



# **Digitisation of South Australian Cultural Heritage Collections**

## **Selection framework for digitisation**



## Preface

This *Selection Framework* supports the implementation of the South Australian Arts and Culture *Digital Access Plan*. The *Framework* has been developed on behalf of the Digital Access Consultative Group (DACG) as a high-level guide to help inform a cohesive approach to selecting materials for digitising.

Selection involves more than choosing which items to digitise; ultimately it is what underpins and shapes the scope and richness of South Australia's digital assets. In selecting well, South Australia's collecting organisations can provide high-quality and useful digital collections that engage current and future audiences.

This *Framework* supports collaboration across the key collecting organisations, and ultimately across the wider distributed collections. Furthermore, it is intended that the *Framework* will guide the development of digitisation plans by individual collecting organisations.

The *Framework* draws on a number of existing cross-sectoral approaches to selection that are referenced at the end of this document. It is designed to be flexible, taking into account that some collecting organisations already have well-developed selection criteria and practices. Hence, the *Framework* is intended to complement what may be in place already, while providing a foundation for those organisations that are yet to implement selection criteria.

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# Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Selection for Digitisation Framework</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Background and context.....	4
Selection framework and cross-sectoral criteria.....	4
<b>Key questions and checklist</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Key questions.....	5
Checklist of Criteria and Related Questions .....	5
<b>Checklist: criteria and related questions</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.Should they be digitised?.....	6
2. May they be digitised? .....	10
3. Can they be digitised? .....	11
4. What are the project management and resourcing implications? .....	12
<b>Resources</b> .....	<b>14</b>
End notes .....	16

## Selection for Digitisation Framework

### Background and context

Selection is the first stage in the lifecycle management of digitisation and is essential for a range of economic, technical and legal reasons. Effective selection practices prevent organisations from ending up with digital collections that become practically or financially impossible to access and manage in the long-term<sup>1</sup>. As resources are finite, it is unlikely that organisations with large collections can afford to digitise everything. For technical reasons, some collection items may be too damaged or fragile to digitise, or in other cases, it may be appropriate to sample content rather than digitise a whole group<sup>2 3</sup>. In other instances, there may be legal or cultural protocols that will determine what is permissible or appropriate to be digitised. Furthermore, there are ongoing costs to consider as part of the selection process, as the newly created digital assets need to be sustained into the future<sup>4</sup>.

### Selection framework and cross-sectoral criteria

The earlier *Digitisation of South Australian Cultural Heritage Collections Baseline Report*<sup>5</sup> highlighted that, while a number of South Australia's collecting organisations apply well-developed selection criteria while digitising, this practice is not universal. Hence, a common *Selection Framework* for digitisation that can be used across the collecting organisations can help to inform a more cohesive approach to digitisation. The *Framework* has been designed to be used flexibly. It can be used for larger digitisation projects. In cases where a single item needs to be digitised, or where a project involves digitisation of similar types of materials, it can function as a guide for workflows and lifecycle management.

The *Selection Framework* simply consists of four key high-level questions, accompanied by a *Checklist* of cross-disciplinary criteria and related questions. The four high-level questions, cross-sectoral criteria and related questions have been drawn from the literature to help inform selection decisions and provide a common ground for collaboration<sup>6 7 8 9</sup>. These include appraisal criteria, as archival appraisal brings a useful perspective that focuses on the provenance and context of materials<sup>10,11</sup>.

Overall the *Framework* is intended as a high-level overlay to link existing practices and support collaboration. It is intended to complement rather than replace existing selection and appraisal criteria that have been developed by some individual organisations and tailored to meet specific legal responsibilities and strategic directions. Organisations that do not currently record selection decision-making can use the *Checklist* to record selection decisions and assist with managing digital collections into the future<sup>12</sup>.

## Key questions and checklist

### Key questions

The four key questions<sup>13</sup> are:

1. **Should they be digitised?**
2. **May they be digitised?**
3. **Can they be digitised?**

And in the case of a project:

4. **What are the project management and resourcing implications?**

**Should they be digitised** relates to issues such as intrinsic value, audience and use.

**May they be digitised** is concerned with copyright, legal and cultural protocols.

**Can they be digitised** focuses on physical condition and technical requirements.

**Project management and resourcing implications** relate to project goals, scope, resourcing and lifecycle management.

Normally the first three key questions should be considered in each individual case of digitising (but will only be considered once for a large project, or when a project involves digitising similar types of materials). In the case of the fourth question, different aspects of the criteria will apply, depending on the scope, scale and purpose of a project.

### Checklist of Criteria and Related Questions

The **Checklist** provides **Criteria** (under broad headings) that are expanded with a list of **Related Questions** and are all linked back to the four key questions.

Importantly, not all of the **Criteria** and **Related Questions** will be relevant to every case, and they are not intended to be rigid rules or to function as pre-defined matrices or scorecards. Instead, they are intended to serve as prompts to guide resourcing, workflows and lifecycle management.

Overall, while it is envisaged that the **Selection Framework** will assist in guiding decision-making, ultimately there are no absolute rules or definitive answers for deciding what should be digitised and the **Criteria** and **Related Questions** need to be tempered with good judgment before making a final decision<sup>14</sup>. It is intended that this *Framework* will support a commonality of approach in the exercise of good selection judgment over time, as well as provide a common ground for collaboration.

## Checklist: criteria and related questions

Organisation:

Digitisation Project Title:

Object /subgroup:

Reference numbers (for metadata)

### 1. Should they be digitised?

Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<b>1.1 Intrinsic value</b>	a. Why is the original object or sub-group considered to be significant?  Note: Value is often defined by a combination of criteria such as socio-historical, intellectual and scientific, evidential, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic, public interest, rarity, bibliographic, monetary	
	b. Is the provenance and context clear?  c. Is the authenticity and integrity of the object or sub-group assured?  Can the meaning or significance of the original object be conveyed in the digital form	
	e. How do the materials identified for digitisation relate to the organisation's collecting policy, or equivalent strategic documents?	

Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<b>1.2 Selection and audience – use value</b>	a. What is the audience (user/ client/ researcher/ educational/ community) need or input?	
	b. Is there a user request for a digital copy?	
	c. Is the object or sub-group a research priority?	
<b>1.3 Joint project</b>  (See also 1.9 contextual value)	a. Should the digitisation of the object or sub-group be considered as part of a joint project e.g. a themed virtual exhibition?	
<b>1.4 Documentation and metadata</b>	a. Is the item or sub-group organised, itemised and described beforehand?	

Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<b>1.5 Visual appeal and exhibitions</b>	a. Is the object or sub-group regarded as a top or visually appealing piece from the collection that will attract wider audiences	
	b. Is the object or sub-group needed for exhibition? Note: need to link exhibition project management with digitisation lifecycle	
<b>1.6 Accessibility and availability</b>	a. Is the object or sub-group in demand?	
	b. Will digitisation make the item or collection more accessible?	
<b>1.7 Sampling</b>	a. Is it possible to identify representative items from the collection as an appropriate sub-group (e.g. limited by geographic region or time period)?	



Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<b>1.8 Preservation value</b>	<p>a. Is the original object or sub-group at risk, or an endangered format?</p> <p>Note: AV media are highly endangered formats. The <a href="#">National Film and Sound Archives</a><sup>15</sup> has identified 2025 as a response deadline.</p> <p>Other endangered formats include digital media stored on obsolete carrier<sup>16</sup> and acetate materials<sup>17</sup>.</p>	
	<p>b. Will digitisation safeguard the originals from further damage by creating a copy for access?</p>	
<b>1.9 Contextual value</b>  <b>(See also 1.3 Joint Project)</b>	<p>a. How do the materials complement other digitised resources?</p> <p>b. Will digitisation allow for digital reunification or of geographically distributed collections</p>	
	<p>c. Can additional contextual value be added through linking with other objects by curating/storytelling?</p>	
<b>1.10 Enhanced value</b>	<p>a. Will the digital copy enable new options for use that were not possible or practical with the original (e.g. through data mining, transcription, or application of optical character recognition - OCR)?</p>	
<b>1.11 Digital uniqueness</b>	<p>a. Has the material already been digitised?</p>	

## 2. May they be digitised?

Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<b>2.1 Copyright, legal and restricted access issues</b>	a. Are there copyright, intellectual property rights, or restricted access conditions that prevent the creation and dissemination of a digital version? b. Are copyright owner permissions documented?	
<b>2.2 Cultural protocols</b>	a. Has the organisation obtained approvals and have agreed protocols been established for handling and digitising culturally sensitive materials?	

### 3. Can they be digitised?

Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<b>3.1 Physical condition</b>	a. What is the condition of the original object or sub-group? Is it able to be digitised? b. Does it need stabilising or conservation treatment prior to digitising? c. If conservation treatment is required what is the best stage to undertake digitising? d. Does the original need protection or re-housing after digitisation ?  Note: Check with a conservator and digitising staff.	
<b>3.2 Technical requirements</b>	a. Can the object be readily represented in digitised form? b. Can the object be digitised with available and appropriate technology? c. Are there any technical or other complex issues that could present challenges to digitisation?  Note: Check with a conservator and digitising staff.	

#### 4. What are the project management and resourcing implications?

Criteria	Related Questions	Comments <i>Expand as required</i>
<p><b>4.1 Project management</b></p>	<p>a. What are the goals of the project?</p> <p>b. Is the project scoped to quantify material for digitisation?</p> <p>c. What are the arrangements for project management?</p> <p>d. What is the time frame? Can the digitisation component be achieved within this period?</p> <p>e. Can the project be can be scaled down if not all material can be digitised?</p> <p>f. What are the key risks and how can they be addressed?</p> <p>Note: Check with a digitisation project manager.</p>	
<p><b>4.2 Lifecycle management</b> (In addition to stages 2 and 3 above)</p>	<p>a. What metadata is needed to support access and preservation?</p> <p>b. Are file naming conventions in place?</p> <p>c. What are the arrangements for digital content management and data storage?</p> <p>d. What platforms can be used to provide access?</p> <p>e. What are the requirements for curation and storytelling?</p> <p>f. What are the arrangements for long term preservation?</p> <p>Note: Check with a digitisation project manager.</p>	

<b>4.3 Resourcing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Which organisation(s) will undertake the digitising and other stages in the lifecycle</li><li>b. What are the staffing skills, equipment and workflow implications?</li><li>c. What financial and other resources are required?</li><li>d. What are the estimated costs?</li><li>e. How will the project be resourced?</li></ul> <p>Note: Check with a digitisation project manager</p>	
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## Resources

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Williams K 2020, *Will people that follow in your footsteps know why you were wearing those shoes? Documenting your digitisation and digital collections process*, VALA 2020-Session 10, Melbourne, 2020.

## End notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Ooghe, B & Moreels, D 2009
- <sup>2</sup> Gertz, J 2013
- <sup>3</sup> Digital NZ, 2020
- <sup>4</sup> Harvey, R & Weatherburn, J, 2018
- <sup>5</sup> Digitisation of South Australian Cultural Heritage Collections Baseline Report 2020
- <sup>6</sup> GLAM Peak 2018
- <sup>7</sup> Ayris, P 1998
- <sup>8</sup> Digital NZ 2020
- <sup>9</sup> Ooghe B & Moreels D 2009
- <sup>10</sup> Harvey, R & Weatherburn, J 2018
- <sup>11</sup> Gilliland, A 2000
- <sup>12</sup> Williams, K 2020
- <sup>13</sup> Gertz, J 2013
- <sup>14</sup> Digital New Zealand, 2020
- <sup>15</sup> National Film and Sound Archives (n.d.)
- <sup>16</sup> National and State Libraries Australia (NSLA), 2015
- <sup>17</sup> Reilly, J 1996