



# Collections Digitisation Strategy

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*The Collection should be published electronically as well as in books and catalogues. The Gallery should aim to make all works in all collections available online in both images and texts*

Ron Radford AO, A Vision for the National Gallery of Australia 2005  
[nga.gov.au/Vision](http://nga.gov.au/Vision)

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## Background

The 2005 Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) performance audit of *Safe and Accessible National Collections*, report number 59, underpins the Gallery development of this digitisation strategy. Specifically, the Gallery, along with the other cultural institutions, was charged to:

Formulate long term Digitisation Plans, which contain evaluation criteria for the measurement of success of their digitisation programs.

Recommendation #13

As well as collecting and forming a national collection, under their governing acts, cultural institutions must make their collection accessible through exhibitions or other means.

Summary and Recommendations #43

Digitisation is the process of making images of objects and documents. These images can be used in digital format and in multimedia packages to serve as a substitute for the real object. Making a digital copy of an object allows it to be viewed many times, sometimes with much greater detail than when on display, without damage to the object itself. Web usage is increasing and is a major means of access to the collections and information about the collections.

Summary and Recommendations #44

All the cultural institutions had digitisation programs, however, the ANAO considers that they need to define how they will measure the outcomes of their respective digitisation programs, be it for preservation, conservation or accessibility.

Summary and Recommendations #45

The ANAO considers that digitisation presents an expanding medium of access to the collections to rural and remote users and in so doing, providing a means to preserve the collection. However, the ANAO found that Digitisation Plans need to contain evaluation criteria so that these programs can be assessed into the future.

Chapter 5 – Accessibility – Conclusion 5.28

[anao.gov.au](http://anao.gov.au)

In 2002 an ANAO review of Cultural Agencies recommended that the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) prepare a portfolio-wide digitisation strategy.

Consequently, a draft strategy was developed, focussing on collaboration and identifying federal government priorities, including education, participation, preservation, audience expansion and digital heritage.

In 2004 DCITA advised that the strategy functions as an ongoing framework, providing a set of principles for agencies to prioritise their individual activities and work collaboratively on future developments. (Recommendation 5.11)

## Executive summary

The Gallery's Collections Digitisation Strategy (the Strategy) draws on the priorities of the Gallery as set out in the Gallery's Strategic Plan 2004–2007. Specifically, the Strategy seeks to deliver on three of the eight strategic goals

- Goal 3 – maintain and protect the national collection
- Goal 5 – promote and enhance access to the visual arts
- Goal 8 – increase and broaden our revenue base

[nga.gov.au/stratplan](http://nga.gov.au/stratplan)

The Strategy seeks to align three primary published reference points:

- ANAO's audit report 59 on safe and accessible national collections;
- DCITA's working group paper – national digital collection strategy; and
- NGA's Long Term Collection Preservation Strategy

In developing its digitisation program the Gallery is cognisant of the Federal Government's *GovernmentOnline Strategy* which states, 'All new non-commercial publications released by a Minister or agency must be made available online concurrently with other forms of dissemination from 1 June 2000'.

[agimo.gov.au/publications/2000/04/govonline](http://agimo.gov.au/publications/2000/04/govonline)

To this end the Strategy seeks not only to address the digitisation of images of works of art in the Gallery's collection, but also the digitisation of a range of supporting collections of historical and archival material containing contextualising content, to enhance understanding and enjoyment of the works of art.

Digitisation activity at the Gallery takes two approaches:

- Ongoing work, associated with core activities such as acquisitions, exhibitions, loans, publications, conservation and image sales. This work is funded through the Gallery's operational budgets; and
- Project work, where specific digitisation projects are identified and project plans developed. It is expected that this activity could be eligible for capital funding, due to the specific and discrete nature of asset so created.

The Gallery applies a principles-based approach to its digitisation program. Digitisation projects are determined on their basis of their ability to meet the goals and objectives of the Strategy. The success of digitisation activities is measured in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Strategy.

The Gallery is committed to best practice in its digitisation activity and the ongoing management of digital assets, in accordance with Australian and internationally accepted standards, while complying with relevant legislation<sup>1</sup>, Government directives and its own collection management priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Including the *National Gallery of Australia Act* 1975, and the *Copyright Act* 1968 and the *Archives Act* 1983.

## **Vision**

Digital images of works of art – and the digitisation of associated historical and archival material – will function as a means of safeguarding the collection and preserving cultural heritage. Digitisation will enable the Gallery to provide access to its collections in innovative and exciting ways.

## **Goals and objectives**

The Gallery's objectives for its digitisation activity are contained within the outputs of collection development, collection management and public access to the collection. The goals and objectives specific for the Gallery's digitisation activity are:

- a) Preserve and document the national collection through the use of digital surrogates, where appropriate; and
- b) Enhance understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts through providing electronic access to digitised material, online and onsite.

The Gallery will realise its goals and objectives through:

- i) Productivity improvements gained through the efficient use of resources;
- ii) Enhanced understanding of works of art in the Gallery's collection and of the visual arts generally;
- iii) Improvements in service delivery across areas including online and onsite electronic access, print publications and eCommerce channels;
- iv) Increased involvement in collaborative arrangements which promote Australia's cultural heritage through the dissemination of digital information; and
- v) Achieving target rates for the creation of digital assets related to the art collection and associated historical and archival material.

## Digitisation selection criteria

The following criteria outline the areas on which digitisation activity will be focussed:

- a) Newly acquired works of art;
- b) Works planned for long-term loan;
- c) Fragile works, or works deteriorated to an extent which inhibits their regular access/display;
- d) Works identified through the Gallery's Long Term Collection Preservation Strategy which require surveys or audits to determine whether their current conditions are fragile, deteriorating or unstable. These groups of works may be subject to a high risk of deterioration, and include:
  - rare books
  - contemporary paintings
  - new media / digital works
  - paintings made prior to 1950
  - works of art comprised of steel
  - Asian art objects of great antiquity
  - works of art containing plastic/rubber/metal/organic material
  - works on paper & photographs (particularly colour photographs);
- e) Works dependent on the availability of technology platforms, to the extent that the accessibility of these works is at medium- to long-term risk;
- f) Works of key importance, or which are considered iconic, or which are considered 'national treasures';
- g) Works relevant to the Gallery's exhibition and publishing programs;
- h) Works which enhance eBusiness, image sales and parallel publishing;
- i) Contextualising material able to enhance understanding and enjoyment of the art collection (i.e. documentary material, ephemera etc.);
- j) Works or material for which copyright no longer subsists;
- k) Works or material which it is culturally appropriate to digitise;<sup>1</sup>
- l) Projects that support the *Government Online Strategy*; and
- m) 'Born digital' material, as it is acquired.

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<sup>1</sup> Some Indigenous material may contain images or other subject matter that communities do not consider appropriate for digitising and subsequent wide distribution/publication.

## Approach

All digitisation activity is conducted in accordance with Australian and internationally accepted standards, complying with relevant legislation, Government directives and the Gallery's collection and preservation management priorities.

The Gallery applies the following approach to its digitisation program:

- a) Digitisation projects are classified according to whether they are discrete projects or a component of the ongoing digitisation work of the Gallery e.g. acquisitions, exhibitions, loans, publishing etc.;
- b) Where digitisation activity is considered to be part of the ongoing work of the Gallery, planning for and performance reporting of the activity occurs at Section level, in line with whole-of-organisation business planning and reporting frameworks; and
- c) Capital funding will be considered and, if appropriate, made available for digitisation projects specifically directed towards creating digital assets.

Organisational oversight of ongoing and capital-funded digitisation projects will be undertaken by the Digitisation Steering Committee<sup>1</sup>. The Digitisation Steering Committee will oversee the Strategy, report to Program Managers and Council, and make recommendations on the allocation of capital funding for digitisation projects. A Digitisation Project Manager will assist the Steering Committee by providing secretariat functions and undertaking evaluations of digitisation activity.

The Gallery recognises that digitisation projects cannot be successfully completed without consultative input from staff across the Gallery; consequently a team-based approach will be applied to the assessment, development and implementation of capital-funded digitisation projects.

The Digitisation Project Manager – with input from key internal stakeholders including staff from Conservation, Curatorial, Imaging & Publishing, Information Technology, Registration, Rights & Permissions and the Research Library – will assess capital-funded digitisation projects against the goals, objectives and priorities of the Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> The Digitisation Steering Committee will consist of representatives from Program Managers and relevant senior staff from Collection Services and Curatorial.

The Digitisation Project Manager will develop proposals for capital funding to be considered by the Digitisation Steering Committee. Proposals for capital-funded digitisation projects are to include the following information:

- 1) An identified project sponsor from within the Gallery's senior management structure;
- 2) An outline of a consultation process undertaken, listing all stakeholders involved in the consultation;
- 3) An audit of physical assets, identifying the selection criteria against which the material has been selected as a priority for digitisation;
- 4) A project plan identifying and addressing:
  - a) an assessment of the project including the tangible and intangible benefits of undertaking the proposed project;
  - b) a project scope including organisational implications and a timeframe for completion;
  - c) an assessment of staffing requirements, including management and administrative issues;
  - d) an assessment of equipment requirements;
  - e) an assessment of funding requirements – identifying which components of the project will be undertaken by Gallery staff and which components may be outsourced;
  - f) a set of key milestones including identification of a critical path for successful completion of the project and the identification of key points at which to review the project's progress;
  - g) a discussion of copyright, intellectual property and moral rights issues;
  - h) an assessment of the condition of material to be digitised;
  - i) an assessment of specific art handling requirements;
  - j) a suggested set of performance measures, including standards to be achieved and quality control measures;
  - k) an assessment of storage and backup requirements, ensuring the project complies with Information Technology policy and meets the requirements of the Gallery's backup and disaster-recovery strategy;
  - l) a statement outlining anticipated access and delivery mechanisms for assets digitised by the project;
  - m) an assessment of the sustainability of and ongoing maintenance associated with digital assets produced by the project; and
  - n) a risk assessment.

Each digitisation project will include a set of performance measures against which the Gallery will measure performance, however the Gallery must be able to evaluate the effectiveness of all digitisation projects.

A set of evaluation criteria has been developed against which the whole-of-organisation digitisation program will be measured, by way of a balanced scorecard.



## **Evaluation criteria**

Evaluations will be conducted to:

- ensure the Strategy is progressing according to plan;
- ensure the Gallery is consistently meeting key government priorities and expectations for online content;
- assess long-term sustainability for storage space & file recognition issues;
- ensure the integrity of the digital asset collection is maintained; and
- ensure return on investment of digitisation activity.

Analysis of other cultural institutions and their Digitisation Plans will be undertaken annually to compare results, with a view to developing common benchmark measures for digitisation performance.

## Balanced scorecard

Operational performance	KPI	Total weighted score	Score	Section weighting
Asset Creation and Availability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assets created</li> <li>• % of total art collection</li> <li>• % of collection available on CMS</li> <li>• % of collection available on Internet</li> <li>• % of new acquisitions captured</li> </ul>				
<b>Outreach</b>				
Accessible collections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of online visitors</li> <li>• Number of online pageviews</li> <li>• Demography of online visitors</li> <li>• Satisfaction of online visitors</li> <li>• Number of external reference queries in Research Library</li> </ul>				
<b>Internal efficiency</b>				
Supply chain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % orders filled within timeframes</li> <li>• % images requiring reproofing</li> <li>• Stakeholder satisfaction</li> <li>• Number of collaborative projects</li> </ul>				

Operational performance	KPI	Total weighted score	Score	Section weighting
<b>Financial performance</b> <b>Value for money</b>				
Return on investment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost-per-asset created</li> <li>• Cost-per-asset accessed</li> <li>• Cost per asset stored</li> <li>• Revenue from image sales</li> </ul>				

Maximum Score				
Actual Score				
Performance %				

### Summary of balanced scorecard

**Date of review:**

**Reporting period:**

Key result area	Section weighting	Score	%
Operating performance Outreach Internal efficiency Financial performance			
Overall result	100%		

## Current status

<b>As at March 2006:</b>	
Total art collection items	139,878
Number of digital image assets	c.40,000
<b>Estimated breakdowns:</b>	
NGA collection	28,876
PR Events / Installations	10,694
Non-NGA collection	230
Miscellaneous	200
Number images available online	c.19,000
Number images to be cleared	c.7,000
Number of works out of copyright:	c.18,000
Estimated rate of digitisation per annum:	15,000 assets

## **Policy review**

A review of the Strategy and related plans will be undertaken annually.

The following areas will be assessed:

- a) New priorities for the next year, including new proposals;
- b) Quantity achieved;
- c) Quality assessment;
- d) % of collection outstanding – estimated targets still correct;
- e) Milestones missed;
- f) Potential duplication with other future projects; and
- g) Budgetary requirements / shortfalls.