

CAMD Case Studies: Emerging Technologies

Museum Metadata Exchange

Council of Australasian Museum Directors/Museums Australia/Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

National	Title	Museum	Description	Updated
Australian National Maritime Museum	19th century immigrant journal collection	Australian National Maritime Museum	A collection of approximately 100 published and unpublished diaries, journals, testimonials, letters and accounts of sea voyages... Coverage: United Kingdom; Australia, 1788 - 1900	07 Apr 2011
Australian War Memorial				264
National Film and Sound Archive	19th century songs and music collection	Australian National Maritime Museum	A collection of approximately 150 song and musical broadsheets associated with immigration to Australia, convict transportation. Coverage: Scotland, UK, Wales, UK, Ireland, United Kingdom, Great Britain, Australia, 1800 - 1900	07 Apr 2011
National Museum of Australia				73
New South Wales				
Australian Capital Territory	30 Treasures of the AFP Museum	Australian Federal Police Museum	A selection of 30 objects from the Museum's collection. Objects range from clothing, computers, vehicles and other equipment to. Coverage: Australia, 1978 - 2008	06 Jul 2011
Northern Territory				
Queensland				
South Australia	A.J. Campbell Collection	Museum Victoria	The A.J. Campbell photographic Collection came into Museum Victoria's care on 22 December 1915 and forms part of a much larger h...	31 Mar 2011

Finding Collections Online

The landmark Museum Metadata Exchange (MME) digital program is reaching the end of its initial phase with over 1,000 collection descriptions from 18 different museums ready for upload to Research Data Australia. The result of a close collaboration between the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD) and

Museums Australia (MA), the project has been hosted by the Powerhouse Museum and funded by the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) under the National Research Infrastructure Strategy Program and the Super Science Initiative.

The MME project grew from a desire on the part of CAMD and MA to increase online access to the humanities collections held in Australia's museums, in much the same way as has been achieved for biodiversity collections via the *Atlas of Living Australia*. This interest coincided with the desire of ANDS to add information from cultural collections to Research Data Australia, its online discovery service for research academics. The ANDS investment has allowed a modest, but potentially far-reaching, start to the work of releasing the enormous, and to date relatively untapped, humanities resources held in museums across Australia.

The need to make this information more accessible to researchers in the humanities, arts and social science fields has presented participating museums with an interesting challenge. Museums have been used to cataloguing and organising their collections object by object; academics, on the other hand, want to be able to identify the relationships between these objects and their field of research. The solution was to rethink collections by identifying groups of objects unified through people, places, events, technologies and other relational criteria.

Early testing of the MME collection level descriptions with university partners at Monash and RMIT has elicited positive responses from academic researchers who see the concept of accessing information about museum collections online, alongside other academic resources, as 'potentially powerful' and a useful tool to access as yet unexplored historical sources.

As the first humanities project funded by ANDS, the MME project has proven to be a successful and timely initiative. The effectiveness of its approach drew favourable mention in the recent exposure draft of the *2011 Strategic Roadmap for Australian Research Infrastructure*.

The success of the MME project has allowed the museum sector to make a number of important points about the:

- depth and breadth of research resources in Australia's collections;
- distributed nature of these collections and the critical need to enhance access using digital tools;
- value of these research resources to academics from a variety of disciplines;
- potential for collections to inspire new and innovative approaches to humanities topics;
- willingness of museums and peak organisations to work together to make collections accessible; and
- the opportunities for museums and academic researchers to work more closely in the future.

Over time, it is anticipated that the potential shown by the MME project will further illustrate the need to resource the development of a national program to make Australia's cultural collections systematically discoverable and accessible online.

See: <http://museumex.org/>