

Collecting Archives Special Interest Group

Diane Woods

The Collecting Archives SIG met during the ARANZ Symposium in August. Following the business meeting, open discussion on three topics was led by Sean McMahon, Shannon Wellington, and Diane Woods. The three topics were: valuing digital collections, coordinated collecting between institutions, and sharing documentation. Below are the minutes of those discussions.

1. The methods and strategies used for valuing collections, led by Sean McMahon

Discussion was framed around three key issues.

- Digital valuation
- Valuation for audit
- Market valuation

Sean McMahon noted that it is challenging to value digital collections by physical volume, but they need to be valued for audit/insurance and market purposes. Shannon Wellington described the approach by Turnbull Manuscripts, using a rubric that includes:

- Content – as usual
- Collecting scope – relationship to collecting mandate
- Investment in surfacing content – resource investment; digital preservation factors; and the complexity in surfacing, storing and managing content moving forward

Anna Blackman noted that the Hocken Collections is also factoring the digital carrier into the valuation process. Occasionally they will print out material to analogue format and value it that way.

Linda Evans commented on the complexity of valuing digital oral history and sound. The cost to create the material needs to be factored into the valuation, due to the front-loading of preservation issues.

Rachel Esson commented on the complexity of valuing intangible assets. Initially, the National Library's digital collections were treated as depreciating assets. The Library explained that the NDHA was robust and

the digital files stored in it did not deteriorate over time, so they could be treated the same way as tangible assets. Digitisation costs are now capitalised.

The SIG discussed the market for digital collections. Is there one? Are there any examples in the open market for valuing and purchasing digital collections? Jessica Moran mentioned a case study which discussed the UCLA's purchase of Susan Sontag's papers. The library initially suggested that the digital component be donated, as there was no way to assign a valid market value for it. When they estate refused that suggestion, they negotiated to pay an undisclosed sum for it.

Shannon Wellington noted the inherent complexity in surfacing digital content, and the need to be able to see the content in order to value it, particularly in the case of digital donations. This adds time to the appraisal process.

Anna Blackman commented on the lack of precedent in market value for digital collections. Sometimes this is assessed via quantity x category = X number of dollars.

Rachel Esson re-iterated the usefulness in valuing collections for insurance purposes. There are also legal and or organisational requirements to do so. There was general discussion about the usefulness of insurance in disaster situations.

An article by Susan Skudder was referred to ('Collection valuation for council archives – a case study from Auckland City Archives', in *Archifacts*, 2008; p.11-23).

Action: Diane Woods to circulate the Hocken Collection's valuation methodology. Anna Blackman to circulate its valuation methodology for digital materials.

1. Co-ordinated collecting between institutions, led by Shannon Wellington

National documentation strategy

Shannon Wellington said that in giving feedback on the National Library's collecting plans, stakeholders asked the library to show intellectual leadership about collecting documentary heritage in New Zealand. The National Library's document 'Positioning for the Future: Draft Strategic Directions to 2030' suggests the possibility of a national documentary heritage framework.

Stephen Innes mentioned AHLAG (Auckland Heritage Librarians and Archivists Group) which has been reasonably successful, although institutions have been affected by the supercity amalgamation.

The Auckland Libraries Collection Development Policy (April 2013)

is available online at <http://www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/EN/About/Documents/collectiondevelopmentpolicy.pdf>

David Colquhoun commented on materials which have both regional and national significance – where do they go?

Gareth Winter noted some donors prefer to give to national institutions because of their perceived status. For example a family may wish to deposit at the Turnbull Library and not at their local repository. But what if the local repository is a better fit for the archives?

Simon Moody said that in the UK repositories are noted for their specialist subject areas, and donors give relevant materials to them rather than to national institutions.

Institutional referrals

Shannon Wellington and Teina Jordan described networking with other archives about collecting interests, and referring donors elsewhere. Many institutional websites carry information about their collecting policies and scope.

What about areas where there are no collecting archives like parts of the West Coast. Where are their archives to go?

Action: Diane Woods to collate a centralised directory of online collecting plans, and have it added to the ARANZ Collecting SIG web page

Auctions

Of the members present, Auckland City Libraries Special Collections, Auckland University Special Collections, Victoria University Special Collections, Hocken Collections and Alexander Turnbull Library indicated that they buy at auction.

Shannon Wellington noted that sometimes public records appear for sale in auction catalogues and on dealer websites (eg Trade Me). Let Archives NZ know if you see any such listings, so they can follow up.

Be aware of laws on anti-commercial behaviour which prevent arrangements with other institutions about prices and bidding.

There was discussion about being wary of inflating prices in NZ's small documentary heritage auction market; and concern about auction houses splitting items of the same provenance into lots to maximise profit, with no regard for maintaining context.

Simon Moody mentioned documents which form part of a military medal group – what is their value?

Shannon Wellington noted the need for auctioneers to provide timely information about auctions, and additional provenance information. She

offered to inspect items being auctioned in Wellington for colleagues.

Rachel Esson said there is a French law allowing national institutions to buy items at the reserve price.

Gareth Winter asked what duty we have to report false statements about items for sale, eg an auction house giving a bogus name for the subject of a portrait.

3. Sharing documentation, led by Diane Woods

Anna Blackman spoke about valuation methods and practices for the Hocken Collections.

There was discussion of the documentation used by collecting archives: collection development policies, receipt forms, deeds of gift, work flow documents, logistics templates, bequest templates, donation forms, sales and purchase agreements.

Virginia Callanan spoke about agreements to digitise donations being part of the deposit agreement from Nga Taonga Sound and Vision.

Jessica Moran said the Turnbull Library has forms for managing transfer of born-digital files, and oral history born-digital files. Linda Evans commented that donors find that having to list deposits helps them to organise them well.

Members brought sample documents to consult and share at the meeting.

Other business

Diane Woods asked if anyone would like to take on the convenor role, or co-convene the SIG, from this time next year.

Action: DW to investigate if there might be an opportunity for a SIG meeting in 2017, either in conjunction with an ARANZ workshop, or perhaps the LIANZA Documentary Heritage SIG.