

## Organising your Collection Store

Online Practical Training Video - Transcript

In this video we will be visiting a couple of small museums in the City of Melbourne, to see what tips they have on managing a collections store.

### Part One

#### Koorie Heritage Trust

First we are joining Nerissa, Megan and Kitty at the Koorie Heritage Trust for their tips on managing a collection. The Koorie Heritage Trust aims to protect, preserve and promote the living culture of Aboriginal people of south-eastern Australia and has over 100,000 items in its collections including artefacts, pictures, photographs, recordings and library materials.

Here is an overview of their objects collection store.

This collection store includes a small work table to temporarily hold objects while they are being moved or accessed within the store. The desk also contains object movement registers, a log of people who enter the store and a copy of the organisation's disaster plan.

Depending on the nature of the object, different storage methods are used. Boxes are clearly labeled, and sometimes include a photograph of the item to help identify its contents.

These object cabinets are used to store a variety of items. The cabinets are named, numbered and the shelves are numbered so that objects can be easily located. Not all objects need to be stored in boxes, and these cabinets allow for simple storage on pull-out shelves.

This cabinet includes a shelf of boomerangs, notice the yellow 'movement record' to show that one of the items usually in this cabinet has been removed for display.

The cabinets provide adjustable shelves for various sized objects.

More fragile items can be stored within boxes in these cabinets.

These carved emu eggs are protected by acid free tissue paper. The box and scrunched paper provides a physical buffer to protect from mechanical damage but also protects items from external environment factors such as temperature and humidity fluctuations.

Open shelves can be used to house a variety of objects. Here there are boxes of textiles, plaster coolamons and on the top shelf there are rolls that hold large textiles. These textiles have been rolled onto a cardboard cylinder along with acid free tissue and polyethylene foam. The textiles on the roll also include a photo on the label for easy identification.

The open shelves also contain items such as these ceramic works  
... and large objects such as these reed eel traps and baby carriers.

Boxes are clearly numbered, and labels on the boxes include registration numbers for each object inside. Boxes containing fragile items are clearly marked.

A great idea if you have frequent visitors to your collections store is to create one cabinet that contains items representative of your collection which can be easily shown to visitors. The cabinet contains examples of artefacts over time, and is representative of the whole collection.

The Koorie Heritage Trust have the advantage of having a workroom immediately beside their main object store which allows them to register, catalogue and research objects without moving them too far from the storage area. For pest management purposes, this room is also used to quarantine works for a period before they enter the store.

They also have a collection store setup specifically for visual art.

Visual art works are stored in bays which have numbered locations and also list the registration numbers of artworks within that section.

They use card to separate each work, to protect the canvas or frame.

If artworks do temporarily need to be leant against a wall, it is important that they are raised off the floor to protect from dust and potential flooding. Raisers can be small blocks made of foam or wood covered with padding.

Unframed prints or works on paper can be protected in a custom housing like this, made in-house from archival cardboard, cut to measure and tied with cotton tape.

Photographs are protected in archival sleeves and can be grouped together by photographer or location, the insert with each photo includes the registration number and the registration number is also marked on the back of the print in case it is separated from its sleeve.

They also have a number of rare books, which are housed in a locked cabinet in the library.

If not all of your organisation is trained in collection management, it is good to have reminders to other staff that the collection needs to be protected.

And all collections should have a disaster bin close-by.

## **Part Two**

### **Victoria Police Museum**

Our MAP Manager Liz now joins Jim at the Victoria Police Museum. The museum has an extensive collection including photographs, documents, artefacts and police service records from 1853 to today.

The museum does not have a purpose built collection store, so its collection is spread around a number of rooms within the Victoria Police headquarters. Since not all of the collection is together in the one space it is extremely important that their cataloguing system includes a good location record for each collection item.

Each collection store is numbered, and then there are location codes for various storage systems within each room. You can use codes like these to name the different types of storage you have in your museum.

Because of limited space, the museum relies heavily on compactus to maximise the storage space for the collection items.

Shelves are clearly numbered, all boxes are labelled, and items stored openly on the shelves have their registration label easily accessible.

Some of their storage areas have a number of existing shelves which can be used to store lightweight boxes. Note, all boxes are labelled with their contents. There is also room for a small work desk for the collections management team when working in the store.

The museum has a variety of items with odd shapes and sizes. Open storage is used for some and open boxes are used for more fragile items that don't fit within the standard boxes.

The museum also has plan drawers which are useful for storing maps, posters and other print material. Note the drawer also contains a silverfish pack for pest management.

The items within these drawers are housed in polypropylene archival sleeves and registration numbers are placed on labels on the outside of the sleeve, always at the bottom left hand corner.

Some deeper drawers are used to house non-fragile items. This drawer shows how you can create separate layers within each drawer and how you could label the sections for easy access.

The museum has a vast number of uniforms in its collection, and most are stored in archival boxes such as this.

Registration numbers and object name are attached to the item using cotton.

The museum has another compactus in another collection store which houses larger items.

The compactus and the bay number are clearly labelled.

The shelves contain a variety of items, however the museum tries to group like items together where possible. Every inch of collection storage is valuable, and the museum has installed a rack to hang framed works along the side of the compactus.

A number of items are stored openly, and the museum uses cotton string to ensure the objects do not fall from their shelf when the compactus is moved.

While it can be daunting to think about organising your storage for the thousands of items you might have in your collection, we hope that these tips might make your job easier. A well organised collections store, where you can easily locate your items, is a very important aspect of good collection management.

**Our sincere thanks to the collections management teams at the:**

**[Koorie Heritage Trust](#)**

**[Victoria Police Museum](#)**

**More resources available:**

**[www.mavic.asn.au/resources](http://www.mavic.asn.au/resources)**