and Guidance of Conservation Practice](#) which aims to govern their work practices and outlines their obligations to their clients, colleagues and employees.

Disaster control plan: A clear, concise document which outlines preventive and preparatory measures intended to reduce potential risks, and which also provides details of reaction and recovery procedures to be undertaken in the event of a disaster to minimise its effect.

Legal deposit: Legal deposit is a statutory provision which obliges publishers to deposit copies of their publications in libraries in the country in which they are published.

Preservation: Preservation is a holistic approach to collection care which encompasses all steps necessary to ensure the long term stability of all objects. This should include ensuring stable storage and display environments, appropriate housing enclosures and conservation treatments, handling techniques that reduce physical damage, judicious duplication programmes, an active integrated pest management program and a current, effective disaster plan.

8.5.2 References

The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material. *Code of Ethics and Code of Practice*. 2002.

<http://www.aiccm.org.au/docs/AICCMBusinessDocs/CodePracticeEthics.pdf>.

The Australian Pictorial Thesaurus. 2000. <http://www.picturethesaurus.gov.au/index.html>

Protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collections. 2007.

<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/info/ind>