

# A CAPITAL IDENTITY

## ACT Heritage Library Strategic Plan 2018–2023



ACT  
Government

**LIBRARIES ACT**

*“From the strength of our heritage, values and identity we embrace the future and welcome all to ‘choose Canberra’, to come and help shape its further success.”*

*- Andrew Barr, Chief Minister ACT Government, Statement of Ambition*



## FOREWORD

The ACT Heritage Library Strategic Plan 2018–2023 explains the crucial role the ACT Heritage Library plays for Canberra, ponders the future, and outlines priorities for the library over the next five years.

Canberra has a long history, beginning with its first people, who have been here for thousands of years. Since becoming the site of Australia’s capital city just over 100 years ago, Canberra has become home to a vibrant and diverse community. Its many people, organisations, places and events play an important part in creating this place we call home.

Our history and the stories that come from it contribute to our community identity, and to study and learn from this past, we must have a record of it to refer to in the future.

By delivering the activities of this strategy, the ACT Heritage Library will continue collecting, preserving, promoting and providing access to documents that record our history, striving to achieve the identity and heritage declared in the ACT Government’s Statement of Ambition.

Meegan Fitzharris MLA  
Minister for Transport and City Services

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*We acknowledge the traditional Custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.*



## ACT HERITAGE LIBRARY

The ACT Heritage Library has been a service of the ACT Government since 1981. Its collections form part of the national documentary record of Australian Life and history ensuring that the stories of Canberra are not lost to future generations. A vibrant information, heritage, arts and cultural sector is part of what makes Canberra a great place to live. It contributes to achieving the Chief Minister’s vision of Canberra as ‘one of the world’s most liveable and competitive cities – welcoming to all’ as outlined in *Canberra: a statement of ambition*.

The ACT Heritage Library collections are unique and include newspapers, photographs, maps and plans, diaries, books, ephemera, microfilm and digital items. Collections are kept in perpetuity for future generations.

Since becoming a service of the ACT Government in 1981, the collections have grown significantly and their current location is now too small. A move in 2018 to larger premises will serve in the medium term. However, as Canberra and the ACT grow and develop, so too will the collections that tell the stories of our communities, eventually requiring a fit-for-purpose facility that secures their long term preservation and reflects their importance as part of Australia’s national documentary record.

Libraries ACT is a member of the National and State Libraries of Australasia (NSLA). Since 2007 this group of libraries, that represent the key government agencies for the collection of Australia’s

documentary heritage, has worked together to improve policies, systems, processes and services for current and future users. The ACT Heritage Library has contributed and benefitted enormously from these collaborations which include TROVE, a national discovery service for both digital and physical collections, a proof of concept for digital preservation, and the recent signing of the deed of collaboration for the development of a National eDeposit (NeD) platform.

The ACT Heritage Library is well used by researchers now, but we believe there is potential for much greater use and benefit for all Canberrans to know and experience their history. From the school child learning about life in Canberra in the time of his great grandparents, to the Museum and Heritage Studies student, to the entrepreneur wanting access to images for his walking tours app, the ACT Heritage Library is the place to go.

*The ACT Heritage Library’s collections form part of the national documentary record of Australian life and history.*

*Along with the National Library of Australia, the State Libraries and the Northern Territory Library we make sure that the stories of our Nation are available and not lost to future generations.*



## OUR CHANGING WORLD

The world we live in has been transformed by digital technologies. How we read, learn, work and communicate with each other has changed dramatically. These changes have a significant impact on how the ACT Heritage Library provides the people of the ACT with opportunities for learning and research. As well, the ACT Government has aspirations for a digital, smart city that is innovative and creative. This provides both guidance and opportunities for the ACT Heritage Library as it develops its services.



- The ACT Government Digital Strategy 2016-2019 has a vision for Canberra to 'be a fearlessly digital city/state that has embraced revolution and innovative technology'. It champions all new and renovated processes to be digital first, the use of cloud based services and growing digital capability, particularly through joined-up approaches.
- The ACT is in the process of developing its Smart Cities Strategy. At a conceptual level this is about using technologies and data to drive better and more efficient public services, stimulate economic activity and be more sustainable. It will require greater collaboration between government, business and community to ensure a more connected and efficient city.
- The concepts behind the Smart Cities Strategy mean we need to be clever about capturing, preserving and promoting user created digital content, and ensuring our digital technology solutions are efficient and sustainable to enable better services to the community.

**“WOULD YOU TELL ME, PLEASE, WHICH WAY I OUGHT TO GO FROM HERE?” ASKED ALICE. “THAT DEPENDS A GOOD DEAL ON WHERE YOU WANT TO GET TO,” SAID THE CAT.**

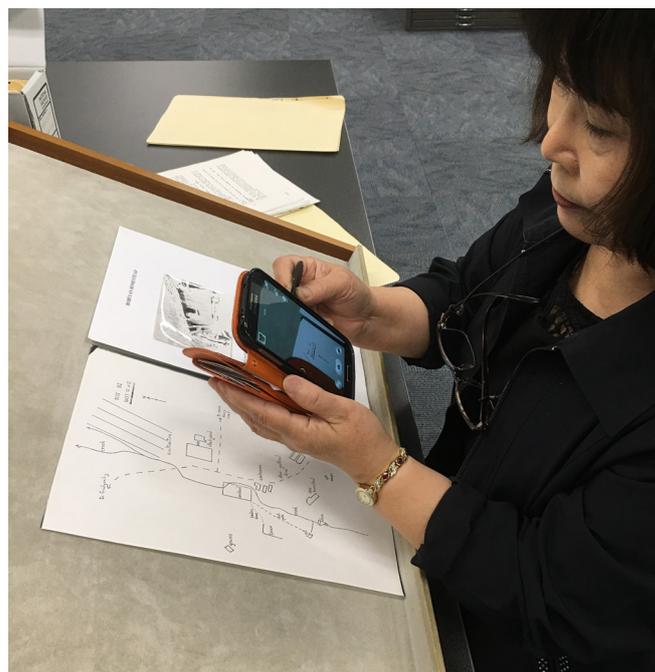
**– LEWIS CARROLL, ALICE IN WONDERLAND**

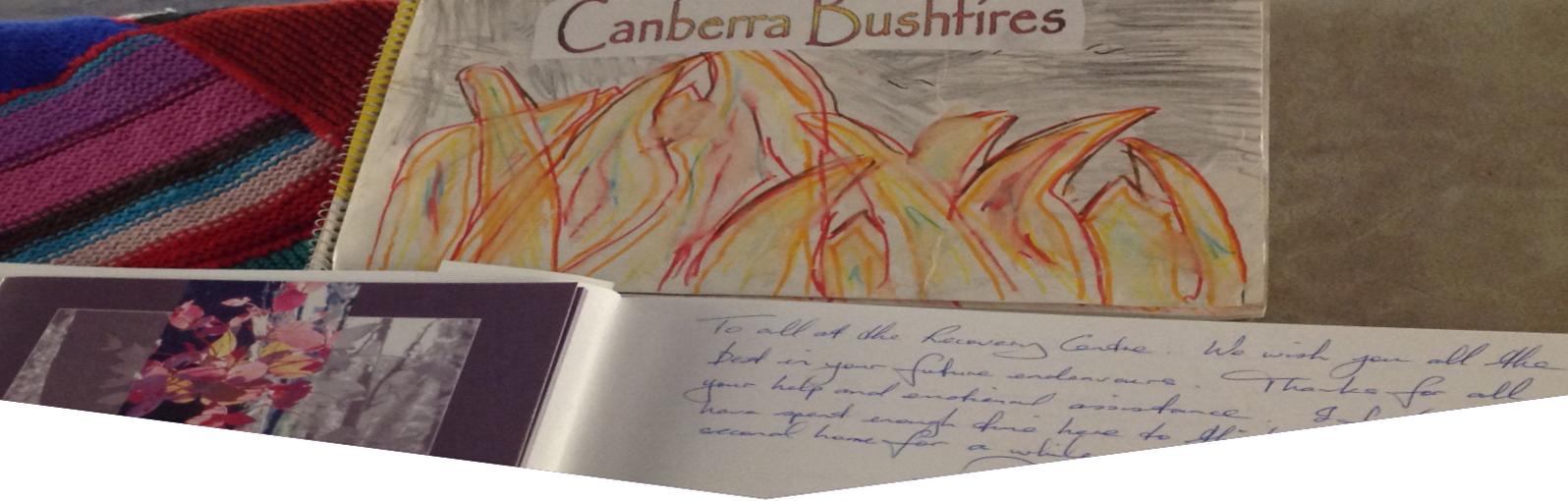
*People seldom write letters or keep diaries. Instead they write emails and public blogs. Their photos are on Pinterest or Instagram. Much of what is published now is digital only.*

*These changes have a significant impact on how the ACT Heritage Library provides the people of the ACT with opportunities for learning and research.*

- A major challenge for heritage collections worldwide is the collection of material that is only in a digital format (born digital material). Each step of the process from identification, acquisition, cataloguing, arranging, describing and storing requires different workflows, processes and systems from physical materials.
- Digital collections may come to the library in a physical format – by way of USB drives, hard drives, DVDs and other physical media which donors have used to store their digital files – or they may have to be harvested or ingested (acquired) directly online and stored in a digital repository.
- Users now expect and want to find information online. Content is increasingly multimedia and if important content is not in a digital format it may not be found and used. Digitisation and metadata using open access standards will provide better access to the collections of the ACT Heritage Library.
- Worldwide, the demand is for staff that have a new set of skills and knowledge to work in the world of metadata, digital content creation, acquisition, curation, data management and preservation.

Our response to this changing context is outlined in this Strategic Plan. The plan has been informed by research into best practice and consultation with a focus group of researchers and heritage groups, a workshop with staff and interviews with key partners and stakeholders. The plan paints a vision of where the ACT Heritage Library aspires to be by 2030 and outlines what we need to do over the next five years to move us towards that vision.





## THE ACT HERITAGE LIBRARY IN 2030

In 2030 the ACT Heritage Library is a highly valued participant in the information, cultural and educational life of the ACT. Its collections and services bring to life the stories of the people and events which have shaped this capital city and its surrounding communities.



It is 2030. The move to the new purpose built facility means much greater access for a wider range of people through exhibitions, educational programs and events, at the same time providing welcoming spaces for researchers.

The purpose built, environmentally controlled storage ensures that the collections are kept in optimal conditions for future generations. The storage is shared by Archives ACT, the Canberra Museum and Gallery (CMAG), and other ACT heritage groups who have unique items which need special care.

More and more of the Library's collections are available from anywhere in the world. Great progress has been made in digitising unique materials and the Libraries ACT legislation with its provision for legal deposit ensures that the ACT Heritage Library is able to work seamlessly with publishers and other creators of digital content to collect their output and preserve it in the Library's digital preservation system.

In line with the ACT Government's Digital Strategy, cloud based services have been used to provide the various systems needed to acquire, preserve and make available digital collections. NSLA's National eDeposit scheme, developed in partnership with the National, State and Territory Libraries, was the forerunner to further collaborative projects such as

**“OUR ARCHIVES ARE TREASURE TROVES - A TESTAMENT TO MANY LIVES LIVED AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THE WAY WE MOVE FORWARD. THEY CONTAIN CLUES TO THE REAL CONCERNS OF DAY-TO-DAY LIFE THAT BRING THE PAST ALIVE.”**

**— SARA SHERIDAN, AUTHOR**

*ACT history is alive. The story is vital to the promotion of Canberra today...to see how far we have come, what has changed and where we are going. The ACT Heritage Library is an essential part in promoting the city.*

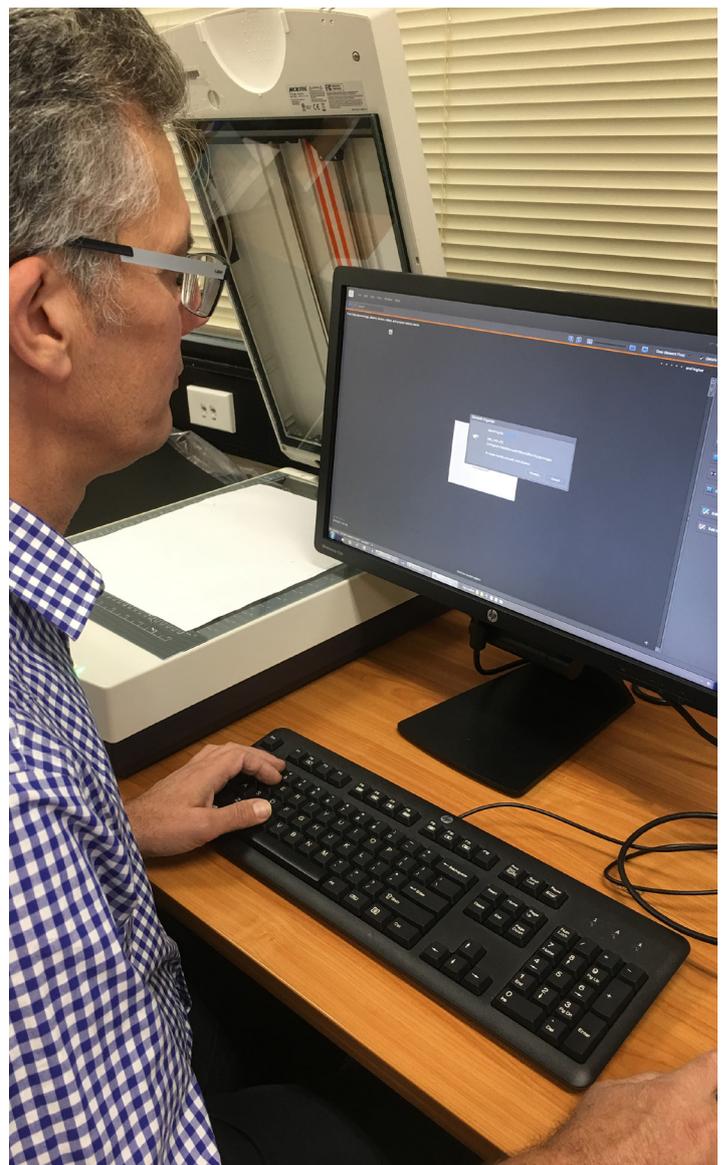
*— Participant in the focus group*

the recently launched Preservation as a Service of which the Library is a member and contributor.

Metadata is the new currency. Being standards compliant, the ACT Heritage Library’s digital records of its collection can be harvested and shared not only by Trove but by international search engines, exposing the stories of Canberra and the ACT to the world. The ACT’s creative and business communities use the library’s data to shape new content and products.

The knowledgeable and widely respected staff are frequently called on to provide research support for information, cultural and heritage initiatives, often reflected in ACT Government policies and strategies. Their support and advice to other community collecting groups is highly appreciated as is their work with schools, TAFEs and Universities.

Recently, the Chief Minister, on a visit to launch the “Give it, don’t bin it!” campaign in preparation for Canberra’s 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, was delighted to listen to his great grandmother’s oral history interview. “It is so special to hear her voice and to know that someone was focusing on capturing the stories of ordinary and not-so-ordinary people of our great city”.



## OUR VISION:

Our identity through heritage

## OUR PURPOSE:

To collect, protect and make discoverable the unique documentary record of Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory

### PRIORITY 1:

## GUARANTEE ACCESS FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

Today's events and happenings become tomorrow's history and collecting the items that record that history is a primary focus for the ACT Heritage Library. Our ability to identify and acquire content, particularly born digital content, would be assisted by legal deposit legislation. Both physical and digital collections need to be kept safe for future generations. Making it easy for people to discover and use our collections is also a priority.

### GOALS

- Grow our unique collections with a focus on digital collections
- Make it easy to discover all our content
- Ensure our digital collection items are acquired, appropriately stored and preserved in perpetuity
- Provide fit for purpose accommodation for physical collections and users

### ACTIONS

These are the primary actions to achieve the goals over the next 5 years:

1. Seek out and encourage donations of unique ACT material
2. Prepare a budget bid, cost and implement oral history and video storytelling programmes
3. Set up AtoM (archival management system) and move the images database and Finding Aids to this platform
4. Leverage the new Library Management System (LMS) discovery layer to provide single search access to the ACT Heritage Library collections
5. Evaluate and cost using AtoM as our primary digital repository
6. Implement NeD in association with NSLA
7. Investigate legal deposit legislation
8. Move the ACT Heritage Library
9. Develop a business case in partnership with Treasury, Archives ACT and CMAG for a future permanent fit-for-purpose shared facility
10. Investigate the best solution to provide for digital preservation of our collections

*“The Heritage Library is a unique collection we cannot lose and it is vital we have the best people and accommodation so it is available to the maximum number of humans for all time”*

— Participant in the focus group

# Canberra Community News

## PRIORITY 2:

### CONNECT PEOPLE TO THE STORIES OF CANBERRA

Canberrans take pride in their history, community and place. To be “confident, bold and ready” Canberrans need to understand where they have come from and what has shaped our people and our city. The ACT Heritage Library collection comprises approximately 100,000 publications, nearly 300,000 photographs, from personal snapshots to records of streetscapes. There are 3,000 maps and plans and 53,000 items of ephemera, including posters advertising Canberra’s first land sale on 12 December 1924. The Library is a treasure trove about the life of Canberra, the ACT and its people. Getting more of this unique content online and growing the number of people who use or experience the collections increases their value to the community.

#### GOALS

- Showcase collections through greater content curation
- Increase our digital content online
- Increase awareness through better education, marketing and promotion

#### ACTIONS

These are the primary actions to achieve the goals over the next 5 years:

1. Appoint an Education Officer to develop thematic collections and programmes that align with the school curriculum
2. Partner with others to mount exhibitions and events
3. Reinstate the digitisation budget
4. Develop and implement a digitisation plan with priorities
5. Facilitate creative industries use of the Library’s data to create new content for the community
6. Encourage entrepreneurial use of the collections by others, including SMEs
7. Develop a unique social media presence to promote collections and services



*“The ACT Heritage Library brings the past of Canberrans into the present and the future. It bring us together and moves us forward together. We need to see, enjoy and use the collection in imaginative and many ways.”*

*— Participant in the focus group*



## PRIORITY 3:

# STRENGTHEN OUR CAPACITY TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE SERVICES

The ACT Heritage Library is vital for recording the life of Canberra and the ACT. We will continue to leverage opportunities for working with other heritage collecting organisations to do more together. We need people with strong digital and professional skills who can adapt to an ever changing environment. We will provide development and career opportunities to retain quality staff. To be sustainable in the long term we need appropriate technologies.

## GOALS

- Collaborate and partner for greater impact
- Ensure we have staff with the right mix of skills and knowledge for the world of digital collecting
- Secure a robust technical infrastructure for our digital collections
- Explore revenue opportunities for targeted initiatives.

## ACTIONS

These are the primary actions to achieve the goals over the next 5 years:

1. Continue to work with NSLA on shared initiatives that benefit our community and collections
2. Become a full contributing member of Pandora Web Archiving service
3. In the short term, modify staffing structure to provide more focussed support for cataloguing, acquisitions and digital acquisition (via NeD)
4. Recruit additional capability for digital collecting and preservation
5. Develop a digital roadmap that clearly outlines what is needed and how we will move towards robust systems and processes
6. Investigate feasibility of a personal archiving digital suite for public use



*“Heritage costs money; ignorance of our past is cheap!”*

*— Participant in the focus group*



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Front Cover Mal Meninga presents the Winfield Cup to the crowd in Civic Square, 25 September 1989. ACT Administration Collection, ACT Heritage Library image 007556.
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  - Knitted rug, 2003. ACT Heritage Library, Manuscript Collection, *HMSS 0238 Wrap Up Canberra Records*.
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  - Appreciation book, 2003. ACT Heritage Library, Manuscript Collection, *HMSS 0343 ACT Bushfire Support Unit*.
ACT Heritage Library staff in the stacks with 1924 real estate poster, 2018.
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Libraries ACT Facebook post sharing ephemera donation to ACT Heritage Library, 22 September 2017.
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ACT Heritage Library Archivist assessing an incoming archival collection, 2018.
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