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The public value of conservation in Australia: a social justice framework

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Abstract

Access to conservation, and thus to cultural heritage, has economic, social and cultural benefits; lack of access can lead to loss, both of cultural materials and of the opportunity to enjoy the benefits stemming from conservation. In Australia as in many other places, however, conservation is not widely accessible outside of the major collecting institutions where the profession has developed. This thesis explores patterns of access to conservation in Australia, the risks facing collections, and the experiences of those working to conserve collections across the country. Interwoven with new readings of conservation's public value, and its links to social equity and justice, these studies clearly demonstrate the need for access to conservation to be broadened, and the ramifications of an unchallenged status quo.

A tripartite methodology is established, encompassing discursive, quantitative and qualitative studies. First, a background to the concepts of value, social equity and justice is given, with critical discourse analysis of key texts in conservation and heritage. Two statistical mapping studies follow, examining the geographical distribution of access to conservation, and environmental risks to collections associated with climate change; both are interested in the 'uneven development' of the conservation sector in urban, regional and remote Australia, and the increased burden of risk for the national collection carried by those with low access to conservation. In the third part of the thesis, the focus on place continues in the results presented of a series of qualitative interviews held with 39 people working with collections at the periphery of dominant conservation practices in Australia. The conversations elicited participants' thoughts on the value and significance of their collections; the types of risk they encounter; their needs and challenges; the effects of any actual or potential losses; and the benefits collections bring to their surrounding communities.

To understand the interplay of these themes in the interviews – and the wider thesis – a dialectical framework is developed to theorise the persistent co-existence of binary oppositions: value and risk, impact and need, preservation and loss. This framework constitutes the thesis's central contribution, together with the findings that emerge from the data analysis. These reveal the presence of inequities in the field, both in terms of accessing conservation and where the risk of material and opportunity loss lies; the impact of disasters, both sudden and incremental, on collections; and the mitigative effects of different forms of conservation and caretaking. A significant finding is that community collections, which are formed in response to the needs of particular places,

require a decentralised policy approach that prioritises the embedding of conservation within collections.

Each part of the thesis informs a final synthesis of the sector's needs for consideration in future national conservation policy. Towards this goal, a set of indicators for understanding the broader impact of conservation is also posited. The findings have implications for how conservation in Australia is understood, mapped, theorised, and – it is hoped – more adequately supported by governments. As it reflects upon the various modes of analysis used as forms of evidence for conservation's public value, the research maintains the importance of listening to the voices of those who are conserving collections.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the preface;

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and

(iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Preface

This thesis is a 'thesis with publication'. It includes three publications reproduced in their entirety. One chapter is also an adapted version of a fourth publication. All publications have been peer-reviewed and published. Editorial assistance was received in the course of preparing the publications, through peer review and the editing process of each publication. The assistance received meets the thesis editorial assistance requirements. The editorial process for each publication required that a specific citation style be used, and these styles have been retained in the thesis.

The publications are reproduced in the following chapters of this thesis, in accordance with the published self-archiving policies of each publisher:

Paper 1 in Chapter 2
Meredith, A 2021, 'Reconceptualizing social value with community heritage collections in Australia', *The Concept(s) of Heritage | Les notions du patrimoine,* Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, Montréal, pp. 143-160.
This publication has been peer reviewed and published. It is included in its entirety.

Paper 2 in Chapter 3
Meredith, A, Sloggett, R & Scott, M 2021, 'Conservation as shared responsibility: social equity, social justice, and the public good', *Change over Time*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 8-24.
doi: 10.1353/cot.2021.0005
This publication has been peer reviewed and published. As the original publication was less than 50% the thesis author's work, a revised and expanded version is included in the thesis. It contains significant new material.

Paper 3 in Chapter 4
Meredith, A, Sloggett, R & Scott, M 2019, 'Access relative to need for community conservation funding in Australia', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 25, no. 12, pp. 1302-1318.
doi: 10.1080/13527258.2019.1590446
This publication has been peer reviewed and published, and is included in its entirety.

Paper 4 in Chapter 5
Pagliarino, A & Meredith, A 2020, 'Mapping climate change and risks for Australian cultural collections', *AICCM Bulletin*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 3-26.

doi: 10.1080/10344233.2020.1788881
This publication has been peer reviewed and published, and is included in its entirety. The thesis author is not the first-named author but contributed more than 50% of the work of the publication.

Additionally, the publications listed above, and the studies presented in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, benefitted from feedback received at the following conferences and workshops:

- Meredith, A 2020, 'Present imperfect: conservation and care without end'. Paper presented at *Futures: the 5th Biennial Conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies*, online, August 2020.
- Meredith, A 2019, 'The public value of conservation'. Paper presented at *The Concept(s) of Heritage: the 13th International Conference of Young Researchers in Heritage*, Australian National University, Canberra, December 2019.
- Meredith, A 2019, 'Making conservation policy in Australia: contexts and gaps'. Paper presented at *Making Conservation: AICCM National Conference*, Melbourne, November 2019.
- Meredith, A 2019, 'Mapping need and risk for Australian cultural collections'. Paper presented at *Managing Risks to Collections: AICCM Preventive Conservation SIG/Sustainable Collections Committee Conference*, Melbourne, February 2019.
- Meredith, A 2018, 'Resilient communities, resilient collections: case studies from regional and remote Australia'. Paper presented at *Heritage Across Borders: the 4th Biennial Conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies*, Hangzhou, China, September 2018.
- Meredith, A 2018, 'Deposits: Natural, Human and Artistic Ecologies in Archives'. Paper presented at *Creative Conversations, Constructive Connections: the biennial joint conference of the New Zealand Geographical Society/Institute for Australian Geographers*, University of Auckland, New Zealand, July 2018.
- Meredith, A 2018 & 2019, 'Location and conservation'. Workshop paper and discussion presented at *Con/servare: a space for collaborative research*, University of Melbourne, October 2019, and Cologne, Germany, July 2018.
- Meredith, A 2017, 'An "Unsettling of established practice"? Concepts of access and value in conservation'. Confirmation paper presented at the *Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation Student Research Day*, University of Melbourne, October 2017.

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Research ethics

The interviews conducted by the author were carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Melbourne (Ethics ID: 1750057.2).

Acknowledgements

For both the possibility of beginning and of concluding this thesis I have my supervisors, Professor Robyn Sloggett and Dr Marcelle Scott, to thank. Their commitment to these questions has opened up the space for others to continue. Thank you for your guidance and trust, and for illuminating the path ahead.

The conversations I had with people conserving collections around Australia changed my conception of what it was possible for me to do. Your dedication, courage and ingenuity impressed me greatly; thank you for so generously sharing your time and knowledge with me.

Staff at the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation have welcomed me since my start as a student in 2013. Particular thanks to Dr Nicole Tse for providing me with many opportunities, including the chance to teach; to Dr Robert Lazarus for rich conversations along the way; and also to Dr Lyndon Ormond-Parker for early discussions. Many of my colleagues are changing conservation practice for the better, including MaryJo Lelyveld and Amanda Pagliarino.

My family – Karen, Warren, Jack, Katrina and Emma – have nurtured me and this work. To my friends, especially those with whom I've lived over the past four years: thank you for your care, perspective, and necessary distraction. It is a blessing to have too many to list. Before beginning, I didn't quite understand how crucial my PhD comrades would be. Eliza O'Donnell, Claire Grech, Julianne Bell and Evan Tindal, thank you for everything – especially the laughter.

Through their careful and rigorous work, editors and peer reviewers at various publications have helped my ideas find an audience.

The support I received through an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship (stipend and fee offset) was integral to completing this research. I was fortunate to receive additional support for my research, fieldwork and conference attendance from funding sources listed elsewhere.

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this thesis has been written and submitted, the land of the Wurundjeri people, and I pay my respects to Elders and their families past and present.

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List of abbreviations

ABS	The Australian Bureau of Statistics
AICCM	The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material
CHG	Community Heritage Grants
CSIRO	The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
HCC	The Heritage Collections Council
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOM	The International Council of Museums
ICOM-CC	The International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation
ICOMOS	The International Council on Monuments and Sites
Icon	The Institute of Conservation
IIC	The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
IPCC	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NLA	The National Library of Australia
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RCP	Representative Concentration Pathway
UN	The United Nations
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction and methodology

Overview

Cultural and heritage collections are linked to a wide range of social, cultural and economic benefits, but the expertise and skills in conservation needed to enable such benefits are inequitably distributed across Australia. As a result, conservation services are not widely accessible outside of the major collecting institutions where the profession has developed. A mixed-methods research project of statistical mapping, critical discourse analysis, and case study interviews establishes the significance, needs, risks, and benefits associated with collections held outside of major collecting institutions.

Addressing prior research gaps, this thesis develops quantitative and qualitative data within a new theoretical framework to support a national approach to conservation policy in Australia. Beginning with discursive revisions of the concepts of value and equity, the thesis then develops statistical mapping studies of access to conservation funding, and the distribution of risk factors relating to climate change, before moving into a series of case study interviews. These interviews were undertaken with custodians and others working with collections which have traditionally been at the periphery of the dominant practice of conservation in Australia. They provide an important update to earlier studies of the value and benefits, and conservation needs and risks, at such collections. The discrepancy between the value of these collections and their lack of access to conservation impedes their potential impact, and requires a policy-driven response. Arguing that investment in conservation should be more equitably distributed among communities and private individuals, the normative aim of this thesis is to improve access to conservation knowledge and skills for underserviced communities, and to embed sustainable conservation practices within these communities.

This chapter sets out the context for the research and its significance, motivating questions and purpose; a background to the project; the research design and methodologies used in each major part; the theoretical framework; and the structure of the thesis. The particular nature of a 'thesis with publication' is also explained.

Context for the research

This thesis contends with a problem that has been frequently observed in the Australian conservation profession, in particular by the two co-supervisors of this thesis. As Marcelle Scott (2016) describes it, the challenge is that 'the majority of conservation expertise is located in collecting institutions, rather than in communities' (p. 113).

Asking why this is so, Robyn Sloggett (2016) looked to the aftermath of the 1975 Museums in Australia Inquiry on Museums and National Collections (Pigott Report), which upheld the pillars of both 'access and preservation'. Through its implementation, however, 'a centralized model of conservation service delivery evolved, focused on the needs of large institutions' (Sloggett 2016, p. 123). The result is an unequal balance between conservation services available in urban locations across Australia, and what is accessible in regional and remote places.[1] Remoteness is only one factor informing the accessibility of a service such as conservation. Different conceptual models for measuring access are explored at various points in the thesis, adding other dimensions such as – from the field of public health – availability, accommodation, affordability and cultural acceptability (Penchansky & Thomas 1981).

The question of access to conservation matters because significant collections of cultural materials are found across the country, beyond the major institutions that are able to employ dedicated conservation staff. These are collections held by individuals and communities in regional and remote Australia; by smaller institutions with little or no funding for external conservation services; by people whose cultural traditions are not included in the major collecting institutions; and by non-government organisations or private custodians. Due to historical impediments in accessing conservation – characterised by a range of geographical, economic, social and cultural inequities – such collections have a high rate of unaddressed preservation needs, and face complex challenges as they plan for the future. In general, their engagement with the conservation sector is dependent on irregular grant funding to employ external professionals, with scarce opportunity to embed conservation knowledge and resources within collections or communities.

Access to conservation also matters because, as is evinced by the case studies in this thesis, conservation has the potential not only to improve the condition of collections, but to enhance people's lives. A study of 'important knowledge repositories' held in Aboriginal Art Centres across the Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley regions found that 'their location within the community that created and understands them underpins and enriches their social, cultural, aesthetic, intellectual, and economic values' (Scott 2017, p. 24). Place and location are thus inseparable from the way that collections are used,

[1] It is likely that this pattern occurs in other countries, but a global study is beyond the scope of this research. The richness of the data available to be gathered on this under-studied topic, combined with the specificities of the Australian policy context, has necessitated a focus on the state of the field in Australia. The methods developed for this study may be transferrable to other contexts, spatial or historical, and to aid in this I have attempted to explicate and reflect on methodological points throughout the thesis.

valued and understood. The answer to the problem of access cannot be to further centralise either collections or conservation. Drawing on a theoretical framework informed by both the history of ethical thought in conservation, and political geography, this thesis makes a normative argument to the effect that conservation, and its associated benefits, should be more widely accessible so that collections can be preserved in and for as many places as possible.

This point – that conservation is linked to social, cultural, economic, educational and health-related benefits – is well-known within the field, particularly in regional and remote areas and in relation to Indigenous collections like those described above. However, there is a gap between this knowledge and its translation into the types of policies and frameworks that could potentially be utilised to garner more political, financial and cultural support for collections and their conservation. The need to develop more substantial evidence around access and benefit in conservation formed an initial hypothesis for this research, but the absence of baseline data also made decisions about the thesis's scope somewhat difficult. With such a large research gap, where to begin? And if the aim is to show how conservation can lead to positive change, how can its effects be identified and measured without an established base for comparison? The problem also seemed to be an absence of methodological accounts of conducting such research in conservation, and of weighing the types of evidence that different methods could produce. Was it worth pursuing a defence of the public value of conservation, and arguing for greater access to its resources and benefits, if the question could not be definitively answered within the confines of one thesis?

On the other side of this apparent abyss was the potential to experiment in a more exploratory mode. What this made possible was the illumination of aspects of the problem from different angles – philosophical, statistical, and via case studies; the testing of different types of evidence; and the development of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data to begin to fill in the gaps. Reading broadly and deeply, a wealth of literature was found to provide insight and background to the problem, and to extend the ways in which it might be conceived and addressed. The place of this thesis is therefore to make an initial foray into ways of knowing about Australian collections, their access to conservation, the risks they face, and the benefits they bring to communities.

Research questions and purpose

The purpose of this thesis is not only to examine present problems and practices; it also has a normative aim. This is because, as the political scientist Andrew Douglas (2013) explains,

> To think politically is to bring a set of evaluative or normative perspectives to bear on our reality. It is to conjure up, explicitly or implicitly, a set of imaginative projections about what our human situation can and should become. (p. 43)

Responding to the call by Sloggett (2015) to develop data and analytic methods to 'provide the critical contemporary context in which to argue for the value and benefit of the profession', the diverse strategies explored herein have the intention 'to increase resources for the conservation of Australia's cultural heritage material' (p. 85). As such, there is an underlying push towards positive change – internal and external to conservation – throughout the thesis. By describing how conservation becomes a public good, the aim is to develop a theoretical basis for understanding its public value, and therefore its place within public policy. Towards this end, this research has an expressly political aim in conceiving of conservation as a public service. Public services compensate for the inequalities of the market by serving all members of the public equally; as such, access to conservation knowledge, skills and resources must be more equitable than is currently the case.

The concepts of access and benefit drove the formulation of the research questions to be investigated:

- Can ideas of public value, and social equity and justice, be used to reconceptualise the work of conservation? Is there a philosophical and theoretical basis for this reconceptualisation?
- What techniques can be used to understand issues such as access to conservation services, and risks facing collections, in relation to the centralisation of conservation services? How can quantitative data on these issues be displayed and communicated?
- What are the experiences of people preserving collections of cultural material across Australia beyond the major collecting institutions? How are forms of value, risks, needs, and benefits described?
- How can the reconceptualisation of conservation's broader public value, or its impact in other domains, be translated into policy? Do the findings suggest a way

> forward in terms of mobilising evidence of the public value of conservation in order to improve access?

The questions are taken up in the three parts of this thesis, which each correspond to a distinct methodology: first, in a theoretical and philosophical discussion of value, social equity and justice; second, in statistical mapping of the locations of different sets of collections in Australia in relation to access to funding for conservation, and risks to collections; and third, in a series of case study interviews with custodians and other people who work with collections. The three parts are then tied together in a study of policy and indicator frameworks for culture and wellbeing, with reflections on the potential utility of the evidence generated through each methodology – discursive, quantitative and qualitative.

While conservation's interdisciplinarity has been widely theorised (Scott 2016), this has not yet been matched by an articulation of the far-reaching nature of its effects. One way in which this might be done is suggested by Claire Bishop (2012), who, writing on participatory forms of contemporary art, also seeks a theoretical frame for understanding the relationship between culture and social change, and how artists are able to 'hold the artistic and social critiques in tension' (p. 278). Adapting Félix Guattari's ([1992] 1995) idea of 'transversal junctions between the political, the ethical and the aesthetic' (p. 134), Bishop proposes that:

> Guattari's paradigm of transversality offers one such way of thinking through these artistic operations: he leaves art as a category in its place, but insists upon its constant flight into and across other disciplines, putting both art and the social into question, even while simultaneously reaffirming art as a universe of value. (Bishop 2012, p. 278)

Conservation, perhaps to a different degree, can also be construed as a transversal practice: it reaffirms the value of collections while at the same time insisting upon the instrumentality of that value in other domains. As well as substantiating this argument, there is a need to counter a misconception of conservation that has become prevalent in adjacent fields. Against charges that conservation overreaches in attempting to prevent damage and destruction through a kind of 'loss aversion' (Holtorf 2015), evidence from the field shows that an acceptance of change is at the heart of conservation practice and has been for some time (Eastop 2012; Hölling 2016). This is not only the case for the works of modern and contemporary art discussed by conservation theorist Hanna Hölling

in the historical shift from static art object to process-art.[2] Positing conservation as a 'temporal intervention' in the life of artworks, Hölling writes that 'we may think of artworks of all kinds as ever-changing and evolving entities that continually undergo physical alteration and transition' (2016, p. 22). Her attention to time, durability, and the importance of the present as 'the only reality given and point of access to the work' are qualities that apply to thinking about other types of cultural materials and collections too (Hölling 2016, p. 21).

Mirroring the questions about conservation's public value, or what it enables, is the need to document what happens when access to conservation is impeded. Loss – both of cultural materials, and of opportunity to enjoy their linked benefits – is also unequally distributed. Historical inequities in access to conservation services, knowledge and resources intersect with socio-economic factors to affect the condition of collections, risking the loss of materials. At the political, ethical and aesthetic juncture produced by conservation, diverse benefits are tangible for individuals and communities; the presence of inequities at the same juncture gives rise to the deleterious effects of loss. Examples of both the impact of conservation and the impact of loss are documented in the case studies and vignettes throughout the thesis.

Background to the research

Policy background

In 1933, S.F. Markham & Professor H.C. Richards conducted the first comprehensive survey of the 'historical, financial and curatorial' state of museums and art galleries in Australia for the Museums Association of London. Surveying 65 museums and art galleries, the authors highlighted the prevalence of risks to collection materials such as inadequate storage, and linked the poor state of collections in regional museums to inadequate funding. This was followed in 1970 by a report prepared by A.E. Werner (Keeper of the British Museum Research Laboratory) for UNESCO on the state of conservation in Australian and Papua New Guinean collections, with a specific focus on Aboriginal and anthropological material. Highlighting the amount of important material held in small historical museums (p. 1), Werner (1970) proposed a solution whereby larger state museums would share conservation facilities with smaller collections (p. 8).

[2] As this line of argument is also advanced in many of the articles that critique conservation's relationship to material and social change, it is important to highlight conservation perspectives on the issue. Chapter 7 contains an extensive discussion on change and loss in the discourses of conservation and critical heritage studies.

In the early 1970s, the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections commissioned a report on Australia's museums and national collections.[3] This became the seminal *Museums in Australia 1975: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia*.[4] The committee made several recommendations with particular relevance to conservation. These were to establish a statutory authority to lead the development of museums; to require that museums seeking public funding meet standards of conservation; for conservation to be a high priority in order to address the deterioration of collections outlined in the report; and, echoing Werner (1970), to establish a training program in cultural materials conservation. On the question of support for regional collections, the committee advised that regional associations or networks should be formed where possible to share conservation knowledge and skills between collections in localities, thereby 'rationalising the museum activities within a region' (Pigott 1975, p. 24).

The idea of a national approach to the conservation of Australia's cultural heritage also emerges in subsequent papers and reports. These include a *survey of dispersed collections by the Heritage Collections Working Group*, *Heritage collections in Australia Report (Anderson 1991);* the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee and University Museums Review Committee's reports *Cinderella collections: university museums & collections in Australia* (1996) and *Transforming Cinderella collections* (1998); the Heritage Collections Council's 2000 *Skills Gap Audit of Specialist Conservators and Conservation Specialisation in Australia*; Deakin University's 2002 *A Study into the Key Needs of Australia's Collecting Institutions in the Heritage Sector; the Collections Council of Australia's Conservation Survey 2006 (*Bullock, Birtley & Jenkins); and Mansfield et al.'s 2014 *Innovation Study: Challenges and Opportunities for Australia's Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums*. Reflecting on the 2000 Heritage Collections Council report, Scott wrote in 2016:

> Numerous findings of the report remain relevant fifteen years later, most especially the unsurprising finding that access to conservation skills outside of the major State and Commonwealth funded collecting institutions had changed little since it was identified as a major concern twenty-five years earlier in the Pigott Report. (p. 189)

[3] At the same time, Justice R.M. Hope was appointed to lead an inquiry into the nature and state of Australia's built and natural heritage, culminating in the 1974 *Report of the National Estate: report of the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate*.
[4] Henceforth referred to as the Pigott Report (1975).

The problem of underfunding, and the resulting skills shortage, continues to affect 'regional museums, historical societies, Aboriginal art centres, and community collections' in particular (Scott 2016, p. 190). Due to their history of unmet needs, collections in these and related categories – audiovisual and performing arts archives; regional galleries; collections of faith; school and tertiary education collections; scientific collections; and private collections – were targeted for quantitative and qualitative case studies in Part 2 and Part 3 of this thesis.

On the national level, 1995 saw the launch of the Heritage Collections Committee and Cultural Ministers Council's *National Conservation Policy for the Conservation of Movable Cultural Heritage*. This was followed in 1998 by the publication of the *National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy: Australia's Heritage Collections* (Heritage Collections Council). Across the two texts, conservation strategies such as significance assessments, conservation planning, training, disaster preparedness and environmental guidelines were developed. Policy statements 5 and 6 of the 1995 policy reflect the close connection between conservation and access. The statements recognise 'the important right of the Australian people to have a reasonable and an equitable opportunity of access to their heritage collections, subject to cultural restrictions or sensitivities', and 'that conservation and preservation are essential to provide ongoing access to Australia's heritage collections for current and future generations' (n.p.). In addition to the above policies, the Conservation and Collection Management Working Party under the HCC developed consultancies that led to 'important publications including *Significance,* a ground-breaking publication that has been used by organisations worldwide; and the training package *re-Collections*, *Be Prepared* and *Guidelines for Environmental Control in Cultural Institutions' (*Cook et al. 2011, *p. 4).* In 2011, however, the Cultural Ministers Council was removed from the Council of Australian Governments and replaced by an annual Meeting of Cultural Ministers (Kyne & Morton 2017, p. 5), and an updated national conservation policy remains an 'elusive goal' (Griffin & Paroissien 2011, p. 5). As Sloggett commented in 2015, in the decades since the policy and strategy were implemented, the 'political, economic and technological' – and social – 'environment in which conservators work has changed considerably' (p. 79), and a new national policy is needed in response.

Australia's two national cultural policies are also relevant to several chapters of this thesis. *Creative Nation* (Department of Communications and the Arts 1994) is widely understood as Australia's first national culture policy (MacNeill, Lye & Caulfield 2013). Implemented by the Keating Labor Government, *Creative Nation* included the

responsibility for heritage preservation as a component of its responsibility for cultural development. In relation to movable cultural heritage, policies addressed the following areas: access; digitisation; cultural diversity and the multiplicity of heritage values; the economic value of heritage, particularly in the regions; employment opportunities in conservation; financial support and legislation to limit the export of significant cultural heritage items; the recognition of Indigenous custodial rights, and the link between repatriation and reconciliation; and intangible heritage. Support provided to the national institutions was intended to encourage community outreach to help 'individuals and communities to preserve and present material of cultural significance in their original locations or regions' (DCA 1994, n.p.).[5]

At this time, cultural material in Australia was conceived as belonging to a 'Distributed National Collection', rather than isolated and self-reliant entities. This idea can be traced back at least to the Pigott Report (1975), whose authors stated that:

> Any collections of merit which is funded predominantly from public funds – federal or State or municipal – should be regarded as a national collection. We put this view dispassionately and not to be provocative. The relevance of an important collection – and the institution which maintains it – is not confined to any one State. Regardless of questions of legal ownership or official responsibility, every important collection in a public museum serves education and scholarship far beyond the enclosing state or municipal boundaries. (p. 33)

Upholding the ideal of public ownership of culture, *Creative Nation* recommended a charter of cultural rights, including the 'right of access to our intellectual and cultural heritage' (DCA 1994, n.p.), but it does not appear that this was ever fulfilled.[6]

It was not until 2013 that a new national cultural policy was released, this time by the Gillard Labor Government: *Creative Australia* (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport). As cultural economist David Throsby (2018) writes, however, successive political upheavals meant that this policy 'enjoyed a much shorter life as a formal component of government policy than had *CN* [*Creative Nation*], which at least existed for long enough for some of its programs to be put into effect' (p. 25). As this implies, the policy did not have a chance to be implemented. The present context, in

[5] For a study of the role of *Creative Nation* and other policy documents in imagining Australia's national identity, see Simpson (2002).

[6] Where there is legislative protection for cultural rights, for example in section 19 of the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, the focus is on the distinct cultural rights of Indigenous Australian people.

which Australia still has no national cultural policy, contributes to his assessment that 'the regulatory framework within which heritage is protected and conserved at all tiers of government at the present time is haphazard, uncoordinated and weak' (Throsby 2018, p. 58). In her 2015 paper on the need for a new national conservation policy, Sloggett called for targeted research to:

- Map the repositories for cultural material across Australia
- Identify and assess current structures that support the custodianship, care and use of this material
- Research and develop clear statements about the different kinds of significance and value such material represents
- Determine, quantitatively and qualitatively, the risks to this material
- Examine the kinds of structured approaches that will help mitigate these risks (access models, training, infrastructure, network development, funding models and the like) (p. 85)

These focal points have shaped the research design of this thesis.

Terminology

To reflect the wide scope of practices it encompasses, the term 'conservation' is used in a broad sense. Both practices understood as preventive – actions taken to prevent or reduce the risk of deterioration or loss of cultural material – and interventive, or remedial treatment practices undertaken to conserve items, are implied in this usage. This is informed by the International Council of Museums – Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) definition of conservation as 'all measures and actions aimed at safeguarding tangible cultural heritage while ensuring its accessibility to present and future generations' (2008). These measures and actions include preventive conservation, remedial conservation and restoration.

The term 'preservation' is used interchangeably with conservation. As the objects of conservation may be analogue or digital, the term is intended to apply to both sets of materials unless otherwise specified. Digital materials may be 'born digital' – created in a digital form – or 'digitised', converted from analogue to digital form; again, both are included within the scope of the terms conservation and preservation.[7]

[7] For a delineation of the terms 'physical preservation', 'digital preservation', 'born digital' and 'digitised', see Brown (2020a).

In all collections of cultural materials, the practice of conservation requires specific knowledge, skills and resources. An understanding of these is developed throughout the thesis, particularly in Part 3. While not exhaustive, the following examples suggest what is contained in each term:

- Conservation knowledge: about the physical and chemical composition of cultural materials; deterioration mechanisms; risks to collections; options for treatment and prevention
- Conservation skills: in practices such as remedial treatments and preventive conservation tasks
- Conservation resources: the infrastructure, materials, funding, and staffing needed to safely preserve collections

Research design and methodology

A mixed-methods research design

Due to the expansive nature of the research problem and questions, a mixed-methods approach was chosen that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods. The advantages of this approach are several: multiple types of data can be used to explore the topic; the perspective of the analysis can vary from breadth to depth as appropriate, and data can be both illustrative and representative; and flexibility in the research design allows for methods to be tested in discrete studies. As each method is necessarily partial and incomplete, combining several methods offers a more developed view of the thesis's main concerns – conservation and access, value, benefit, need and risk.

The thesis is structured in three parts, each with its own overarching conceptual model:

- Part 1 (Chapters 2-3): theory as method and critical discourse analysis
- Part 2 (Chapters 4-5): quantitative mapping and statistical analysis
- Part 3 (Chapters 6-8): qualitative case studies and dialectical analysis

Bringing the three parts together, a fourth part – containing the findings (Chapter 9) and a brief conclusion – reflects on the types of data, or evidence, obtained through each method with a view to communicating the needs of collections and the impact of conservation in future policy.

With a theoretical basis established in Part 1 through a review of the literature and critical discourse analysis, Parts 2 and 3 then provide empirical evidence of the issues and test the theories developed in Part 1. The mapping and statistical studies in Chapters 4 and 5 explore the issues of spatial equity in accessing funding for community heritage

conservation, and the spatial distribution of risks to heritage arising from climate change. Augmenting the theoretical and quantitative studies of the first half of the thesis is the qualitative data included in Part 3. Herein, interviews with collection custodians, conservation outreach workers, and other experts are studied first by sector, then through a selection of individual case studies. The key concepts of value, risk, need and benefit identified in Part 1 are given shape in the words of the interview respondents, whose narratives of their experiences in conserving collections provide important testimony as to how conservation is understood, encountered and practiced across the country today. As the case study interviews contain, in some ways, the most complex data of the thesis, a method of dialectical analysis is developed across Chapters 7 and 8 to grapple with their apparent contradictions without seeking easy resolution. That is, where there are significant holdings of materials, there is also a high level of risk to collections; and despite the presence of community benefits linked to collections, many lack access to conservation and other mitigation strategies to enable those benefits to reach as many people as possible. Chapter 9 and 10 synthesise the findings and draw these varied approaches together.

As each chapter contains a discussion of the specific methods used to obtain the results, the next sections focus, rather, on the overarching methodologies informing each part.

Part one: theory as method and critical discourse analysis

In the first part of the thesis, a theory is built around the key concepts of public value, and social equity and justice, in relation to conservation. As these concepts are also interrogated in diverse textual artefacts of the conservation and heritage fields – policies, guidelines, and assessment processes, as well as philosophical works – the relationship between discourse and practice demands a close reading. Critical discourse analysis, commonly associated with the work of Norman Fairclough in the 1990s but including a wide array of theorists, 'provides theories and methods for the empirical study of the relations between discourse and social and cultural developments in different social domains' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 60).[8] Practitioners of critical discourse analysis share an understanding of the world – material and social – as being constructed through discourse, although the degree to which discourse is considered to be wholly or partially constitutive of reality varies. It is also a critical research strategy in that the aim is to 'investigate and analyse power relations in society and to formulate normative

[8] 'Critical discourse analysis' is so named to distinguish it from the earlier discourse theory associated with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). Critical, in this sense, means that there is potential for discourses to be changed through their critique; this would not be possible in Laclau and Mouffe's account, where 'discourse itself is fully constitutive of our world' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 19).

perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 3).

In Chapter 2, critical discourse analysis is undertaken of the relationship between texts – such as policies and other framing documents – and conservation practices. The idea that language is not a reflection of a pre-existing reality but is formative of that reality gives rise to the possibility that 'changes in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed' (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 9).[9] Later in the thesis, this conception of the role of language shapes both the collection of the qualitative interview data and the mode of analysis applied to the transcripts.

Part two: statistical mapping studies

The second part of the thesis presents two large-scale statistical mapping studies that look at aspects of collections' needs and risks. Both chapters take up the issue of spatial inequity as one factor informing the accessibility of conservation. Quantitative data is collated on, first, access to funding for community heritage conservation, and second, the location of a set of collections against maps of climate change variables. The decision to incorporate quantitative data was also driven by an awareness of the growing availability of digital datasets, and their potential utility in studies of access and equity in conservation. The UK-based research project *Mapping Museums 1960–2020* (Candlin et al. 2020), while dissimilar in the type of data collected, demonstrates a broader interest in the application of geographical methodologies to the cultural heritage field.

As a methodology, mapping provides a way of representing and communicating complex information involving spatial and temporal variables. Although the data presented in these chapters is quantitative, to guide its interpretation and critique the theories of cultural and political geographers – chiefly, Doreen Massey, Neil Smith, David Harvey, and Setha Low – are drawn upon.

Part three: case study interviews

In the third part of the thesis, a case study research design was used to collect and analyse the data from a series of qualitative interviews. These were undertaken from November 2019 to June 2020 with 39 respondents who work with collections across Australia, and sought to capture, in the respondents' own words, the risks, needs, and benefits of conservation at different cultural collections across Australia. A particular focus was on

[9] The influence of twentieth-century theories of linguistics can be seen on the subsequent development of discourse theory and critical discourse analysis. The idea that language can change reality is indebted to, for example, linguist JL Austin's theories of speech acts and performative utterance (1962).

collections at the periphery of dominant conservation practice, which is centred in Australia at the major state and national collections. A full list of respondents is given in Chapter 6.

There are parallels between the case study research design and Fiona Candlin's methodology in her 2015 book, *Micromuseology: An Analysis of Small Independent Museums*. Candlin interviewed staff and visitors at small, independent, single-subject museums in the UK, with the idea that an analysis of smaller museums can reflect wider cultural issues. Drawing on the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's method of 'thick description', and historian Carlo Ginzburg's theory of microhistory, Candlin develops a:

> …method for creating dialogue between small facts and big issues. This involves a close relationship between thick description – recognizing and understanding the meaning of fine detail within a given context – and diagnosis, wherein the anthropologist explains what that description and the knowledge that it generates demonstrates about the society in which it was found, and beyond that, about social life as such. (2015, p. 19)

For Candlin, the location of each collection elicited a particular connection to its surroundings, to local people and their histories. In my analysis of the interviews, 'fine detail' is elicited by including respondents' descriptions of their experiences in the case studies of Chapters 7 and 8. The case study methodology is able to maintain the uniqueness of each respondent's situation as a discrete unit, which can also reveal the similarities and differences in different collections and their contexts.

Following summaries of each interviews' key points in Chapter 6, select interviews were chosen for in-depth case studies in Chapters 7, and comparative vignettes in Chapter 8. Briefer case studies are also woven into the theoretical discussions of Chapters 2 and 3.

Theoretical framework

To establish a social justice framework for conservation practice, a theoretical basis is found in considering philosophies of ethics and aesthetics, and political and cultural geography, in relation to conservation.

Philosophies of ethics and aesthetics

By bringing the principles of social equity and social justice, and the framework of the public good, into conservation discourse, the aim is to develop a philosophical basis for

articulating the impact that conservation has on the world. This does not mean that ethics is 'a criterion by which one can justify a work; it is, rather, a methodology':

> Much as the discourse related to apprehending "beauty" within an artwork does not require it to be beautiful to be significant, but exists as a set of tools to approach the work's discussion, ethics can likewise function as a methodological approach which can address the aesthetic conditions of an artwork in light of the effects it produces on the social field of which it is a part. (Beshty 2015, p. 22)

Rather than thinking of ethics as an external field to be applied to conservation, in this framework the practice of conservation itself constitutes a methodology and an ethical discourse. From the point of view of the ethical philosopher Erich Hatala Matthes (2016), 'historic preservation is essentially concerned with ethical issues' (p. 787). While Matthes (2019) writes that heritage generally has a 'positive valence, as being a good thing', it poses two morally significant problems: 'disowning injustice' by only focusing on the positive aspects of the past, and 'embracing injustice' by constructing and identifying all heritage as positive (p. 5). The idea that collections produce public good must therefore move beyond 'a performative value related to both moral duty and entrenched understandings of rights, but a display without action' (Phillips 2016, p. 212).

This thesis takes its definition of social justice from John Rawls' 1971 *A Theory of Justice*: 'the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation' (p. 6). The link between this theory of the 'duty to justice' and the cultural sphere is made by philosopher Elaine Scarry (1985; 1999). Aesthetics – figured as 'beauty' in Scarry's 1999 work *On Beauty and Being Just* – is innately concerned with distributional good, or equity; 'far from contributing to social injustice', the work of aesthetics 'actually assists us in the work of addressing injustice' (p. 62). It is beauty, according to Scarry, that can fulfil the duty to justice: citing Rawls, she writes that we have a duty '"to support" just arrangements where they already exist and to help bring them into being where they are "not yet established"' (Scarry 1999, p. 115).

Political and cultural geography

The work of human geographers explores the theories, causes and implications of spatial inequality. Neil Smith (2008) analyses the relationship between spatial inequality and the restructuring of geographic space through the Marxist concept of uneven development,

which refers to the interdependent levels of development and under-development at a given scale – urban, regional, nation-state, global. In this view, disparity in investment is 'structural rather than statistical' (Smith 2008, p. 4). Throughout her work, Doreen Massey (1979; 1995) argues that issues of space and place are inseparable from issues of production, and that private economic interests benefit from spatial inequality. Massey insists that the local in structural processes be studied alongside the general in order to understand the impact of spatial scale and variation on empirical phenomena. Spatial and aspatial forms of inequality combine to create a 'power geometry' in which differential levels of mobility and access serve to reinforce power imbalances (Massey 1994, pp. 149-151).

From a sociological perspective, spatial inequality follows a divergent history. In their survey of the field, Lobao, Hooks and Tickamyer (2007) argue that research into spatial inequality conjoins two separate traditions: sociological study of inequality and stratification, and human geographical study of space, place and scale. This 'spatial turn' in sociology and other humanistic disciplines purports to spatialise the study of inequality, but overlooks the concern for inequality at the heart of geographic theories of spatial production from Smith, Massey and David Harvey (1973) onwards. This approach was criticised by Massey (1979) as attending only to the outcome of the differential spatial allocation of resources, rather than the processes by which unequal distribution is shaped. More recently, the geographers May and Thrift (2001) contend that the 'spatial turn' of the social sciences and humanities promulgates a dualistic relationship between space and time in which the 'spatial is relegated to the realm of stasis and thus excavated of any meaningful politics' (pp. 1-2).

The first sociological studies of spatial inequality in Australia date to the 1970s with historical examinations of post-war urban growth on inequality in and between cities. These multi-factorial urban ecological studies include social indices such as housing conditions, tertiary education and crime rate, but omit the question of access to arts, culture and heritage, or even to health services (Stilwell & Hardwick 1973). Following the recession of 1973–1975, and likely influenced by the British geographers' recuperation of the concept, uneven development began to be applied by Australian sociologists, geographers and political economists to socio-economic disparities across urban, regional and national scales (Stilwell 1979; Forbes & Rimmer 1984). As a whole, this research contends that the post-war centralisation of public investment caused unequal standards of living in rural and regional Australia.

These theoretical models of place, location and spatial inequity matter for conservation. Place informs cultural production, material availability, collection ontologies and conservation traditions; risks to collections arise from the natural and human environments surrounding the collection. Community collections, perhaps more so than larger institutions, are created and maintained in response to the needs and identities of place-based communities, but they are at a significant disadvantage in terms of accessing conservation services. Consequently, regional and remote collections carry a disproportionate burden of risk for the distributed national collection, while also being excluded from enjoying the social, cultural and economic benefits which derive from securing objects' continuity.

Thesis structure

There are three main parts to this thesis and a fourth section containing findings and a conclusion. As this is a 'thesis with publication', three chapters contain reproductions of a book chapter (Chapter 2) and peer-reviewed journal articles (Chapters 4 and 5). In addition, Chapter 3 presents a reworking of a peer-reviewed journal article. Full citation details for each publication are given at the start of their respective chapters. Separate reference lists follow each published chapter.

Part 1: Theoretical propositions

Chapter 2: 'Reconceptualising social value with community heritage collections in Australia' examines the philosophical foundations of the concept of value, and considers how a division between intrinsic and instrumental forms of value has shaped the field of conservation. Tracing the history of the concept, the chapter analyses the development of axiologies of heritage values in key conservation texts, policies, guidelines, and assessment processes. Although 'social value' is now recognised in such frameworks, it is argued that an axiological structure – which aims to identify, compare and preserve intrinsic values – restricts what this can mean in practice by embedding values in the object or collection, and therefore in the past. This affixing of value has the effect of limiting the actual instrumentalisation of heritage: its capacity to improve the lives of people and communities. Methods of critical discourse analysis are used to juxtapose the hegemonic discourses of conservation – in which the object retains its status as the locus of value – with examples of the social value of community heritage collections in Queensland, Australia, in the context of post-disaster response and recovery. Drawing on understandings of the processual nature of heritage, it is proposed that a new conceptualisation of conservation as a process can refocus attention on what conservation can offer communities in the present and future.

From this theorisation of value, **Chapter 3**: 'Conservation as shared responsibility: social equity, social justice, and the public good' establishes a foundation for three other key concepts in this thesis: risk, need and benefit. While social inequity presents a risk to cultural heritage, conservation also contributes to social equity and justice goals. This chapter argues that conservation, as a normative discipline premised on the idea of a future in which heritage is accessible and open to interpretation, use and enjoyment, must, like social equity and justice movements, work to create more equitable socio-political futures. It focuses on groups in Australia whose access to conservation, and thus to their rights to their heritage, is disrupted by social inequities. Theorising that conservation is a public good, and focused through case studies that examine issues affecting community collections in Tasmania, a case is established for the need to rebalance conservation in areas which have experienced past structural injustice. Utilising the work of ethical and political philosophers, critical evaluations of the profession are proposed to attempt to redefine conservation discourse, and to demonstrate the obligation of conservation to account for principles of social equity and justice. Overall, the chapter reflects on the philosophical, ethical and societal implications for the profession of understanding conservation as a process characterised by change.

Part 2: Statistical mapping

The first of the quantitative data studies, **Chapter 4**: 'Access relative to need for community conservation funding in Australia' evaluates the accessibility of conservation services in terms of spatial or geographic barriers to access. In a climate of scarce resources for heritage preservation, there is a need to develop principles and methodology for assessing and responding to inequity within the conservation sector. While the case study focuses on the conservation and management of collections of cultural material in Australia, the methodology is globally relevant for advancing the equitable distribution of heritage and conservation resources according to need. Using a statistical analysis of the spatial distribution of 1323 local heritage conservation projects that have been funded by the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grants Program from 1994 to 2017, the chapter provides a measure of the spatial equality of conservation in Australia. Spatial distribution analysis indicates that the majority of projects funded are located in major cities, with fewer projects funded in regional, remote and very remote areas. An 'access relative to need' approach is proposed to counter the current centralisation of the conservation industry.

Chapter 5: 'Mapping climate change and risks for Australian cultural collections' adapts the statistical mapping methodology to look at risk factors to collections arising from a changing climate. The variables of temperature, relative humidity, rainfall and fire weather are used in conjunction with spatial methodologies to produce maps that overlay locations of Australian national, state and regional cultural heritage collections with climate change risks. The data analysis of these maps is evaluated in relation to the biological risks of insect pests and mould using published studies and recent observations. Mapping both the distribution of cultural heritage collections, and potential environmental impacts, allows for future risks to collections to be modelled, producing an evidence base for identifying future priorities for conservation. An historical study of the development of arts policy and conservation guidelines in Australia places the investigation of changing climate and risks within a broader national cultural heritage context. In understanding how Australian cultural heritage collections, and the conservation profession more broadly, might become more sustainable and resilient, the use of environmental guidelines in conjunction with predictive climate mapping resources is recommended.

Part 3: Case study interviews

As a complement to the quantitative studies, **Chapter 6:** 'A sectoral analysis of issues in the Australian conservation sector' presents the results of 39 case study interviews with collection custodians and other workers around the country. Building on earlier reports into the needs of collections, a thematic qualitative analysis of the interview data is conducted, identifying key issues to those who care for collections today. An initial sectoral analysis finds 14 categories of interview respondent according to the type of collection with which they work: university collections; school archives; scientific collections; hospital archives; performing arts archives; audiovisual archives; regional art galleries; public libraries; regional museums and historical societies; Indigenous collections; religious collections; built heritage collections; private collections; and other respondents. Included in the introduction to each interview is a brief discussion of the respondent's role, and the extent and significance of the collection. An extended thematic analysis then interprets the content of the interviews across six primary areas: impact and benefit of collections; risks to collections; mitigation of risks; access to conservation; the effects of loss, damage and destruction; and future challenges and needs.

Continuing the qualitative analysis, **Chapter 7:** 'Three case studies of the dialectic of significance and risk' develops detailed accounts of the operation of the apparent

contradiction, or dialectical tension, faced by those working with collections between the existence of significant materials, and risks to those materials. Again drawing on the 39 case study interviews, this chapter shifts perspective to examine three individual case studies within a theoretical framework of Theodor Adorno's negative dialectic. Case studies are presented of a regional museum and historical society; two scientific collections; and a respondent who works with a range of Indigenous community collections. Between the two poles of the dialectic – significance and risk – is the potential for loss to occur. From the analysis of the three case studies, similarities are found in terms of their emphasis on place and location with local significance and regionally specific risk factors. Hierarchies of significance – like those introduced in Chapter 2 – tend to devalue the local, but this chapter shows that there is a desire for materials to be held locally, and that loss may occur if this is not appreciated. A broader discussion of the impact of loss, damage or destruction captures insights garnered from these case studies as well as others beyond the scope of this chapter.

In **Chapter 8:** 'Further case vignettes of the dialectic of impact and need', a second dialectical analysis focuses on the co-existence, in many collections interviewed, between the benefits they bring to their surrounding communities, and their needs and challenges now and into the future. While many collections demonstrate links to social, cultural, economic, educational and health-related benefits, these benefits are impeded by problems such as low staffing and resource levels, and geographical remoteness from the centres of conservation in Australia. As it is contended that conservation, as well as bringing its own immediate benefits, is necessary for these other forms of impact to be realised, a focal point in the analysis of need is access to conservation for collections. In order to reflect the omnipresence of this issue across different collection types, all of the sectors identified in Chapter 6 are included. In these case vignettes, the sense of the respondents' own experiences is retained through the use of their descriptions of benefit and need. The sectoral analysis leads into a general discussion of the needs and benefits found in common across the collections, and examples of the dialectical movement wherein addressing need is found to increase benefits, and access to collections – as enabled by conservation – to increase their value or significance. Mirroring the structure of Chapter 7, a third point is located between the terms need and benefit to show how opportunity loss arises when needs and challenges are not met for collections.

Part 4: Findings and conclusion

Finally, **Chapter 9**: 'Future policy needs and indicators for conservation' argues for a policy-driven response to the issues identified in the preceding chapters. Synthesising and

reflecting on the results of the mixed-methods data and analysis, the chapter considers what a new national conservation policy would need to account for in order to represent the needs of collections, and to make conservation more accessible to prevent loss of cultural materials and opportunity. Examples are drawn from the case study interviews to connect the participants' needs to ideas about what a future national conservation policy could do to support their collection or type of collection. Insights garnered from the theoretical and quantitative modes of analysis are also applied. In order for conservation to be better supported in art and cultural policies, the new articulation of its public value and social benefit advanced in this thesis must be communicated. Thus, research into quantifications of the social value of arts, culture and heritage is assessed, with a focus on wellbeing and cultural indicators. The chapter proposes how these might be applied to the field of conservation as (a) internal measures of progress in the Australian conservation field, and (b) external measures of conservation's impact on other domains. A critique of some aspects of these models – relating to cultural hegemony and the quantification of culture – is also undertaken. The chapter concludes with a discussion of an evidence base for the conservation sector from which progress might be measured.

On a 'thesis with publication'

While I am the main author of this thesis, three of the four publications were co-authored (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). One of these co-authored publications – now Chapter 3 – has been extensively rewritten such that it is now predominantly my own work. Nonetheless, the original co-authors are cited, as for other chapters where this is relevant. A thesis that includes co-authored publications makes transparent the collaborative nature of any research, and there is as a result some variance in style, voice, and objectives between the published chapters, and those which are presented for the first time here. To meet the expectations of publication, it was necessary to provide background information – particularly for those publications with an international focus – and contextual detail about the research anew each time, resulting in some repetition across chapters.

Chapter 2: Reconceptualising social value with community heritage collections in Australia

As discussed in the Introduction, this is a thesis *with* publication. This chapter is a reproduction of the author-accepted manuscript of a book chapter published with Les Presses de l'Université du Québec in *The Concept(s) of Heritage | Les notions du patrimoine* (2021).

Due to publication requirements, this chapter contains an analysis of several case studies which are not fully contextualised until later in the thesis. Human ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Melbourne for undertaking data collection as part of the PhD research project (Ethics ID: 1750057.2).

The full citation for this article is as follows:

> Meredith, A 2021, 'Reconceptualizing social value with community heritage collections in Australia', *The Concept(s) of Heritage | Les notions du patrimoine*, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, Montréal, pp. 143-160.

Abstract

A division between intrinsic and instrumental value echoes across many fields of inquiry: philosophy, political economy, art history, and conservation and heritage. In the latter fields, axiologies of heritage values have been developed across key texts, policies, guidelines, and assessment processes, with the aim of enabling the intrinsic values of objects and collections to be identified, compared, and preserved. Although "social value" is recognized in these frameworks, the processes of heritage significance assessment means that a value identified nonetheless remains fixed in time. As argued in this chapter, this affixing of value has the effect of limiting the actual instrumentalization of heritage in the sense of its capacity to improve the lives of people and communities. Drawing on methods of critical discourse analysis, the hegemonic discourses of conservation – in which the object retains its status as the locus of value – are contrasted with examples of the social value of community heritage collections in Queensland, Australia, in the context of post-disaster response and recovery. This analysis gives rise to a new conceptualization of the value of conservation as a process, shifting the focus away from values as fixed in heritage objects, toward what it can offer communities in the present and future.

Researching social value in community heritage collections

Value is a key concept in conservation theory and practice, as it is in the field of heritage studies. In the discourses of both fields, typologies of value are formalized through mechanisms such as policies, guidelines, legislation, charters, conventions, declarations,

and other doctrinal texts. In the Australian context – where the case studies presented here are situated – value is commonly interpreted through the framework of "significance," following the Burra Charter of 1979 (updated in 2013),[10] and, in the movable heritage or collections context, *Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections*.[11] The latter text, building on a 2001 guide to assessing significance by the then Heritage Collections Council,[12] divides significance into four primary areas – historic, artistic or aesthetic, scientific or research potential, and social or spiritual significance – and is widely utilized in practice by people working with collections both in Australia and around the world. Focusing on social value, this chapter departs from the established formulae by taking an inductive approach to studying significance, drawing on vignettes of case study interviews with museum development officers who work to support community heritage collections in the Australian state of Queensland. In the productive tension between what Laurajane Smith terms the "authorized heritage discourse,"[13] and the perceptions and experiences of the museum outreach workers, is a re-conceptualization of what constitutes "social value" for community heritage collections possible?

Research that addresses the experiences of people conserving their heritage, and the specificities of locality and place, requires a methodological orientation which is reflective of "situated knowledge."[14] Standpoint theory, Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues, "provides a valid starting point for research and analysis whereby the subject can recognise and claim the partiality involved in the process of their knowledge production."[15] "All social research," Moreton-Robinson continues, "relies on the experiences and knowledges of research subjects to inform the research,"[16] where the use of the term "subject" is inclusive of the researcher. Contemporary conservation practice and research in Australia recognize and utilize standpoint theory. At the University of Melbourne's Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (where I have

[10] Australia ICOMOS, The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, Burwood, Australia ICOMOS, 2013. This is an updated version of the 1979 Charter.

[11] Collections Council of Australia, *Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections*, Canberra, Collections Council of Australia, 2009.

[12] Heritage Collections Council, *Significance – A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections*, Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 2001.

[13] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, London and New York, Routledge, 2006.

[14] Donna Haraway, "Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective," *Feminist Studies*, 1988, vol. 14, no. 3, p. 575-599.

[15] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Towards an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint theory: A methodological tool," *Australian Feminist Studies*, 2013, vol. 28, no. 78, p. 331-347, at p. 333.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 334.

trained), this is applied as a two-way learning model in partnership with the Warmun Art Centre in Western Australia, bringing together different standpoints to preserve and produce new knowledge.[17] As this partnership developed in the aftermath of floods in the remote Warmun community in 2011 that severely impacted the Art Centre's collection,[18] the formation of a successful research association in the post-disaster context has bearing upon the points I will make in my analysis of community heritage collections later in this chapter. Accordingly, my standpoint for this research is located at the nexus of the following positions, from which the knowledge it can offer is necessarily partial. A descendant of white settler Australians, I work on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. Research for this study was also undertaken on Quandamooka, Turrbal, and Jagera lands. My research into the public value of conservation, by focusing on the relationship between heritage, social equity, and social justice, is not apolitical and finds consonance with the aims of policy advocacy: the use of evidence-based research to petition for social change.[19]

Arguing, then, for an understanding of conservation as a socially valuable process, it is necessary to provide a brief history of the concept of value in different texts. As my intention is to show how concepts of intrinsic and instrumental value have informed hegemonic conservation discourses, the texts discussed are limited in range to a particular lineage of Western intellectual history and philosophical inquiry that begins with the English writer John Ruskin in the 19th century. This is not to suggest that other traditions of conservation or heritage are of lesser value,[20] and it is important to remember that, as Marcelle Scott points out, forms of both professional and amateur knowledge continue to contribute to the development of the conservation discipline.[21] Following a critical discourse analysis of the textual history of the concept of value, and its place in established heritage discourses, other bases for knowledge are explored in relation to case study interviews conducted in Queensland. These interviews with four

[17] Gabriel Nodea and Robyn Sloggett, "Ngarranggarni: Gija two-way learning and the University of Melbourne," *University of Melbourne Collections*, 2017, vol. 20, p. 68-74.

[18] Sade Carrington, Jonathan Kimberley, Vanessa Kowalski, Sophie Lewincamp, Patrick Mung Mung, Gabriel Nodea, Roseleen Park, Marcelle Scott, and Robyn Sloggett, "Conservation and the production of shared knowledge," in Janet Bridgland (ed.), *ICOM-CC 17th Triennial Conference Preprints*, Melbourne, September 15–19, 2014, Paris, International Council of Museums, 2014, art. 0303, p. 1-8.

[19] Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers*, London, Overseas Development Institute, 2004.

[20] For overviews of different conservation traditions, see Miriam Clavir, *Preserving What Is Valued: Museums, Conservation, and First Nations*, Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2002; and Alessandro Conti, *History of the Restoration and Conservation of Works of Art*, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1988 [trans. 2007 Helen Glanville].

[21] Marcelle Scott, *Tradition and Innovation: Building the Conservation Discipline in Australia*, Ph.D. thesis in cultural materials conservation, University of Melbourne, Australia, 2016, p. 53-54.

museum development officers who work in an outreach capacity with a range of community heritage collections were carried out as part of my Ph.D. research at the University of Melbourne. Several major risks affecting the preservation of community heritage collections in Queensland's regions are distinguished, shedding light on the difficulty of accounting for the concept of need in current conservation axiologies. The benefits of conserving collections are also explored in the post-disaster recovery contexts. When considered in a dialectical relationship with hegemonic discourses, these examples of the social value of heritage collections – and of conservation itself – call into question the fixed nature of value and values in formal discourses.

Theoretical background to the concept of value

In ethical philosophy, debates about intrinsic and instrumental value have recurred from the time of Plato's *Republic*. Intrinsic value refers to things which are valuable (in varying ways) in and of themselves, whereas things possessing instrumental value are only valuable as a means for getting other valuable things. The philosophy of aesthetics, through the writings of Edmund Burke[22] and Immanuel Kant,[23] has also grappled with the division of intrinsic and instrumental value. Art's instrumental value, or social utility, is highlighted at a particular juncture in the Western history of conservation. Identifying this turning point, Sarah Staniforth writes:

> there is little to be found in the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the care of collections in early museums. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that serious concern was expressed about the condition of the paintings in the National Gallery, London. Two Select Committee Inquiries of the British House of Commons (1850 and 1853) drew attention to the impact of smoke pollution caused by the spreading effects of the industrial revolution.[24]

But the industrial revolution, as Tony Bennett explains in *The Birth of the Museum*, was key to the opening up of galleries and museums to the broader English public at the time. For workers displaced to the cities, "the space of the museum was also an emulative one; it was envisaged as a place in which the working classes would acquire more civilized habits by imitating their betters."[25] Access to public collections thus carried a subtext of social

[22] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1757 [rev. ed. 2015, Oxford University Press].

[23] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1790 [trans. Werner S. Pluhar, 1987].

[24] Sarah Staniforth, *Historical Perspectives on Preventive Conservation*, Los Angeles, Getty Publications, 2013, p. 89.

[25] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, London and New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 47.

control, compounding the already quite complex project of discriminating between intrinsic and instrumental value in museological contexts. As a turn toward instrumental value, this must also be seen in the context of the rise of scientific positivism, and the fall of religious values, in the broader intellectual sphere of 19th-century Britain. A similar exchange can be seen in the history of conservation and its professionalization. Miriam Clavir notes a change, also at the end of the 19th into the early 20th century, from earlier traditions of restoration toward practices based in codes of integrity and scientific knowledge.[26]

Typologies of value and their application in practice are frequently contested in the critical discourses of conservation and heritage, with the acknowledgement that values are historically and culturally contingent. Axiological questions – what is of value, and how to distinguish it; whether value is quantifiable; how to compare various types of values; and how to preserve that which has been identified as valuable – are still relevant. Iwona Szmelter, a member of the International Council of Museums–Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) Theory and History of Conservation Working Group, attested to the primacy of values in the conservation discourse when she wrote in 2016 that the conservation of heritage material "begins with the recognition of its values."[27] In the United States, the Getty Conservation Institute has published many research reports on value since the Agora initiative began in 1997,[28] including a recent volume that reviews the changes in values-based conservation over the past two decades.[29] Values are put into practice in diverse ways through these frameworks. In structured assessment processes such as the aforementioned *Significance 2.0*, the categorization of types of values is deemed necessary to allocate priorities for conservation. Quantitative methodologies for value are also used in collection surveys to assess various aspects of objects or collections, for instance at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands.[30]

Critical discourse analysis: Social value in key conservation texts

[26] Miriam Clavir, "The social and historic construction of professional values in conservation," *Studies in Conservation*, 1998, vol. 43, no. 1, p. 1-8.

[27] Iwona Szmelter, "Contemporary conservation theory in the context of the valuation of cultural heritage," in Marzenna Ciechanska (ed.), *Between Science and Art*, Warsaw, Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Arts, 2016, p. 15-31, at p. 16.

[28] Erica Avrami, Randall Mason, and Marta de la Torre, *Values and Heritage Conservation – Research Report*, Los Angeles, The Getty Conservation Institute, 2000; Erica Avrami, Randall Mason, and Marta de la Torre, *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage – Research Report*, Los Angeles, The Getty Conservation Institute, 2002.

[29] Erica Avrami, Susan Macdonald, Randall Mason, and David Myers, *Values in Heritage Management: Emerging Approaches and Research Directions*, Los Angeles, The Getty Conservation Institute, 2019.

[30] Cultural Heritage Agency, *Assessing Museum Collections: Collection Valuation in Six Steps*, Amersfoort, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, 2014.

Critical discourse analysis, an extension of the discourse theory developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in the 1980s,[31] aims to reveal the "role of discursive practice in the maintenance of unequal power relations," and is "politically committed to social change."[32]

Practitioners of critical discourse analysis are in general agreement that discourse and society exist in a dialectical relationship. Discourses constitute, and are constituted by, the social world.[33] Variation tends to occur in the extent to which researchers believe discourses, or societies, to constitute the other. Critical discourse analysis has previously been employed by Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell in their study of "the structure, organisation and management of language" in the Burra Charter.[34] Building on that precedent, this section applies the method to key philosophical and theoretical works in the discursive field of conservation in order to understand and critique the role that historical conceptualizations of value have played in establishing current frameworks for practice. This analysis has two main aims: firstly, to trace how what is valued, and thus preserved, changes over time (that is, the historical contingency of value assignation, and therefore of conservation). Secondly, by taking the field of conservation itself as an object of axiological study, a foundation for theorizing its public value is found.

Genealogies of value in conservation typically take a Eurocentric approach, citing a canon that begins with John Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*.[35] Historical value is afforded prime position in Ruskin's axiology; distinguishing preservation from restoration, Ruskin casts restoration – referring to the reconstruction or copying of architectural elements – as false, or "evil."[36] This is in marked contrast to the theories of his French contemporary, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, who argued in his *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française* of 1875 that architecture could be restored to a past ideal state by removing later additions to buildings, and reconstructing lost architectural elements.

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[31] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London, Verso, 1985.

[32] Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London, Sage, 2002, p. 64.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[34] Emma Waterton, Laurajane Smith, and Gary Campbell, "The utility of discourse analysis to heritage studies: The Burra Charter and social inclusion," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2006, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 342-343.

[35] John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, London, George Allen, 1899 [1849].

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 353-358.

Strongly informed by the secular, positivist science of sociology emerging in France in that period, Viollet-le-Duc upheld the values of reason, form, and rationalism.[37]

Ruskin directly influenced William Morris, and in 1877, the two co-founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), outlining their ethos in a manifesto of the same year.[38] Against a backdrop of rising industrialization in England, both Ruskin and Morris participated in the romanticization of labour and its "heritage," such as the material signs of the "workman's hand" that remain in buildings. In these material signs, Ruskin found the abstract values of authenticity, endurance, and craftsmanship.[39] To Morris, attempts to restore buildings were unethical, as restoration was thought to erase the documentary record of labour present in architectural heritage. Complementing historical value, Morris privileged heritage as evidence, particularly in his criticisms of the practice of removing elements added to buildings after their initial construction. Exalting the handmade, rather than the industrially produced, the agenda of the SPAB nonetheless subordinated social value to aesthetic value. Smith links this to the rise of the expert, and the role of cultural capital in preservation:

> it was the professional whose responsibility it was to care for and pass on the aesthetic values that lie at the heart of what it meant to be a "Modern European." More specifically, it was only the well-educated who had the necessary cultural literacy to understand grand social and national narratives that were inherent in the fabric of such monuments.[40]

These theoretical frameworks, together with Camillo Boito's work in Italy, were influential on both the 1904 Recommendations of the Madrid Conference[41] and the 1931 Athens Charter (Carta del Restauro)[42].

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[37] Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992 [trans. LM O'Connell, 2001], p. 105.

[38] William Morris, *SPAB Manifesto*, London, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 1877.

[39] Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *op. cit.*, p. 354-358.

[40] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[41] Royal Institute of British Architects, "Recommendations of the Madrid Conference 1904," *The Architectural Journal: Being the Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)*, 1904, vol. XI, 3rd series, p. 343-346.

[42] International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, Athens Conference, October 21–30, 1931, ICOMOS.

Meanwhile, the tradition of art restoration was also being redefined and professionalized in the shift to a "scientific paradigm,"[43] and the language of value mobilized to demarcate the new practices and ethics associated with "conservation" against earlier, less formalized traditions. A new schema for comparing forms of value was proposed by Alois Riegl, who departed from Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc by considering the social underpinnings of many different forms of value – rather than promoting a single approach – and also by attending to the present through values of use and newness.[44] Riegl's thus seems a more nuanced view, as he mediates between the needs of contemporary and past societies, as well as between different value systems. In his 1963 *Theory of Restoration*, the Italian art theorist Cesare Brandi outlined a theory of restoration based on two components – *istanza* (artistry) and history.[45] Defining restoration as a "methodological moment in which the work of art is recognized, in its physical being, and in its dual aesthetic and historical nature, in view of its transmission to the future," Brandi attempted to unify intrinsic and instrumental types of value.[46] Known as *restauro critico*, Brandi's theories have been influential on the use of scientific methodologies, the principle of minimal intervention, and the subjectivity of aesthetic judgments. While he privileged aesthetic value, Brandi recognized that it is always historically determined, and stated that "for restoration to be a legitimate operation, it cannot presume that time is reversible or that history can be abolished."[47] The Venice Charter of 1964 – the first doctrinal text of the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) – reflects Brandi's influence.

Not merely becoming more prominent, value took on a different meaning by the 1980s and 1990s as non-Western forms of heritage making were recognized by official documents, such as the Nara Document on Authenticity, whose preamble specifically mentions "the social and cultural values of all societies."[48] More recently, Australian conservators and heritage practitioners have made important contributions to embed values-based approaches in frameworks for practice. These frameworks, from the revised Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013) in the built heritage field,[49] to the methods

[43] Scott, *Tradition and Innovation*, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

[44] Aloïs Riegl, "The modern cult of monuments: Its character and its origin," *Oppositions*, 1903 [trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, 1982], no. 25, p. 21-51.

[45] Cesare Brandi, *Theory of Restoration*, Rome, Istituto centrale per il restauro, 1963 [trans. C. Rockwell, 2005].

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[48] International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), The Nara Document on Authenticity, Paris, ICOMOS, 1994, p. 46.

[49] Australia ICOMOS, The Burra Charter, *op. cit.*

advanced in *Significance 2.0* for collections conservation, [50] are now internationally recognized and applied. They account for the current orthodoxy of undertaking significance assessments (that is, identifying and comparing heritage values) of objects, collections, and sites before conservation work begins. Contemporary conservation practice now extends beyond these frameworks and methods for assigning value, particularly in Australia where there is a strong tradition of community-led and cross-cultural conservation projects. In the examples of such practices discussed below, it is clear that, as Smith writes, heritage is not fixed in materials, but is "a cultural and social process… of mediating cultural and social change, of negotiating and creating and recreating values, meanings, understandings and identity."[51] Language is one such mediating factor in the dialectical relationship between discourse and practice, even in a field that is oriented toward materials. From this analysis of the conceptualization of value in conservation, and the translation of concepts into practice, the question of language is taken forward into the next section on the social value of community heritage collections, and the formulation of a new understanding of the public value of conservation.

The social value of heritage collections in the post-disaster context

In late 2019, I held a series of interviews with four museum workers from the Queensland Museum Development Officer program. The museum development officers provide outreach advice and support services to community heritage collections located in regional areas of Queensland. The regions covered by the officers interviewed include Cairns and Far North Queensland; Townsville; Mackay and Central Queensland; and Toowoomba and Southern Inland Queensland. Across each region, the officers provide support to predominantly small, volunteer-run community heritage collections such as historical societies, museums, local history libraries, galleries, archives, and Indigenous keeping places and art centres. With varied backgrounds, they offer advice, training, and workshops across preservation, conservation, curatorial, and collection management subfields, and hands-on assistance in response to disasters and emergencies affecting the material fabric of collections. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following participants by telephone: on December 3, 2019, with Ewen McPhee, the museum development officer for Townsville; on December 5, 2019, with Melanie Piddocke, the museum development officer for Mackay and Central Queensland; and on December 6, 2019, with Lydia Egunnike, the museum development officer for Southern Inland Queensland, and Tilly James, the museum development officer for Cairns and Far

[50] Collections Council of Australia, *Significance 2.0*, *op. cit.*

[51] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

North Queensland. An additional written response to interview questions was provided by conservator Sue Valis, who is based at the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville and provides outreach conservation support to regional museums through the Museum Development Officer program.

Based on their experiences, each museum development officer identified significant challenges faced by the collections they support in conserving their heritage. Arising out of a nexus of complex geographic, climatic, social, economic, and political factors, these are risks that threaten the potential value of the collections. The state of Queensland is located in Australia's north-east and covers an area of 1,852,642 square kilometres. Exacerbating the challenges posed by scale and distance, there is also significant climatic variation across the state, from subtropical coastal zones, to the monsoonal north, and to arid inland and desert areas. The impact of climatic phenomena on collections and communities is worth pausing on, as the deleterious effects of human-induced climate change on populations and their cultural heritage highlights the intractable nature of some of these issues. In 2019 Australia experienced its warmest and driest year on record, [52] with more than two-thirds of Queensland officially drought declared by the end of the year. Illustrating the conjunction of the climatic and socioeconomic factors in her region of Central Queensland, Piddocke stated:

> I would say out west, the biggest threat maybe in terms of weather is because it gets hot and dry and doesn't rain for a really long time – there's a lot of dust, and collections aren't always protected from that. A lot of the people that are managing these collections are also pastoralists, so they're dealing with the fact that their property is in drought and they're trying to keep that going. They're not necessarily having the time or energy to invest in keeping the dust off things in the museum, for instance.[53]

At the other extreme, Queensland's Far North experiences extremely high temperatures and high humidity during the wet season. Coastal areas are also prone to cyclones, and bushfires are a continual threat in drier areas, as was seen in the catastrophic Australian bushfire season of 2019-2020. These climactic factors not only affect the material fabric of heritage, but also the health and wellbeing of people in affected areas. As emerging

[52] Commonwealth of Australia Bureau of Meteorology, Annual Climate Statement 2019, Canberra, Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology, 2020, <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/annual/aus/2019/>, accessed August 22, 2020.

[53] Ainslee Meredith and Melanie Piddocke, unpublished interview for Ph.D. thesis, Melbourne, Australia, University of Melbourne, 2019.

research is showing, Aboriginal people were among those most affected by the 2019-2020 bushfires in southeastern Australia.[54] While the interviews were conducted before the devastating impact of the "Black Summer" bushfires had become clear, the early start to the bushfire season in 2019 – linked to the ongoing drought – focused attention on fire and other risks to collections. Respondents were concerned not only with the immediate risks posed by fire, but also the health and wellbeing of their contacts at collections in fire-affected areas. Despite the severity of these environmental risks, the majority of community heritage collections – in Queensland as in other parts of Australia – are not stored within climate-controlled environments, and many also lack suitable building infrastructure. Compounding the risks associated with fire, and other severe weather phenomena – flooding, bushfire, drought, high heat and humidity, and cyclones – are other socially and economically derived risk factors. These include insufficient funding available to collections; issues with inappropriate storage infrastructure; differential levels of knowledge about caring for collections among custodians due to limited access to education and training; the reliance on volunteers to run collections; and the financial dependency of regional locales on highly variable sectors such as mining and resources, and tourism.

The dialectical tension between the risks to collections and their social value animates the discourse produced by interviews with the museum development officers in Queensland. Each spoke of the high value of conservation for the collections and communities with whom they work. The social value of both the collections and their active conservation will now be discussed in relation to their importance in post-disaster recovery. In addition to the recent drought in Queensland – which can also be considered a disaster, albeit on a slower timeline – there have been floods in Townsville in February 2019, and central and southern Queensland in 2010-2011; and the Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi, which hit Northern Queensland in February 2011. McPhee, described their role in the immediate aftermath of a disaster as to "just allow the community to try and buy time" through implementing preventive conservation measures such as freezing water-damaged material, or simply consolidating what had been salvaged in one location. By slowing down material degradation, the communities are granted more time to "make those choices about whether to keep it and try and have it treated, or whether it's not really worth keeping."[55] In examples of post-disaster recovery provided by McPhee, the

[54] Bhiamie Williamson, Francis Markham, and Jessica Weir, *Aboriginal Peoples and the Response to the 2019–2020 Bushfires*, Working Paper no. 134/2020, Canberra, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, 2020.

[55] Ainslee Meredith and Ewen McPhee, unpublished interview for Ph.D. thesis, Melbourne, Australia, University of Melbourne, 2019.

particular contribution of collections – and conservation work in support of them – was to bring people together in pursuit of a common goal, and to give a focal point to broader conversations about loss:

> The work I did up in Cardwell, after Cyclone Yasi, where the museum lost its roof and objects were scattered all over town… and then the rebuilding of the collection, then the identification of the objects that were important to the community post-cyclone had a really positive impact in terms of bringing them together. We would hold information days about caring for your objects, water-damaged objects, or identifying objects that you thought were important and what you could let go and what you couldn't let go, and what was easy in terms of actually fixing things.[56]

The value of community cultural heritage collections, as becomes clear in the post-disaster context, does not solely lie in the objects themselves, but in what is enabled by community attachment to collections and the process of rebuilding. McPhee continued:

> when you're looking at a cyclone or a flood where the whole community is affected and people are struggling with their own personal loss and their own loss of personal photographs which are in the museum, or important things to their family, you find that you are lifting up not only the museum but also the community as well.[57]

The potential for collections, and people working with them, to recover and continue post-disaster does, however, depend on the degree of disaster preparation and training. This potential for recovery may be impeded by the cumulative effects of, for example, the type of severe and protracted drought experienced across Queensland in recent years. Much of South East Queensland – as well as other parts of Australia – recorded its lowest annual rainfall totals in 2019, following several years of below average rainfall.[58] As Piddocke explained, the focus on these other "pressing issues" in collections caretakers' lives means that there is less time for the preparation or updating of disaster management plans, and for undertaking training in disaster response.[59] Egunnike (Southern Inland Queensland), connected the effects of drought and rural population

[56] *Ibid*.

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] Commonwealth of Australia Bureau of Meteorology, *op. cit.*

[59] Meredith and Piddocke, unpublished interview, *op. cit.*

decline to the reduced presence of volunteers to sustain and run collections: "But it's just that constant sort of nothing, the rain still hasn't come and the communities, a lot of people are leaving them so that also affects the number of volunteers available to do anything."[60]

As these examples show, the value of heritage collections for local communities is in constant dialectical movement with the various interconnected social, economic, and environmental risks they face, and their social value post-disaster. Their ability to bring communities together and provide a focal point for grief emerges from strong "community attachment" to collections, as Valis at the Museum of Tropical Queensland pointed out.[61] This attachment would, in the dialectic of disaster and recovery, make any loss of collection material particularly "detrimental and devastating."[62]

The dialectic of social value between discourse and practice

Bringing these two areas of discourse together – the hegemonic texts on value and values in conservation, and the testimony proffered by people working with collections in the field – produces a dialectical tension. Does the social value of heritage exist in the object or collection itself, as the formal assessment processes would seem to suggest, or does it emerge in relation to the uses people make of conservation and heritage, as in the examples of communities learning to care for collections post-disaster? Rather than continuing to oppose intrinsic and instrumental value, the problem may lie in the inherent limits of attempts made to instrumentalize the intrinsic value of heritage, for example in the hegemonic texts of charters, treatises, and assessment processes. When heritage objects or collections are identified as holding "social value," the act of assigning significance seems to curtail its potential social utility to the past. The possibility that heritage might perform a social function in the future – in the examples above, by bringing communities together and providing a focal point for working through grief post-disaster – is left to the side. The current emphasis on conservation axiologies – that is, on the identification of and discrimination between types of "heritage values" in objects, collections, or environments – reaffirms a system in which value is intrinsic, rather than instrumental, where what is of value is circumscribed to the limits of the heritage object (whether material or immaterial).

[60] Ainslee Meredith and Lydia Egunnike, unpublished interview for Ph.D. thesis, Melbourne, Australia, University of Melbourne, 2019.

[61] Ainslee Meredith and Sue Valis, unpublished interview for Ph.D. thesis, Melbourne, Australia, University of Melbourne, 2019.

[62] *Ibid.*

Having identified this tension, can it inform a new way of understanding how value operates in the conservation and heritage fields? The perceptions and experiences of the museum development officers in Queensland demonstrate that where there is high risk to heritage – for instance, in relation to the unmitigated effects of the environmental factors and the range of disasters affecting the state – its social value becomes even more pronounced. While it has not been a focus of this chapter, the intersection of risks to collections and their profound community benefit is also at stake for cultural heritage material which is held in Indigenous Australian art centres and keeping places around the country. Extensive work has been undertaken in the area of community and social value by researchers at the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation at the University of Melbourne, as introduced in relation to the two-way learning partnership between the University and the Warmun Art Centre and community. Additional examples are Robyn Sloggett on cross-cultural epistemologies in conservation[63]; Sophie Lewincamp and Sloggett on recognizing community expertise[64]; and Marcelle Scott on the development of the conservation profession in Australia.[65] The 2017 *Safe Keeping Report on the Care and Management of Art Centre-based Community Collections* found that a long-term lack of investment in funding and infrastructure for remote Indigenous communities means that they have not had the same autonomy in preserving their heritage when compared to collections of similar significance located in major cities.[66] Taken together, this research demonstrates how Australian conservation practice and theory has developed beyond the fixed values discourse of *Significance 2.0* and the Burra Charter. The axiologies of values discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, while allowing for different types of values to be compared, fail to account for this articulation of its social value, or for the need for greater access to conservation in regional areas which have been historically underserviced by conservators, and subjected to disinvestment by Federal and state governments.[67]

These concerns are shared by other heritage scholars and practitioners. A recent project by Sian Jones with the British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) explored the ongoing tension between social value and the "traditional historic values" upheld by

[63] Robyn Sloggett, "Expanding the conservation canon: Assessing cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaborations in conservation," *Studies in Conservation*, 2009, vol. 54, no. 3. p. 170-183.

[64] Sophie Lewincamp and Robyn Sloggett, "Connecting objects, communities and cultural knowledge," *AICCM Bulletin*, 2016, vol. 37, no. 1, p. 3-13.

[65] Scott, *Tradition and Innovation*, *op. cit.*

[66] Marcelle Scott, *Safe Keeping Report on the Care and Management of Art Centre-based Community Collections*, Darwin, Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists Aboriginal Corporation, 2017.

[67] Robyn Sloggett, "A national conservation policy for a new millennium – Building opportunity, extending capacity and securing integration in cultural materials conservation," *AICCM Bulletin*, 2016, vol. 36, no. 2, p. 79-87.

heritage practitioners.[68] Social values, which are "dynamic," "elusive and intangible qualities" and highly localized, are frequently positioned "in stark contrast to other forms of value that members of the heritage sector have often seen as more intrinsic, namely historic, scientific and aesthetic values."[69] Contending that structured assessment processes and similar methodologies are ill-equipped to capture social value, Jones proposes that "it might therefore be preferable to conceive of social value as a *process of valuing* heritage places rather than a fixed value category that can be defined and measured."[70] In the Southeast Asian context, Nicole Tse, Ana Maria Theresa Labrador, Marcelle Scott, and Roberto Balarbar have also addressed the limitations of an object-based value system through case studies of preventive conservation in the Philippines that exemplify the interdependencies of people, place, and time.[71] Observing volunteer engagement in the recovery process after a series of natural disasters on the island of Bohol in 2013, the authors highlight the "unanticipated benefits of these kinds of collective conservation activities,"[72] emphasizing the value of the process rather than fixed value categories.

This tension between value as it is understood in assessment frameworks, and in lived experience of conservation practice, was keenly felt by many of the museum development officers to whom I spoke. To foreground the "process of valuing" builds on the work of Sian Jones, Denis Byrne,[73] Laurajane Smith, and others in the fields of conservation and critical heritage studies to recognize that social value is produced through the processes of caring for collections (which also entails, as the example in my case study shows, knowing when to let go, whether that is to deaccession or to mourn lost or destroyed objects). This recognition – that value is not fixed in the object, but is subject to processes of designation, authorization, and negotiation – posits conservation to be valuable insofar as it leads to the public good through a process that is instrumentally valuable. As the purpose of conservation shifts from objects to people and their values, an extension of the value discourse to include the public value, use, or benefit of conservation is urgently needed. Though we now identify more diverse values

[68] Sian Jones, "Wrestling with the social value of heritage: Problems, dilemmas and opportunities," *Journal of Community Archaeology &Heritage*, 2017, vol. 4, no. 1, p. 21-37, at p. 28.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] Nicole Tse, Ana Maria Theresa Labrador, Marcelle Scott, and Roberto Balarbar, "Preventive conservation: People, objects, place and time in the Philippines," *Studies in Conservation*, 2018, vol. 63, no. S1, p. S274-S281.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. S278.

[73] Denis Byrne, "Heritage as social action," in Graham Fairclough, Rodney Harrison, John H. Jameson, and John Schofield (eds), *The Heritage Reader*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 149-173.

in heritage, the "object" in conservation discourse is still centred as the source and recipient of value, except in cases where its economic value must be proven – like other contemporary public goods – in order to justify further investment. But if values emerge from socio-political contexts, how can conservation return that value to the public, and do so in a way according to need?

The social value of heritage and the public value of conservation

This re-conceptualization of the social value of heritage also has ramifications for our understanding of the purpose of conservation as a means of sustaining heritage. The rhetorical position of conservation in its hegemonic discourses continues to forestall a full exploration of its social use value. With its instrumental value often taken to be self-evident, insufficient attention is paid to the underlying theoretical principles, mechanisms, and indicators of this value. Accordingly, conservation is not widely understood to bring value and benefit, and to underscore forms of public good. Construed as a process, conservation is less a response to identifying and affixing value, than it is a method for allowing something new – in this chapter, in the form of disaster response, recovery and rebuilding – to respond to the past.

Moving away from the idea that conservation serves or fulfils particular pre-existing values (economic, social, cultural, historic, aesthetic), the public value of conservation might lie in how it offers a philosophy that some things are worth keeping, caring for, and saving, that things do not last without our conscious care of them, and that keeping them benefits us. Conservation treatments provide the technical means for the creation, sustenance, and recovery of memory, a practice that is both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable. The conceptualization of the public value of conservation is therefore intended to argue for its place as a public service. Social change, then, could take the form of greater equity in public access to the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for preserving different types of heritage. Linking this to the position on policy advocacy taken at the beginning of this chapter, articulating this value has a broader aim of advocating for a conservation field that is accessible to more varied publics.

The value of conservation as a discourse therefore lies in the dialectical relationships it posits between the positions of past, present, and future; creation and destruction; deterioration and repair; reconstruction and loss; and between different readings of value. When understood as an engaged process rather than a fixed activity, its social role can be seen to extend to offering a language for discussing questions of destruction,

creation, maintenance, and repair, questions which engage people in conversation about such issues, and change our relations with each other and the world.

Chapter 3: Conservation as shared responsibility: social equity, social justice, and the public good

As discussed in the Introduction, this is a thesis *with* publication. This chapter is a revised version of the author-accepted manuscript of an article published with the University of Pennsylvania Press Journals in *Change over Time* (2021).

Compared to the version published, this chapter contains a case study based on research undertaken for this thesis. It also includes a more thorough literature review and conceptualisation of the topic. Case studies from the published paper have been omitted. Several passages in the published paper which were written by the thesis author are reproduced verbatim in the text below. These are clearly indicated throughout by the use of block quotations. Page numbers for the article were not available at the time of writing. Available online:
https://cotjournal.com/conservation-as-shared-responsibility-social-equity-social-justice-and-the-public-good-ainslee-meredith-robyn-sloggett-marcelle-scott/

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Chapter 4: Access relative to need for community conservation funding in Australia

As discussed in the Introduction, this is a thesis *with* publication. This chapter is a reproduction of the author-accepted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* on 21 March 2019. Available online: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13527258.2019.1590446

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Chapter 5: Mapping climate change and risks for Australian cultural collections

As discussed in the Introduction, this is a thesis *with* publication. This chapter is a reproduction of the author-accepted manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in the *AICCM Bulletin* on 17 December 2020. Available online:
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10344233.2020.1788881

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Chapter 6: A sectoral analysis of issues in the Australian conservation sector

Introduction

From the quantitative studies of the two preceding chapters, this chapter shifts to a different analytical approach and scale with case study interviews. The results of these 39 interviews address many of the same issues that arose in Chapters 4 and 5 – access to conservation, the distribution of conservation services, and the beneficial impact of conservation and collections for different communities – using the methodology of in-depth interviews.[104] Though the interviews vary in length, format, and sometimes in their questions, taken together they offer rich insights into the experiences of people and communities who care for collections of cultural material across Australia (Figure 6.1). Grounded in the experiences of respondents reported in their own words, the next three chapters of this thesis provide a much-needed update to earlier studies of the state of collections and conservation in Australia (Markham & Richards 1933; Pigott 1975); needs, gaps and opportunities within the sector (Deakin University 2002; Mansfield et al. 2014); and linking heritage collections to community benefits (Anderson 1991).

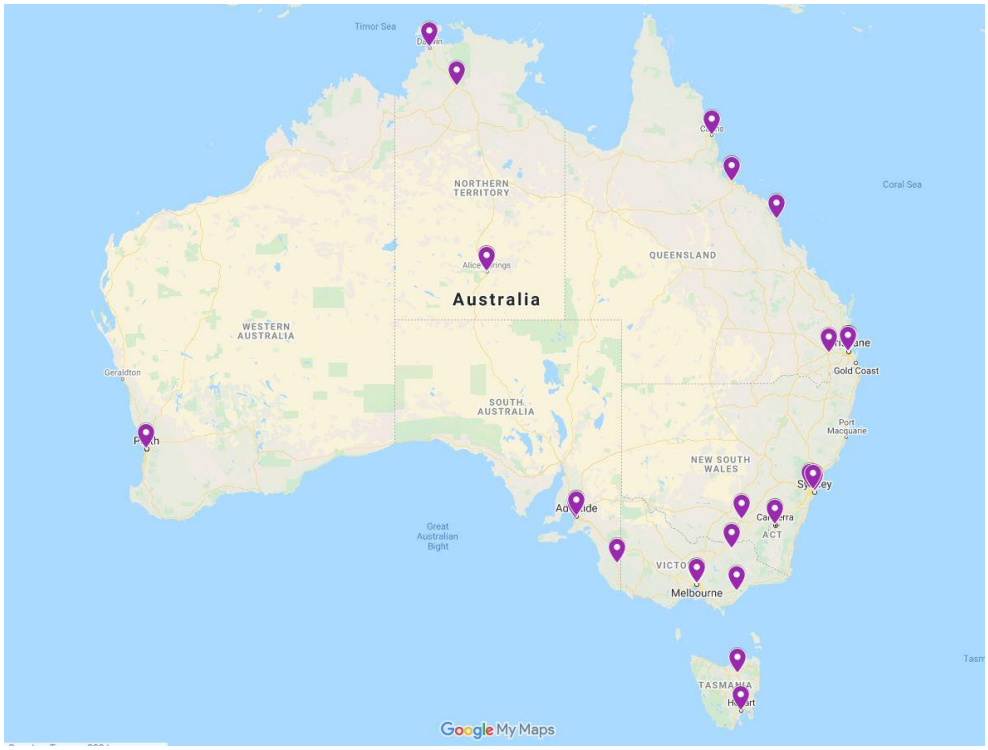

Figure 6.1. Map showing the locations of interviews undertaken with respondents at collections across Australia.

[104] For further information on interview methods see Chapter 1 and Appendix 3: Additional methodological information, interview and transcription guidelines.

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In undertaking these interviews, the aim has been to develop an understanding of the value and benefits, and conservation needs and risks, of collections which have traditionally been at the periphery of the dominant practice of conservation in Australia. A tendency towards centralisation was observed even at the time of Markham and Richards' report of 1933, with the authors noting a shift towards centralising regional museums and art galleries after World War One as collections were transferred to state-run institutions (p. 7). After the Pigott Report of 1975 and the improvement of conservation departments in major public institutions, 'this disjuncture has become more apparent', as Sloggett (2015) writes:

> Today there is a much wider gap than has ever existed before between collections held in the state and federally supported collecting institutions and those held elsewhere. These include collections managed by custodians living in remote and regional Australia, by those working in non-government organisations, by members of special interest groups such as education institutions and community groups, by Indigenous communities, and material held in families and private individuals. It also remains the case that the vast majority of Australia's cultural materials are unlikely to have been surveyed by conservators, let alone treated. (p. 82)

A comprehensive list of all of these collections has never, to my knowledge, been produced in Australia; some parts of the sector such as the regional art galleries studied in Chapter 5 have more documentation available, making the task of mapping them easier. In the UK, the *Mapping Museums* project led by researcher Fiona Candlin has established a dataset of all UK museums from 1960–2020 (Candlin et al. 2020). This is not attempted here. Instead of completeness, the aim was to select respondents from diverse collection types and regions in order to represent a wide range of experiences, views, and voices.

Until 2014, the National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics (NCCRS) at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) undertook data collection and reporting for the sector. Their final report specific to collecting institutions was *Museums 2007–2008*, which identified 1184 museum or gallery organisations operating from 1456 locations across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009). Since the closure of the NCCRS there has been an absence of such statistical data, leading David Throsby (2018) to call for its return (p. 65). As the final NCCRS data is now more than a decade old, and

excludes some types of collections included in this study, the number of relevant collections is likely to be higher than the 1184 identified. Thirty-nine interviews therefore represents a compromise between the large number of possible collections, the desire for detailed discussions with each respondent, and what is achievable in a PhD thesis.

The 39 interviews covered the following themes which are elucidated in this and subsequent chapters: the experiences of people in attempting to preserve their heritage beyond the mainstream collecting institutions; conceptions of its value or significance; risks faced and mitigation strategies; types of conservation undertaken; the accessibility of conservation services, and impediments to access; the impact of past or possible future instances of loss, damage or destruction; the broader benefits of collections and their preservation and the relationship between collections and their surrounding communities; how the needs of collections are envisaged now and into the future; and finally, what a new national conservation policy would need to account for in order to represent these collections.

As the first of three chapters to focus on the interviews, this chapter aims to introduce, contextualise and classify the interview data. Prefacing the in-depth case studies of Chapter 7 and the case vignettes in Chapter 8, it provides a broad overview of the interview data. A categorical analysis is undertaken in which the collections are grouped into 13 sectoral categories.[105] This first stage of analysis includes a summary of the forms of value or significance associated with each collection, grounded in the language and concepts used by the respondents. That is, rather than using my position as researcher to assign significance, I have tried to convey what significance and value meant to each respondent in relation to their perceptions of the broader social impact of conservation. Where respondents have used or drawn on the *Significance 2.0* framework (Collections Council of Australia 2009), this is also noted. There remains, nonetheless, a tension between the respondents' narratives, my interpretations and original framing of the questions, and the abstract process by which lived experience is transformed into analysable data. These points of ethics are also addressed.

A second stage of the categorical analysis presents the key issues raised in the interviews. A coding key was used to sort the data obtained from the interviews into six thematic categories: (1) the impact, value and benefit of collections; (2) risks; (3) mitigation of risks; (4) access to conservation; (5) the occurrence and effects of loss on collections and

[105] Two further interviews did not fit into a sectoral category and so are studied separately.

their communities; and (6) future challenges and needs (Tables 11.1-11.6, Appendix 4). In each category, additional subcategories are listed to enable the key issues to be referenced against pertinent examples taken from the interviews. As the coding key was developed and refined in conjunction with the production of the interview transcripts,[106] its categories are informed by what the respondents have reported of their own experiences. However, as their answers were given in response to a set of interview questions, the influence of my preconceived ideas must again be acknowledged. Rather than seeking to suppress this tension, the question of subjective perception in relation to the production and interpretation of interview data is returned to throughout the chapter.

Methods

The idea of 'categorical thinking' is advanced by Melissa Freeman in her book *Modes of Thinking for Qualitative Data Analysis* (2017), which explores the conceptual underpinnings of analytical strategies in an attempt to resist their reduction to fixed methods of data analysis. This chapter draws on methods of 'categorical thinking' to classify, identify and interpret the interview transcripts. Due to the nature of the interview material, it was important to find an analytical approach that encouraged process and revision. Thinking through the relationship between abstract categories and narrative details has also allowed for a balance to be found between transforming the interview transcripts into units of data, and retaining their irreducible wholeness as case studies.

Categorisation, which depends upon the sorting of units of data into groups to enable their comparison with other units of data, can reveal the 'dynamic relationship between things, language, preexisting categories, and our ability to come up with new ways of conceptualizing and organizing the world' (Freeman 2017, p. 17). By ordering, abstracting, and categorising data, similarities are identified, differences are compared, and concepts are generated in which the singular instance can be transformed into the general, as will be seen in Chapters 7 and 8. First, however, the following steps are necessary: to identify and classify data; to determine points of comparison; and to relate each category derived from the data to 'the conceptual scheme that gives it meaning' (Freeman 2017, p. 11).

On this point of the relationship between categories and concepts, the question of subjectivity – both of the researcher and respondent – arises. As the interviews comprise 'human accounts' of my object of research, it is necessary to 'develop an understanding

[106] See Appendix 3 for guidelines on the transcription process.

of the relationship between the account provided and the phenomenon studied' (Freeman 2017, p. 19). Furthermore, 'it is important that the assumptions researchers make about what it is they are researching are clearly understood and stated' (Freeman 2017, p. 19). When do categories come into being? Before beginning the interviews, assumptions were made about their likely categorisation, or conceptual place, within this thesis. Potential collections were organised according to my knowledge about two of their more readily identifiable features: location (by state and remoteness level), and collection type, or the sector to which they belonged. Both features informed the selection of respondents to be interviewed. In turn, aspects of each respondent's subjective position – such as their role within a collection – shaped their interpretations of, and responses to, my interview questions. This is acknowledged by Freeman (2017) as the 'mutually constitutive relationship' of concepts to experience: 'the conceptual categories humans use to make sense of the world are constructed out of experience and, in turn, are used to make sense of experience' (p. 19).[107]

Although the results are tabulated, it must be stressed that this is neither a comparative, nor a quantitative, analysis. The aim is not to compare within or across categories, and the example of one collection should not be used to measure the strengths or weaknesses of another. Variations in both the number of respondents approached in each sector, and the response rate, increase the unevenness of the data. For example, only one respondent at a school archive was interviewed, compared to five university collections. Due to the uniqueness of each collection and its context, the interview questions were semi-structured. A list of interview questions was provided to each respondent ahead of time (Appendix 2), but the aim was to engage respondents in a conversation about the specificities of their collection, or their work, rather than to elicit comparable responses. Accordingly, assumptions should not be made based on the presence or absence of topics discussed in different interviews. As there has been so little previous documentation of collections such as these in academic research, each case makes a unique contribution to our understanding of how the issues of value and benefit, risk and need, conservation and mitigation, are conceptualised and navigated across the sector.

Part 1: Sectoral analysis

The mode of sectoral analysis undertaken here build on two earlier Australian surveys of the field: the 1975 *Museums in Australia Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections* and Deakin University's *A Study into the Key Needs of Collecting*

[107] Categorisation, as a conceptual model and a method, and particularly when applied to the social, is open to critique for its production of stereotypes, prejudices and loss of nuance (see for instance Allport 1954). The limitations of categorical thinking found in this chapter are challenged in Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis.

Institutions in the Heritage Sector (2002).[108] However, the categorisation of collections here departs from the two preceding studies. In the Pigott Report, which focuses on museums, collections are grouped into three grades: 'major museums' (supported by the state and Federal governments); 'associated museums' such as regional art galleries, university collections and 'several large open-air and folk museums'; and 'local museums'. *Key Needs* (2002) utilises a classification structure of libraries, museums, galleries and archives. Reflecting the changes in collection type, structure and nomenclature since these earlier studies, the below analysis finds 13 relevant categories of collections. Under each category, the collections are briefly introduced, with a discussion of how significance is understood by the respondent. It is also noted if collections in the category were studied in either the Pigott Report (1975) or *Key Needs* (2002).

University collections

University collections include archives, libraries, art collections, and specialist museums in science, technology, music, and more. Many of these have been collected as the outcome of academic research and teaching.[109] Interviews were held at five university collections (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). Although university museums were examined in a chapter of the Pigott Report (1975), none of these collections were specifically mentioned. One – the Macquarie University Art Gallery – is listed in a focus group in *Key Needs* (2002).[110] This sector was also the subject of two reviews by the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee and University Museums Review Committee (1996, 1998). University collections are well-represented within the dataset; this may be due to several factors such as researcher bias; the ease of locating university collections, and their contact details, online; and the familiarity of staff at university collections with research projects improving the response rate.

Table 6.1: Interviews undertaken with university collections

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
11 December 2019	Macquarie University Art Gallery *Sydney, NSW*	Rhonda Davis	Senior Curator
13 December 2019	Chifley Library, Australian National University *Canberra, ACT*	Roxanne Missingham Heather Jenks	Chief Librarian Associate Director, Library Services

[108] The former is henceforth referred to as the Pigott Report, and the latter as *Key Needs* (2002).
[109] See Sloggett (2009a), unpublished PhD on Dr Leonard Adam's ethnographic collection at the University of Melbourne.
[110] A roundtable meeting was also held with the State Records NSW, for which Charles Sturt University operates as a Regional Archives Centre.

7 May 2020	University of Tasmania Cultural Collections *Various locations, TAS*	Caine Chennatt	Associate Director, Collections
16 June 2020	Charles Sturt University Regional Archives and University Art Collection *Wagga Wagga, NSW*	Wayne Doubleday	Manager

Table 6.2: Interviews undertaken with university sporting clubs

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
20 April 2020	Melbourne University Lightning Netball Club[111] *Melbourne, VIC*	Lindy Murphy	President

The first interview in this category was undertaken in person with Rhonda Davis, Senior Curator at the Macquarie University Art Gallery (MUAG) in Sydney. Established in 1967, the university's fine art collection includes a range of works by Australian and international artists and a sculpture park. Rhonda described art collections such as that held by Macquarie University as 'intrinsically important to a university' (Davis 2019).[112] In addition to a program of exhibitions and other public events, the MUAG collection is embedded in teaching, learning and research at the University, and in its surrounding communities. Its Art and Object Engagement Program for people living with dementia provided a focal point for the interview.

A second in-person interview was undertaken in Canberra at the Australian National University's Chifley Library with Chief Librarian, Roxanne Missingham, and Associate Director of Library Services, Heather Jenks. The Chifley Library holds print books, serials, microform and microfiche, and digital records primarily for research in the social sciences and humanities. Other significant collections at the ANU were referred to in the interview, such as the Noel Butlin Archives of labour, industry and business; the National AIDS collection; the Pacific Research Archives; and the Southeast Asia Archives. A large portion of the interview focused on the impacts, both negative and unexpectedly positive, of a flood at the Chifley Library in February 2018.

The remaining interviews in this category were held over Zoom or by telephone. In his role as the Associate Director of the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Cultural

[111] This interview could also have been categorised separately as a 'sporting club'. However, as no other sporting club respondents were interviewed, and its university context is important to understand, it is included here.
[112] To avoid unnecessary repetition, in-text citations of the interview transcripts are only given once per paragraph, unless more than one respondent is cited.

Collections, Caine Chennatt has oversight for all of the university's collections. He thus brought a different perspective to the data in this category. As Caine explained, material in the UTAS collections has not necessarily been strategically collected, but rather acquired by donation and inheriting specialist collections developed through the university's teaching and research. To understand the significance of the collections, Caine has been developing an in-house document based on *Significance 2.0* that includes 'relevant to the university' as a separate category of significance.

A fourth interview was held with archives manager Wayne Doubleday at the Charles Sturt University (CSU) Regional Archives and University Art Collection in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.[113] Within the archives there are three collecting areas: the corporate archives of CSU and precursor institutions; private records and manuscripts from the Riverina and Murray geographical region, including local community groups; and material from the same region that is held in a Regional Archives Centre on behalf of the NSW State Archives & Records. Wayne described the Archives' significance as primarily regional due to this collecting scope. As an example, the Archives holds a collection of photographs by Alfred 'Possum' Greene which document the Snowy Mountains area in the 1950s and 60s. The photographs depict historic huts since destroyed in bushfires or otherwise damaged, and the landscape prior to the completion of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme.

Finally, an interview was also held with Lindy Murphy at the Melbourne University Lightning Netball Club (MUL). This interview departs from the others in that at the time of our interview, no coherent collection existed for the netball club despite its 100-year history at the University of Melbourne. As an example of a 'collection' yet to be brought together, but where materials are held in disparate other public and private collections, this interview provides evidence of the archival needs of this kind of organisation. As Lindy explained, the rationale for a collection goes beyond sporting history to incorporate links to women's history at the university and early sports administration in Victoria. Sporting collections were not referred to in the Pigott Report (1975), and only the Melbourne Cricket Club Museums Department was consulted in *Key Needs* (2002).

School archives

Both government and non-government schools hold important archives at the primary and secondary levels. An interview was held with one school archive at an independent

[113] Due to Wayne's background as an archivist, the interview focused on the archives collection; a curator is also employed to care for the art collection.

day and boarding school for boys in Brisbane. Collecting data in this category was constrained by the difficulty of identifying schools that hold archival collections. An email callout for participants was sent through the School Archives SIG Committee of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), but the respondent was the only school archivist engaged. This category would be enriched by the inclusion of a school archive at a public school, or in a non-urban area.

Table 6.3: Interviews undertaken with school archives

	Collection	Respondent	Role
8 May 2020	Brisbane Boys College *Brisbane, QLD*	Helen Jackson	School Archivist

A telephone interview was conducted with school archivist Helen Jackson at the Brisbane Boys College (BBC). As Helen stated, while the initial material collected for the archives had a commemorative function, and collection was driven by previous students of the school, the broader importance of the archives has come to be recognised. The collection contains a broad range of material types: textiles, photographs, paper and books, metal trophies, furniture, and an art collection. No formal significance assessment has been undertaken, but in our interview references were made to its historical significance within an educational context. Helen has also been able to elicit elements of its wider cultural significance through conducting her own research into items in the collection.

Scientific collections

Collections of material relating to the history of the natural sciences are held in a variety of settings, including museums, universities and specialist collections. Two interviews were undertaken at herbaria collections in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. While attempts were made to contact staff members at other types of scientific collections, such as those specialising in natural history and with collections of fauna specimens, none proceeded to the interview stage. The *Key Needs* (2002) report also found a low response rate from natural science collections.

Table 6.4: Interviews undertaken with scientific collections

	Collection	Respondent	Role
13 December 2019	Australian National Herbarium *Canberra, ACT*	Dr Brendan Lepschi	Curator
24 January 2020	State Botanical Collection at the National Herbarium of Victoria	Dr Pina Milne	Collections manager

Melbourne, VIC		

As one of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) National Research Collections, the ANH holds approximately 1.25 million plant specimens, including 8500 type specimens, across its two sites (Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research 2011), and exists primarily as a research collection. Its core collection – initially named the Herbarium Australiense of the CSIRO – was one of the original collections visited by the members of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections in their preparation of the Pigott Report (1975). In an in-person interview, the collection curator, Dr Brendan Lepschi, described its significance to scientific research as 'incalculable'.

An interview was also undertaken in person with Dr Pina Milne, collections manager of the State Botanical Collection (SBC) at the National Herbarium of Victoria. With approximately 1.5 million specimens in its holdings, it is also a highly significant herbarium: a 2016 significance assessment found the SBC to have 'historic, artistic and aesthetic, scientific and research, and social significance', with its scientific and research significance in particular assessed to be significant at the international, national and state levels (Context Pty Ltd 2016, p. 88). Its holdings of type specimens – estimated to be greater than 40,000 – is the largest of its kind in Australia (Context Pty Ltd 2016, p. 14).

Due to the conjunction of significance and risk in these two collections, they were selected for a detailed case study in Chapter 7.

Corporate collections: hospital archives

Medical history collections are held at hospitals, universities, and professional associations. One interview was undertaken in this category. In *Key Needs* (2002), one collection holding comparable material appears to have been consulted: the AMA Medical History Museum in Hobart. The Pigott Report (1975) makes reference to the University of Melbourne's Medical History Museum, as well as to 'small collections of records and medical equipment' held in different state Quarantine Stations, and to the Australian Institute of Anatomy in Canberra, since closed (p. 50). The development of hospital archives provides further evidence of the changes in the nature of collections over the past 50 years.

Table 6.5: Interviews undertaken with hospital archives

Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**

30 March 2020	St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne Archives and Heritage Centre *Melbourne, VIC*	Barbara Cytowicz	Hospital Archivist

An interview with Barbara Cytowicz, hospital archivist at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM), was conducted by telephone. The SVHM Archives and Heritage Centre holds material dating back to the 1890s, when the hospital was founded by the Sisters of Charity, and includes both archival and movable heritage items. A significance assessment found the collection to be significant at a state level as 'a rare example of an important and longstanding nexus between religion and health in Victoria' (Russell 2012, p. 21).

Corporate collections: performing arts archives

Performing arts collections range from state companies (theatre, dance, music and opera) to local performing groups. Only one interview was undertaken in this category despite more collections being contacted. Poor timing likely affected the response rate, as the Australian performing arts sector was severely affected by Covid-19 shutdowns in the first half of 2020. Comparable collections included in the earlier studies include the Percy Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne in the Pigott Report (1975), and the Performing Arts Museum at the Victorian Arts Centre (now the Arts Centre Melbourne) in a focus group for *Key Needs* (2002).

Table 6.6: Interviews undertaken with performing arts archive

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
19 May 2020	Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation *Sydney, NSW*	Neil Pollock	Archivist

An interview was conducted by Zoom with Neil Pollock, archivist at the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation (SBWF), a Sydney-based independent performing arts archive. Begun in 1986 by the psychiatrist Dr Rodney Seaborn, the collection holds material relating to theatre and other performing arts with a focus on the histories of smaller independent companies. Neil, who has trained in archival studies, spoke of the significance of the collection as a 'community archive' offering 'a picture of what life is like in the theatre', distinguishing it from the collections of major performing arts companies (Pollock 2020). This resonates with how, in other sectors, local significance should not be placed in a hierarchy below state or national significance, but understood

as a unique kind of value. The collection holds an array of material types: paper-based items; ephemera such as theatre scrapbooks; photographic and audiovisual material; and a significant collection of marionette puppets, whose composite object type poses some conservation challenges.

Audiovisual archives

Audiovisual materials are held in many different types of collections, including media archives, family collections, local historical societies and Indigenous communities. Three interviews were undertaken in this category. Audiovisual material does not appear as a discrete category in either the Pigott Report (1975) or *Key Needs* (2002). At the time of the Pigott Report, the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) was not yet an independent organisation, with audiovisual materials kept in various government departments and collections. Reference is also made in the Pigott Report to the then Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) and its holdings of audiovisual materials, including ethnographic film and sound recordings. The Canberra focus group for *Key Needs* (2002) included Screensound Australia, now the NFSA.

Table 6.7: Interviews undertaken with audiovisual collections

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
12 December 2019	ABC Archives *Sydney, NSW*	Janelle Mikkelsen	Collections Manager
17 April 2020	Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures *Various locations*	Dr Nick Thieberger	Director
19 June 2020	First Nations Media Australia *Various locations*	Dr Daniel Featherstone	Archival Project Manager

The first interview in this category was undertaken in person with Janelle Mikkelsen, collections manager at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Archives in Sydney. With holdings of radio and television recordings dating back to 1932, the ABC Archives – unlike the other two interviews included in this category – is a singular collection belonging to one organisation, and in that sense could also be categorised and analysed as a corporate collection. However, as its audiovisual format is of primary importance for studying meaning, value and use, it is discussed in conjunction with other collections with similar risks and needs.

A second interview was held over Zoom with Dr Nick Thieberger, the director of PARADISEC, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures. Since 2003, PARADISEC has developed a digital archive of audiovisual recordings of small languages and cultures primarily in the Asia-Pacific region. The work of Nick and other staff members at PARADISEC also extends to the development of data creation and management protocols for researchers working with languages. Approximately 1230 languages are now represented in the PARADISEC archive, which is inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World register of documentary heritage.

A final interview in this category was undertaken over Zoom with Dr Daniel Featherstone, archive project manager at First Nations Media Australia (FNMA). As a peak body, FNMA provides support to around 60 Indigenous-run media organisations in over 235 remote, regional and urban communities across Australia, with media content in more than 25 languages. The organisations each hold highly significant archives of analogue and digital video and audio, photographs, and associated documentation. This interview data could also have been explored in the section below on Indigenous collections; however, as with the ABC Archives, the exigencies of audiovisual formats – such as their shift from analogue to digital storage – is a critical factor.

Regional art galleries

In 2009, the ABS recorded 165 art museums/galleries operating from 180 locations across Australia.[114] Whether galleries were located in major urban, regional or remote areas was not specified, but an estimate can be made based on data collection undertaken in 2018 for Chapter 5 of this thesis. Looking only at galleries associated with regional councils, 134 collections were found.[115] Three interviews were undertaken with art galleries in different regional locations across Australia. Of those interviewed, one appears in the earlier studies – the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) was a participant in a roundtable in *Key Needs* (2002). MAGNT was also visited by the Pigott Report committee and included in their statistics (1975, p. 121). Collections in this category are relatively established, with their significance and purpose well-understood; the authors of the Pigott Report refer back to Markham and Richards who, in their 1933 *Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*, found that 'several small-town galleries in Australia were impressive by international standards' (p. 19). A comparable category to 'regional art galleries' in the Pigott Report is 'Provincial and Suburban Galleries' (1975).

[114] The 2007–2008 data formed the final Museums Survey released by the ABS.

[115] As explained in Chapter 5, this excludes the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory and any galleries independent of local government.

Table 6.8: Interviews undertaken with regional art galleries

	Collection	Respondent	Role
11 March 2020	Naracoorte Regional Art Gallery *Naracoorte, SA*	Lesley Barker	Gallery manager
28 April 2020	Gippsland Art Gallery *Sale, VIC*	Simon Gregg	Director
12 June 2020	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory[116] *Darwin, NT*	Sandra Yee	Conservator
Written responses provided	Arts Tasmania's Roving Curators[117] *Various, TAS*	Melissa Smith Veronica Macno	Roving Curator Roving Curator

The Naracoorte Regional Art Gallery (NRAG) opened in 1967 and is one of the oldest regional art galleries in South Australia. A telephone interview was held with the gallery manager, Lesley Barker, who spoke about the gallery's place in the community, and the need for more 'expertise to look after the collection properly' (Barker 2020). In the gallery's permanent collection are paintings, works on paper, ceramics, glassware, and other fine art works, with important sub-collections of prints by Indigenous Australian artists, and etchings by the British-Australian artist John Goodchild.

An interview was also held at the Gippsland Art Gallery (GAG) – a regional gallery in Eastern Victoria that has been collecting a permanent collection since 1965 – with its director, Simon Gregg. In addition to the collection's artistic value, and representation of the local Gippsland natural environment, Simon stated that the collection is 'very significant for the people that live in the region, because it's part of our collective social history… I see it as more than just a collection of artworks, but a collective history of people in the region' (Gregg 2020). The collection holds works on paper, paintings, ceramics, works in glass and wood, textiles, photographs and digital artworks, and mixed media.

Unlike Naracoorte and Gippsland, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) is an independent statutory body of a state government.

[116] The interview with Sandra Yee, conservator at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) appears both here and in the 'regional museums' category, as the collection fulfils both functions to the same degree.
[117] The interview with Arts Tasmania's roving curators, Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno, is listed here and also in the 'regional museums' category, but as they tend to work more with collections in the latter category a description of their work is included in that section.

Nonetheless, it is included here due to its regional location in Darwin, where distance from the major metropolitan centres in Australia poses challenges in terms of conservation. An interview with Sandra Yee, conservator at MAGNT, explored these risks and challenges in the context of the joint artistic, cultural and scientific collections. As well as holding fine arts materials, MAGNT also holds natural history and scientific materials.

None of the three art galleries has had a formal significance assessment undertaken of their collection.

Public libraries

In Australia, public libraries exist at the national, state and local levels, with different mandates at each level, for example legal deposit. Three interviews were undertaken in this category. Although the interviews were quite limited in scope – all respondents are based at state public libraries in urban areas – their positions as conservators who also undertake outreach work is important in light of my research questions.

Table 6.9: Interviews undertaken with public libraries

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
5 December 2019	State Library of Queensland *Brisbane, QLD*	Christine Ianna	Coordinator Reformatting Unit; also with Museums & Galleries QLD Standards program
17 December 2019	State Library of Queensland *Brisbane, QLD*	Rachel Spano	Senior Conservator
28 February 2020	State Library of Western Australia *Perth, WA*	Cristina Albillos	Senior Conservator

Two telephone interviews were undertaken with conservators at the State Library of Queensland (SLQ), Christine Ianna and Rachel Spano, and also with Cristina Albillos at the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA). The SLQ was visited by members of the Pigott Report committee (1975), and both it and SLWA took part in roundtables for *Key Needs* (2002).[118] As examples of state-funded collecting organisations that have a mandate to support local public libraries across their respective states, both interviews provided many examples of the outreach work this structure makes possible. In addition to their

[118] The SLWA was included under its previous name of the Library & Information Services of Western Australia.

roles preserving the state libraries' highly significant collections, the three conservators have also deep knowledge of the risks, needs and value of the distributed library collections, and related heritage materials, in their areas.

Regional museums and historical societies

This is the largest category of collections in my dataset, reflecting the quantity of collections in this category across Australia. 2007–2008 data found 712 'social history museums', 247 'historic properties/sites' and 59 'other museums' across the country (ABS 2009).[119] The category 'other museums' includes museums, outdoor museums, maritime museums, military museums and transport museums (ABS 2009, p. 12). This category also forms a focal point of both the Pigott Report (1975) and *Key Needs* (2002). Of those interviewed for this study, the Museum of Tropical Queensland and the History Trust of South Australia were also included in the latter report's roundtables; and the Queensland Museum was included in both reports.

Table 6.10: Interviews undertaken with regional museums and historical societies

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
8 November 2019	Queensland Museum	Cathy ter Bogt	Senior Conservator
3 December 2019	Queensland Museum MDO – Townsville *Various, QLD*	Ewen McPhee	Museum Development Officer and MDO Program Manager
5 December 2019	Queensland Museum MDO – Mackay *Various, QLD*	Dr Melanie Piddocke	Museum Development Officer
6 December 2019	Queensland Museum MDO – Cairns *Various, QLD*	Tilly James[120]	Museum Development Officer
6 December 2019	Queensland Museum MDO – Southern Inland QLD *Various, QLD*	Lydia Egunnike	Museum Development Officer
6 March 2020	*Various, WA*	Clare-Frances Craig	Conservator and Previous Museum of Western Australia development service officer

[119] It is not clear from the available data in which of these three categories historical societies sit. As per the entry for regional art galleries, data on the remoteness level of museums surveyed was not included in the report (ABS 2009).
[120] Pseudonym used.

21 April 2020	Yackandandah Museum/Historical Society *Yackandandah, VIC*	Susan Reynolds	Collections manager
5 June 2020	History Trust SA *Various, SA*	Amanda James	Senior Community History Officer
4 June 2020	Katherine Museum *Katherine, NT*	Simmone Croft	Curator
Written responses provided	Museum of Tropical Queensland *Townsville, QLD*	Sue Valis	Conservator
Written responses provided	Arts Tasmania's Roving Curators *Various, TAS*	Melissa Smith Veronica Macno	Roving Curator Roving Curator

Four interviews were conducted by telephone with Museum Development Officers (MDOs) at the Queensland Museum (QM); an initial in-person interview with Senior Conservator at the Museum, Cathy ter Bogt, introduced me to the program. The MDOs provide outreach advice and support services to community heritage collections located in regional areas of Queensland. Interviews were held with the MDOs Tilly James in Cairns and Far North Queensland; Ewen McPhee in Townsville; Dr Melanie Piddocke in Mackay and Central Queensland; and Lydia Egunnike in Toowoomba and Southern Inland Queensland. An additional written response was provided by conservator Sue Valis, who is based at the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville and provides outreach conservation support to regional museums through the MDO program. A case study of the MDO interviews appeared in Chapter 2.

Three further interviews were undertaken with respondents who do not work with individual collections, but in an outreach or advisory capacity with multiple collections in their respective states. These were Clare-Frances Craig, conservator and past development officer for the Museum of Western Australia; Amanda James at the History Trust of South Australia; and the Arts Tasmania Roving Curators, Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno, who provided written responses.

Based on her experience as a conservator and former Museum of Western Australia development officer, Clare-Frances Craig was able to provide insights into the benefits and needs of community heritage collections in Western Australia in our telephone interview. She discussed case study examples of the Claremont Museum; and outreach

work with collections in the Southwest and Great Southern regions of Western Australia such as Dwellingup, and in more remote locations such as the Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery in the Warburton Community, Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku.

An interview with Amanda James was held over Zoom. Working with the History Trust of South Australia (HTSA), Amanda manages the support for distributed heritage collections held in regional communities across South Australia. These collections tend exhibit historical significance on the local level. In terms of significance, Amanda also explained that 'what we find with the community collections is that that understanding of what makes something truly significant can be quite lacking' (James 2020), but there is also good utilisation of significance assessments through the Community Heritage Grants program.

Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno, the Arts Tasmania Roving Curators (ATRC), provide support to over 140 community museums and galleries across the state of Tasmania (extending from regional to remote areas). The collections they work with are diverse, ranging from local and social history museums to specialist collections such as 'military, maritime, aviation, railway, mining, faith-based or spiritual, and sports' (Smith & Macno 2020, p. 1). Utilising *Significance 2.0* as a guide for assessing significance, the curators stated that the most common types of significance they encounter are historical and social significance.

A telephone interview was also held with Susan Reynolds, Collections Manager at the Yackandandah Museum/Historical Society in regional Victoria (YMHS). The Yackandandah Museum has a varied collection of materials which relate primarily to the social history of Yackandandah and surrounding districts. A significance assessment of the collection has been completed (Russell 2007), but the emphasis in the interview was on the limitations of the significance assessment framework and its hierarchisation of local, state and national significance. A detailed case study of this interview is found in Chapter 7.

Lastly in this section, a telephone interview was held with Simmone Croft, Curator of the Katherine Museum (KM) in the Northern Territory. Opening in 1985, the Museum's collection holds historical material relating to the area's social history, including Indigenous Australian, aviation, farming and industry, domestic, and telecommunications material relating to the Overland Telegraph. A significant assessment is yet to be undertaken due to the difficulty of engaging an assessor, but

Simmone hopes that one can be completed, particularly for the Gipsy Moth aircraft used by the first 'flying doctor' of the Northern Territory, Clyde Fenton.

Indigenous collections

This category is based not on material type, but on the origins and shared concerns of the collections. Collections are diverse and range from art centres, to audiovisual archives, family and private collections, and museum collections. Some material is held within national and state-level collecting organisations. Indigenous people working with cultural heritage collections were consulted for *Key Needs* (2002), which includes data on Indigenous perspectives on access to collections, cultural protocols and training (pp. 82-84). However, according to the authors, 'very low numbers of respondents identified their collection theme exclusively as Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander / South Sea Islander' (p. 31). In the Pigott Report (1975), an additional Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia provided recommendations. The *Safe Keeping* report into the conservation of art centre-based community collections provides additional context and evidence of the significance and preservation needs of many Indigenous collections (Scott 2017).

Table 6.11: Interviews undertaken with Indigenous collections

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
1 June 2020	Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research	Kirsten Thorpe	Senior Researcher
16 June 2020	Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (Strehlow Collection)	Shaun Angeles	Cultural Repatriation Manager
19 June 2020	First Nations Media Australia[121] *Various locations*	Dr Daniel Featherstone	Archival Project Manager

An interview was conducted by Zoom with Kirsten Thorpe, Senior Researcher at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research. In her role, Kirsten supports Indigenous community and family collections across the state of New South Wales, focusing particularly on digital collections. Relevant materials are also held in other local, state and national collections. The community-held collections in particular contain highly significant materials such as 'personal papers of people who have been in activist movements, important papers that are sitting outside of the periphery of the major

[121] The interview with Dr Daniel Featherstone from First Nations Media Australia is listed but not discussed here; as it focused on the needs and challenges of audiovisual materials, it has been located in the category of audiovisual collections.

collecting institutions' (Thorpe 2020). A detailed analysis of Kirsten's interview is provided in Chapter 7.

A second interview in this category was held with Shaun Angeles, Cultural Repatriation Manager for the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (Strehlow Collection). At the time of the interview, Shaun was based at MAGNT in Darwin, but also spoke about his work at the Strehlow Research Centre in Alice Springs. As explained in the section on regional art galleries, MAGNT is a public collecting institution of the Northern Territory. The Strehlow Collection contains highly significant ethnographic and anthropological materials relating to the Arrernte people of Central Australia collected by Professor Ted Strehlow in the twentieth century. Part of the collection relates to men's sacred and secret ceremonial activities, the unique value of which Shaun explored in the interview.

Religious collections

Religious collections, also known as collections of faith traditions or ecclesiastical collections, are predominantly cared for by their governing bodies in Australia. They include diocesan collections, congregational archives, heritage centres and museums. One interview was undertaken in this category, which did not appear in either the Pigott Report (1975) or *Key Needs* (2002). More respondents were sought through the Australian Society of Archivists Collections of Faith Traditions Special Interest Group but potentially due to unfortunate timing in early 2020, no more were forthcoming. A minor thesis on the Catholic Archdiocese of Sandhurst has also explored the significance and conservation of religious collections in Victoria (Griffin 2014).

Table 6.12: Interviews undertaken with religious collections

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
2 June 2020	Mary Mackillop Place Museum *Sydney, NSW*	Edwina Huntley	Curator

A telephone interview was held with Edwina Huntley, Curator at the Mary Mackillop Place Museum of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart in Sydney (MMPM). The collection holds material dating back to the start of the congregation in 1866; as well as being highly valued by the Catholic community in Australia, it is historically, socially and culturally significant. While a formal significance assessment is yet to be undertaken, Edwina considers it likely to be nationally significant as the Sisters are the first Catholic religious congregation in Australia to receive the canonisation of a saint. In terms of its

broader historical and social significance, the collection 'reflects the growth of rural communities in Australia before Federation, and the development of the Roman Catholic Church as an Australian entity', as well as 'the changing attitudes, beliefs and social economic changes in society, reflected in the evolution of devotional practices in the Catholic community' (Huntley 2020). It also holds Indigenous Australian art and artefacts from the Western Australian communities of Warmun and Ringer Soak.

Built heritage collections

Built heritage is relevant to cultural materials conservation when there are associated collections. These range from house museums, to religious, industrial, governmental, educational and commercial sites. Two interviews were undertaken with organisations with built heritage as well as movable object collections. In *Key Needs* (2002), the need to 'address the problems of heritage collections housed in heritage listed buildings, particularly smaller collections' was noted (p. 62). Sydney Living Museums is included in *Key Needs* under its previous name of the Historic House Trust of New South Wales.

Table 6.13: Interviews undertaken with built heritage collections

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
11 December 2019	Sydney Living Museums *Various, NSW*	Sarah-Jane Rennie	Head of Collections Care
18 February 2019, written responses also provided	Mission to Seafarers Victoria *Melbourne, VIC*	Jay Miller	Curator and Heritage Registrar

An in-person interview was held with Sarah-Jane Rennie, Head of Collections Care at Sydney Living Museums (SLM), which encompasses 12 historic houses, gardens and museums across New South Wales. Established in 1980 as the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney Living Museums is the only government agency in Australia that has the specific role of conserving, managing and interpreting historic sites including house museums. The built heritage of historic houses can present difficulties in terms of significance, as the increased understanding of social history is now often at odds with earlier systems of valuation.

An in-person interview was also held with Jay Miller, Curator and Heritage Registrar at the Mission to Seafarers Victoria in Melbourne (MtSV). The Mission to Seafarers is a charitable organisation that provides practical welfare and spiritual support and outreach to seafarers. In addition to the historic building, designed in the Arts and Crafts style by

the Australian architect Walter Butler, there is a heritage collecting relating to the history of the organisation. Jay reported that a 2014 significance assessment found the Mission to Seafarers collection to be the 'largest most complete collection of material relating to seafarers' welfare in Australia' (Miller 2020).[122] As a 'living collection' within the still-operating Mission to Seafarers, it is particularly significant in terms of maritime history, social history, and military and wartime history.

With both interviews, a tour of the site and buildings (at the Mission to Seafarers) and storage areas (at Sydney Living Museums) was also generously provided by the respondents.

Private collections

In 2001, a survey of private and family collectors in Victoria found that 'some of the most important cultural material in Victoria is contained in family collections, particularly family collections in rural areas' (Sloggett 2001). Two interviews were undertaken with private collectors, both of whom are located in urban areas of Melbourne. This narrow scope reflects the difficulty of identifying private collectors to interview; without any publicly available records, interviews with the two respondents were arranged through word of mouth.

Table 6.14: Interviews undertaken with private collections

	Collection	**Respondent**	**Role**
23 March 2020	Family Collection *Inner Melbourne, VIC*	Family Collection Custodian[123]	Custodian
6 April 2020	Private Collection[124] *Inner Melbourne, VIC*	BB[125]	Custodian

The first interview undertaken was with the custodian of a 'Family Collection' by telephone. The collection contains items relating to two families connected to the respondent, who inherited the collection in 2011 following the death of an older family member. It appears to be typical of family collections in its breadth and diversity of material, with photographs, paper-based items and books; a framed oil painting; a large sub-collection relating to the First World War with letters, military photographs, postcards, maps, medals and memorial scrolls; and ephemeral objects such as early

[122] I was not able to access the original significance report.
[123] Pseudonym used.
[124] Both respondents requested anonymity in this research. To distinguish between the two, one is identified as the 'Custodian of a Family Collection', and the other by the initials BB.
[125] Pseudonym used.

nineteenth-century locks of hair. A notebook begun by the preceding custodian to annotate the 1850s diaries against contemporaneous social issues is also considered part of the collection.

The second interview, also by telephone, concerned the respondent BB's collection which has a specific focus on the history of ice-skating in Victoria. It holds a broad array of materials, including paper-based items, photographs, books, ephemeral material, and ice-skates (composite objects). Both collections are stored in the respondents' own houses, with the exception of part of BB's collection which was acquired by the State Library of Victoria in 2006. Of the two, only this portion of BB's collection has been formally assessed; BB reported that it was found to possess state-level historical and social significance.[126]

Other respondents

In order to broaden my understanding of the issues affecting collections in Australia, interviews were also sought with additional respondents working in the areas of disaster management, and conservation services and research.

Table 6.15: Interviews undertaken with other respondents

	Collection	Respondent	Role
27 January 2020	Artlab Australia *Adelaide, SA*	Heather Brown	Conservator and Researcher
17 February 2020	Torrens Resilience Institute, Flinders University *Adelaide, SA*	Johanna Garnett	Executive Officer

The first interview, with Heather Brown, was held by telephone, and focused on two distinct areas of her work and practice: as an Assistant Director at Artlab Australia, a government agency providing expert services in conservation, and as a PhD researcher in digital preservation at the University of South Australia. Due to her research interests, the interview had a strong focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by digital preservation. Heather identified key issues as the bifurcation of physical and digital preservation practices; disaster preparation for digital collections; and how a language or terminology barrier between different fields can impede communication. Also discussed were the benefits of conservation in how it enables the sharing of knowledge, identity

[126] I was not able to access the original significance report.

and stories; and the work of conservators to assist in the aftermath of disasters through rebuilding and resilience.

A second interview, with Johanna Garnett from the Torrens Resilience Institute (TRI) at Flinders University, was able to be held in-person during a trip she had made to Melbourne. Johanna's experience in emergency management training and leadership – including fire, health security and human-instigated disasters – has informed her research into disaster preparedness for special collections in libraries (Garnett et al. 2018). The interview furnished insights into the necessity of bringing the two sectors of disaster management and conservation closer together.

Part 2: Extended thematic analysis

Following the transcription of the interviews, a coding key was developed and refined as each transcript was coded. The interviews were first coded manually by hand, then in Excel software.[127] The development of the coding key categories was based on the respondents' experiences, as reflected in their words; this was intended to cut against the reliance of the interview questions on my pre-conceived ideas. Both the coding key and the thematic analysis relocate the production of knowledge, categories and concepts, to a site between the researcher and respondent.

The coding key comprises six primary thematic categories: (1) impact, value and benefit of collections; (2) risks; (3) mitigation of risks; (4) access to conservation; (5) the effects of loss on collections and their communities; (6) future challenges and needs. Each thematic category includes several sub-categories. The full coding key is reproduced in Appendix 4. In addition to these themes, respondents were also asked about what a new national conservation policy would need to recognise in order to reflect the needs of their collection or sector. A discussion of this element of the interviews is followed up in Chapter 9.

In the thematic analysis below, pertinent examples are drawn from the transcripts to illustrate each sub-category. It is important to note that the data is neither quantitative nor comparative. Coding transcripts depends on certain subjective features such as the language used by both interviewer and respondent to describe experiences, and the interpretation of questions and answers as the interview progresses. In semi-structured interviews in particular there can be high variation between transcripts in terms of what is present to be coded and analysed. The purpose of the thematic analysis is therefore to

[127] See Bree and Gallagher (2016) for an explanation and rationale for coding using Excel.

demonstrate the extent and range of experiences reported by respondents; structurally in the thesis, this analysis was an essential precursor for developing the dialectical framework seen in Chapters 7 and 8.

Returning to Freeman's (2017) statement that qualitative research must 'develop an understanding of the relationship between the account provided and the phenomenon studied' (p. 19), the influence of subjective perception was accounted for in a third layer of coding focused on perceptions of the researcher and respondents. These inferential codes captured the respondents' perceptions of risk and value; the broader contexts affecting collections at the time of interviews; and ideas arising out of the transcripts with the capacity to alter theorisation of the thesis problems (see Table 10.7, Appendix 4). In the latter category are references to the enduring importance of cultural materials; the acceptance of change in a collection or its items; the benefits of holding materials locally; and moments in which certain dialectical tensions came to the fore.

Theme 1: Impact, value and benefit of collections

This theme reveals the various ways in which respondents described their collection both in terms of more traditional understandings of significance, and also in the sense of their wider social impact and benefit. Participants described impact in the following terms: the value of the cultural or scientific record; collections' impact for research; educational benefit; historical value; scientific value; environmental value; artistic value; cultural value; social value; the value to custodian's own life; economic benefit; and how access to collections enables the enjoyment of these forms of value and benefits.

Table 6.16: Impact, value and benefit of collections

Sub-theme	**Example**
Value of the cultural or scientific record	Many collections include materials that furnish evidence of both the cultural and scientific record; the two types of value are entwined. For instance, items that Shaun Angeles (Strehlow/MAGNT) works to repatriate include secret/sacred artefacts and ancestral remains.
Impact for research	In developing a new framework for understanding the impact of university collections, Caine Chennatt (UTAS) accounts for their significance in terms of documenting university histories of research and collecting, as well as their value in ongoing and future research.
Educational benefit	Simon Gregg (GAG) discussed how regional art galleries, in providing access to art for people at a distance from major cities, provide an important

	experience of art and education in art history for local residents.
Historical value	A very common type of value spoken about by respondents. For instance, Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno (ATRC), who apply the *Significance 2.0* framework, noted that for Tasmanian community museum collections, the most common type of significance is the primary criteria of historic significance.
Scientific value	Barbara Cytowicz (SVHM) discussed the connection between heritage collections in hospitals and patient outcomes.
Environmental value	The crucial importance of scientific collections of herbaria for understanding environmental changes was discussed by Brendan Lepschi (ANH) and Pina Milne (SBC).
Artistic value	A strong theme in regional art galleries. Lesley Barker (NRAG) discussed links between the art collection and art prizes administered by the gallery for the creation of new works.
Cultural value	As an alternative to the language of value and significance, Kirsten Thorpe (Jumbunna Institute) discussed the impact of collections in terms of 'cultural maintenance', which brings use value together with preservation.
Social value	Christine Ianna and Rachel Spano (SLQ) discussed the importance of public libraries and their collections of social history. Christine posited preventive conservation and disaster preparedness as a form of social support for communities. Sarah-Jane Rennie (SLM) made the point that social impact studies of collections are dispersed in Australia and need to be brought together.
Value to custodian's own life	Very prominent in interviews with private and family collections custodians.
Economic benefit	The links between collections and tourism were discussed by Lydia Egunnike (MDO program) and Sandra Yee (MAGNT).
Access to collections necessary to enable value and benefits	The 'open access' principles discussed by Roxanne Missingham and Heather Jenks (ANU Chifley Library) has enabled progress in digitisation, with the library's entire collection of theses digitised in 4.5 years. The average annual use of a thesis has since increased from zero to 42, improving dissemination of research.

Theme 2: Risks to collections

This theme reflects the diversity of risks posed to collections across Australia. The ten agents of deterioration are included (Michalski 1990; Waller 1994), with additional risks also identified, such as a range of socially and economically derived risk factors. Risks were identified in the areas of: building and infrastructure; storage capacity and housing; pests; environmental risks and/or lack of environmental controls; water; fire; dissociation, inadequate cataloguing and/or documentation; handling risks; risks associated with digitisation; dust, drought and dryness; security; lighting; intellectual property and ownership of materials; social and economic risks. Some of these map on to the 'agents of deterioration' identified by Michalski (1990) and Waller (1994), but the sub-categories extend further to consider more human-centred risks.

Table 6.17: Risks to collections

Sub-theme	**Example**
Building and infrastructure	Reliance on non-purpose built buildings with poor environmental controls was identified as an issue by many in regional areas, including Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno (ATRC).
Storage capacity and housing	Similarly, a lack of appropriate storage space in such collections often results in the entire collection being on permanent display.
Pests	A lack of developed procedures for pest control can be an issue with some regional museums, according to Sue Valis (MDO program).
Environmental risks and/or lack of environmental controls	Jay Miller (MtSV) identified a lack of environmental controls in a non-purpose built, heritage-listed building as a significant problem.
Water	This sub-category includes risks arising from water infiltration, flood, cyclone and storms. The causes and effects of these were explored in detail by the Queensland Museum MDOs.
Fire	An example of fire damaging a substantial portion of collection material was given by Susan Reynolds (YMHS).
Dissociation, inadequate cataloguing and/or documentation	Amanda James (HTSA) discussed a lack of ongoing documentation of the condition of small regional museums and the need for more collection audits. Despite the early uptake of collection databases among South Australian collections, the reliance on a volunteer workforce means that gaps exist in collection documentation.
Handling risks	Rhonda Davis (MUAG) spoke of the challenges of a collection being displayed as part of an institutional working environment, and damage that might occur as a result.

Risks associated with digitisation	Shaun Angeles (Strehlow/MAGNT) discussed cultural protocols around digitising Indigenous secret/sacred materials. Heather Brown referred to the problem of confusing digitisation and preservation.
Dust, drought and dryness	Christine Ianna (SLQ) explored how drought is as big of a risk as fire in certain regions in Queensland.
Security	Digital security was discussed by Cristina Albillos (SLWA) and Heather Brown. Security risks with exhibition displays were discussed by Simmone Croft (KM).
Lighting	Many respondents working with regional museums and historical societies identified risks relating to exposure to light. Materials may be on display for indefinite periods of time due to a lack of knowledge about preventive conservation and/or storage space.
Intellectual property and ownership of materials	Nick Thieberger (PARADISEC) explained that previous academic research practices often failed to take sufficient account of intellectual property and copyright, causing problems when this research is transformed into a digital archive.
Social and economic risks	Fluctuations in government support and administration of programs in support of conservation were discussed by respondents working with public libraries. Those working with volunteer-run collections (such as historical societies) referred to difficulties when people managing collections are facing other social risks, for instance long-term drought and its economic impact on their livelihoods.

Theme 3: Mitigation of risks

This theme explores the various ways in which people working with collections seek to mitigate the effects of the risks outlined above. These include forms of preventive conservation, as well as other ameliorative influences on collections' risk levels. Ways of mitigating risk were found to be: disaster management and response; storage and housing of collection items; digitisation; pest management; fire suppression; collection management, documentation and policies; light reduction; security; environmental controls and management; accessioning and deaccessioning strategies; training; staff knowledge and expertise; and the context of a broader organisation providing support to the collection.

Table 6.18: Mitigation of risks

Sub-theme	Example
Disaster management and response	Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno (ATRC) discussed working with a number of community museums to develop disaster management plans.
Storage	Simon Gregg (GAG) discussed improvements to collection storage that occurred when the gallery opened its new building in 2017.
Housing	Pina Milne (SBC) discussed the use of barrier bags to protect herbaria specimens from pest damage.
Digitisation	As well as using cold storage for audiovisual materials, Janelle Mikkelsen (ABC) discussed the upcoming mass digitisation of the video tape collection. The launch of the ABC's digital archive in 2018 has provided a cloud-based platform for storage and access by program makers who can repurpose material.
Pest management	Edwina Huntley (MMPM) spoke of an integrated pest management program that, in conjunction with improved storage and ventilation, reduces biological risks to collection materials.
Fire suppression	Tilly James (MDO program) referred to the use of fire-resistant safes for highly significant items in collections.
Collection management, documentation and policies	Sarah-Jane Rennie (SLM) discussed progress made in identifying items in the collections, leading to fewer instances of 'unidentified' objects.
Light reduction	Neil Pollock (SBWF) employs strategies to reduce light damage to textile items in collection storage, such as marionette puppets.
Security	Simmone Croft (KM) has addressed security concerns by installing new museum-grade cabinets with digital locks.
Environmental controls and management	Helen Jackson (BBC) prefers to utilise passive environmental management methods such as air circulation to avoid problems associated with relying on air-conditioning in an educational setting (where it might be turned off for school holidays).
Accessioning and deaccessioning strategies	Rhonda Davis (MUAG) spoke of the positive outcomes of deaccessioning strategies, which involve gifting works to regional galleries.
Training	Participants in workshops run by the MDO program receive training in preventive conservation, rehousing and the appropriate use of materials.

Staff knowledge and expertise	Several respondents, including Susan Reynolds (YMHS), draw on their own skillsets, networks and knowledge about conservation to mitigate risks to collections.
Context of broader organisation providing support	Examples took very different forms, ranging from council levies to support public libraries, to disaster management and security support provided by the CSU to the archives and art collection.

Theme 4: Access to conservation

In this theme, the question of access to conservation was explored from two angles: impediments to access, as well as the various ways in which those working with collections practice or engage in conservation. Access to conservation treatment, advice, resources and materials, and conservation networks and professional associations were discussed. Additional sub-categories described the capacity for conservation to be undertaken in-house; engagement of external conservation services; involvement in conservation outreach programs; demonstrated use of conservation decision-making, and conservation knowledge and skills; and how repatriation of Indigenous cultural materials enables their conservation.

Table 6.19: Access to conservation

Sub-theme	**Example**
Access to conservation treatment	Collections have different degrees of access to conservation treatment. Some are able to undertake treatment in-house, primarily the bigger institutions, but also those whose staff have specialist skills, for example the Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia Museum referred to by Amanda James (HTSA).
Access to conservation advice	Most collections have established connections with professional conservators and/or organisations who can provide advice about conservation.
Access to resources and materials for conservation	More resourcing for conservation, particularly the need for staff time, was a common theme expressed by participants.
Access to conservation networks and professional associations	Lesley Barker (NRAG) is able to draw on regional art gallery networks in South Australia for conservation advice and support.
Capacity for in-house conservation	Helen Jackson (BBC) utilises her skills and training in conservation to undertake conservation work for the collection in her capacity as school archivist.

Engagement of external conservation services	The necessity of engaging external conservators, often interstate, for conservation projects was discussed by Sandra Yee (MAGNT).
Involvement in conservation outreach programs	The success of outreach work in conservation depends on going in at the 'right time, when there's a need', according to Tilly James (MDO program). Clare-Frances Craig discussed working for a similar (now discontinued) service in Western Australia.
Demonstrated use of conservation decision-making	Janelle Mikkelsen (ABC) described the archives' collection policy to preserve content, the value of which may only be realised in the future.
Demonstrated use of conservation knowledge and skills	Brendan Lepschi (ANH) discussed the knowledge that herbaria collections staff have in conservation, including awareness of the limits of that knowledge and when to engage external conservators.
Repatriation as a form of conservation	The expertise of elders being used to enrich collection materials was discussed by Shaun Angeles (Strehlow/MAGNT) and Daniel Featherstone (FNMA).

Theme 5: Effects of loss on collections and their communities

Without access to conservation, collections can experience loss of, or damage to, their cultural materials. This theme sought to explore the types and effects of loss, and incorporates respondents' examples of instances where collections have experienced loss, and also their opinions of the potential impact of any future loss. The effects of loss were discussed in the following ways: limiting access to collections; threatening the physical integrity of materials; leading to restrictions on use of materials; how loss can affect a collection's or item's status as a cultural or scientific record; the cultural impact of loss; the personal effects of loss; and what happens in the aftermath of loss and rebuilding.

Table 6.20: Effects of loss on collections and their communities

Sub-theme	**Example**
Access to collections is limited	The existence of regional archives mean that people do not have to travel to urban centres to access materials, stated Wayne Doubleday (CSU). Any loss would be 'catastrophic' in terms of community trust.
Physical integrity of materials	Lydia Egunnike (MDO program) described types of damage to collection items she sees in her region, which experiences very high heat and low humidity, noting the effects of unmitigated

	climatic extremes on organic materials such as leather, rubber and silver gelatine.
Restrictions on use	In a working collection such as a herbaria, damage to a specimen may mean that it can no longer be examined by scientific researchers (Pina Milne, SBC).
Loss to status as a cultural or scientific record	Sandra Yee (MAGNT) discussed the possible effects of a loss of provenance for archaeological materials, where information about the record is crucial to placing it in context.
Cultural impact of loss	Kirsten Thorpe (Jumbunna Institute) described the cultural effects of loss of access to records for Stolen Generations survivors, as well as the 'symbolic alienation' that occurs when Indigenous history is not included in local history collections.
Personal effects of loss	Sue Valis (MDO program) described the impact potential loss in relation to the strength of community attachment to collections.
Aftermath of loss	At times, loss of parts of a collection can lead to changes or growth in a collection, as discussed by Roxanne Missingham and Heather Jenks (ANU Chifley Library).

Theme 6: Future challenges and needs

This theme brings together various responses given by participants when asked to reflect on challenges for their collections going into the future. Challenges and needs were expressed in terms of sharing and communicating about the collection; digitisation; funding; the type of support available for conservation; advocacy; the need for collections to be environmentally and ecologically sustainable; staffing, training and time; stewardship and keeping the collection together; the need for conservation; disaster preparation; heritage protection; and how forms of inequity can function to condition needs.

Table 6.21: Future challenges and needs

Sub-theme	**Example**
Sharing and communicating the collection	Private/family collectors are looking for ways to better share their collections with others while balancing privacy and security concerns.
Digitisation	The urgent need for significant audiovisual materials held in Indigenous communities to be digitised was raised by Daniel Featherstone (FNMA).
Funding	Melanie Piddocke (MDO program) identified a problem whereby collections in different regions

	rely on funding stemming from particular sectors (e.g. the mining/resources sector in Queensland) and the need to find new sources of funding when one wanes.
Type of support available for conservation	Several respondents identified the issue of only receiving sporadic, not ongoing, funding and other support for conservation activities. The need for better national research infrastructure to manage dispersed collections was cited by Nick Thieberger (PARADISEC).
Advocacy	The need for greater advocacy for collections within institutions such as universities was identified by Caine Chennatt (UTAS), and the need for recognition in policy by Jay Miller (MtSV).
Environmental and ecological sustainability	Edwina Huntley (MMPM) discussed the successful use of passive environmental control strategies for on-site storage, and how this can reduce the financial and environmental burden of relying on HVAC systems.
Staffing, training and time	Kirsten Thorpe (Jumbunna Institute) and Shaun Angeles (Strehlow/MAGNT) discussed the need for Indigenous employment and engagement within cultural institutions.
Stewardship and keeping the collection together	Identified by many respondents working with volunteer staff in regional museums and historical societies, for instance Amanda James (HTSA). The issue of how to begin a collection from dispersed materials was raised by Lindy Murphy (MUL).
Conservation	Cathy ter Bogt (QM) identified the issue of a low number of external conservators in Queensland who can be brought in to support the core staff.
Disaster preparation	Johanna Garnett (TRI) discussed the need for better integration between cultural heritage practitioners and emergency management groups across Australia.
Heritage protection	Ideas about raising the profile of the heritage sector and avenues for legislative protection were discussed by Barbara Cytowicz (SVHM).
Inequities conditioning needs	Clare-Frances Craig discussed issues with a lack of access to conservation and other cultural heritage professionals in regional and remote parts of Western Australia; distance may not be properly accounted for in grant funding limits.

Conclusion

As is evident even from the range of interviews presented in this chapter, beyond the major collecting institutions there is much diversity not only in the types of collections, but also in the experiences demonstrated by people who work with them. The accumulative style of both the sectoral and thematic analyses of the interviews, and the generation of concepts out of the interview data, reflect points of complementarity and contradiction in the data. While the focus has not yet been on the words used by each respondent, this will be carried out in the next two chapters. Presenting the results in this way balances the need to bring order to the interview data with my wish to retain something of the irreducibility of each case. The method of categorical thinking has supported this dual aim.

By focusing on the experiences of those preserving their heritage on the periphery, ground has been made in documenting the value and benefits of such collections, their engagement with conservation, the risks they face, as well as their present and future challenges and needs. Compared to the two previous reports referenced throughout this chapter (the Pigott Report of 1975 and *Key Needs* of 2002), this research is also more exploratory and reflexive, with the data presented alongside a sustained reflection on the process, subjectivity and perception. This appears, for instance, in the categorical analyses where there is a 'dynamic interpretive movement' between inductive and deductive modes of categorisation (Freeman 2017, p. 24), as concepts derived from pre-existing categories are challenged – such as those included in the Pigott Report and *Key Needs* – and extended by the respondents' own experiences. The category of risks is exemplary on this account. In addition to the established agents of deterioration, additional social and economic risk factors that directly affect collections, or indirectly exacerbate other risks, have emerged from the interviews. While these concerns have been identified previously (for example in Michalski & Pedersoli Jr 2016), their categorisation here as social and economic risks to be considered adjacently with the agents of deterioration is new.

In order to provide an overview of the interview results, the scope of this chapter is necessarily too broad for detailed case studies to be developed. Other limitations of a categorical analysis are 'the inherent bias of language, the essentializing nature of categories, and the resulting decontextualization of the concepts created' (Freeman 2017, p. 25). This can give rise to 'systems of categories that create a knowledge structure far removed from its source' (Freeman 2017, p. 28). However, by presenting the results categorically, it is clear how each case can illuminate others in its category

beyond those I interviewed. As, moreover, no classification system can be definitive, there is always the chance that other perspectives can be applied to a set of data. What this initial categorical analysis enables is the identification of issues across the sector, and the selection of case studies for the chapters to come.

From this beginning in categorical thinking, another mode proposed by Freeman (2017) – that of dialectical thinking – is traversed in Chapters 7 and 8, where case studies and vignettes are developed around dialectical tensions that arose in the transcripts. These tensions lie between the concepts of value and risk, and need and benefit; as they arise within individual case studies, they exceed the limits of the categorisation undertaken in this chapter. Each will be explored. First, the tension between collections of significant materials and risks they face is followed in Chapter 7. The second tension between the benefits collections bring to their surrounding communities, and their needs and challenges going into the future, structures Chapter 8.

Chapter 7: Three case studies of the dialectic of significance and risk

Introduction

In this chapter, the limitations of categorical thinking identified at the conclusion of the previous chapter are overcome through the use of a different strategy, that of dialectical analysis. Across three case studies of collections drawn from different sectors, moments of dialectical tension are identified where the concepts of significance and risk are particularly prominent. A typology of variations on these concepts, as derived from the interviews, was developed in the extended thematic analysis of Chapter 6 – in Theme 1, *Impact, value and benefit of collections* and Theme 2, *Risks to collections*. What is necessarily elided in a categorical analysis, however, is the co-existence of these points in individual case studies, whereby collections that hold significant materials of great benefit to their communities nonetheless encounter high levels of risk. On the surface, this contradiction appears self-evident, as it is integral to decision-making strategies in conservation and other fields. By placing the two concepts in dialectical tension, the intention is to denaturalise this received interpretation, and to show how what arises as a serious consequence between significance and risk is the potential for loss.

While there has been a concern for the state of collections outside of the major institutions across Australia at regular intervals over the years (Markham & Richards 1933; Piggott 1975), and developments in the conservation profession in terms of understanding the effects of risk factors, case studies offer a different vantage point on the dialectic of significance and risk. Examples are drawn from three different sectors identified in Chapter 6 – regional museums and historical societies, scientific collections, and Indigenous community collections – to show both the pervasive nature of the dialectical tension, and the diverse consequences it produces. Following an analysis of each case study, a discussion section brings together reflections on loss in relation to location and place – a return to these concepts connecting the different parts of the thesis.

Background to dialectical analysis

The contradictions present in the case studies call for an analytic method that can account for contradiction without seeking premature resolution. A parallel approach was taken by Scott (2016) in her application of Thomas Kuhn's 1959 'essential tension' theory to perceived crises in conservation. Identifying a longstanding tension between tradition and innovation in the development of the conservation field, Scott (2016) also utilised case studies to exemplify instances of such tensions:

> This is an important argument as, rather than consider the various crises that have arisen from dialectical tensions within conservation as points of division, this recognition of historical lineage provides the evidence of the ways in which various 'essential tensions' in conservation have led to disciplinary and professional growth and innovation. (p. 16)

The theoretical framework used in this study to interpret the dialectical tension is based on the German philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno's theory of negative dialectics (Adorno [1966] 2007). An explanation of the theoretical basis for this mode of analysis explicates a few key aspects of the theorist's work – contradiction and the dialectic; the 'negative' of negative dialectics; and the relationship between categorical and dialectical thought.

If the aim of categorical analysis is to create abstractions out of data in order to organise it, a focus on the dialectic calls the naturalism of such categories into question. In his work *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno explains that classification involves identifying 'what something comes under, what it exemplifies or represents, and what, accordingly, it is not itself' ([1966] 2007, p. 149).[128] He also writes that 'objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy' (Adorno [1966] 2007, p. 5). The work of abstraction – developing categories and concepts – always leaves a remainder, which is now to be elucidated in three case studies.

Adorno developed his idea of negative dialectics through a critical reading of the idealist philosophers Kant and Hegel. He argued against the resolution, or synthesis, of binaries such as that posited by Kant between reason and intellect, because as contradictions they 'bear witness to real social antagonisms' (Jarvis 1998, p. 152). In Jarvis's (1998) commentary on Adorno, he explains this as follows:

> …[the] negative dialectic, accordingly, does not aim to resolve all contradictions in a final non-contradictory position. It is easy to misunderstand Adorno's "immanent critique" as a generalized application of the law of non-contradiction as a means of discovering contradictions in criticized texts… Rather, negative dialectic seeks to make visible, as contradiction, the real antagonisms which are masked by philosophy's striving for logical identity. The aim of negative dialectic

[128] Originally published in German in 1966 as *Negative Dialektik*.

> is not the liquidation of contradiction in logic, but the reconciliation of antagonisms in reality. (p. 170)

Adorno's idea of immanent critique is a departure from the transcendental method followed by Kant. Immanent critique – also known as a materialist critique – emerges from the material being studied, whereas the type of transcendental critique exemplified by the German idealists operates from without. A dialectical mode of analysis can make explicit this 'mutual implicatedness' of thought and experience, and subject and object (Jarvis 1998, p. 167). In the context of this study, it can also reveal the co-existence of significance and risk. Showing how the Hegelian dialectic is misinterpreted through a schematic reduction to thesis–antithesis–synthesis, Adorno resisted synthesis and resolution of dialectical tensions, and thus the loss of contradiction. Rather, the aim of a negative dialectic is to sustain contradiction through critique; it is further distinguished from Hegel's dialectic 'in not claiming already to have gained successful access to absolute truth' (Jarvis 1998, p. 16).

Methods

As the specific methods of qualitative data collection were discussed in Chapter 1, this section focuses more narrowly on the selection of case studies for the dialectical analysis. In Helen Newing's 2011 text *Conducting Research in Conservation: A Social Science Perspective*, she reviews social scientific methods for research in the field of environmental conservation: participant observation, qualitative interviews and focus groups, questionnaires, cultural domain analysis, community workshops and participatory action research, and participatory mapping. She also discusses facets of case study design that can be generalised to apply to qualitative research in cultural materials conservation.

Newing writes that when a project addresses 'a new, poorly developed area of research, almost any case study should add something to the current state of knowledge', but there is still a need for a rationale in the selection of case studies (2011, p. 47). Two principles have therefore guided the selection of case studies: first, that the case study 'is most useful if it is reasonably typical of the wider situation', and second, that cases should be chosen 'where the factors you are interested in are particularly prominent, so that you can explore them in depth' (Newing 2011, p. 47). Taking the second principle of prominence: in coding the interview transcripts, an inferential coding layer was added to highlight moments where the factor I am most interested in – the dialectical tension between significance and risk – appears both in contradictions reported by the respondent, and implicitly between the lines of the text. The three case studies are

prominent examples of the dialectical tension between significant material held, exposure to risks, and the impact of loss. The 'reasonably typical' principle can be understood in the context of the categories presented in Chapter 6. What can be achieved across two chapters of case studies – and within a mixed-methods thesis – is necessarily limited. A balance must also be found between ensuring reliability and replicability, and allowing the description and analysis of each case to unfold at sufficient depth. Three case studies have therefore been selected from the categories outlined in Chapter 6 (the second, on herbaria collections, covers two collections in different cities). Depth, as one of the measures of validity for case studies, contributes to the development of narratives that can communicate the problem identified in the dialectic – that is, the risks faced by collections holding significant material – to different audiences.

Together, the case studies demonstrate how the dialectical tensions discussed above occur across different locations and types of collections: a museum and historical society in the town of Yackandandah, regional Victoria; herbaria collections in Canberra, ACT, and Melbourne, Victoria; and a respondent who is based in Sydney but works with multiple Indigenous community collections in regional New South Wales. Although the scope is therefore restricted to collections located in the south-eastern states of Australia – case vignettes of collections in the other states and territories are included in Chapter 8 – the similarities and divergences in the experiences of respondents is typical of what is at stake for collections more generally as they navigate the tensions between significance, risk and loss. Reiterating the point made in Chapter 6, this study is not comparative but accumulative of the type of detail – and the type of collection – yet to be addressed in academic studies. As unique cases, each illuminates the dialectical tension in generative ways. This does not lead to an easy resolution or synthesis, but to further considerations of how loss emerges from the space between the concepts of significance and risk, and why it continues to matter.

Case studies

Cases study 1: a regional museum

Yackandandah Museum and Historical Society is a small regional museum located in Yackandandah, a town in north-east Victoria at a distance of 313 kilometres from Melbourne.[129] A small town in the Shire of Indigo, Yackandandah recorded a population of 1811 people in the most recent census in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics). At the time of my interview with the collection manager, Susan Reynolds, on 21 April 2020, the museum was closed to the public due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as was the case for

[129] Yackandandah is classified as an inner regional (RA2) area (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018c).

most collections worldwide.[130] This temporary closure followed on from a significant downturn in tourist business over the 'Black Summer' of 2019–2020 when bushfires threatened nearby areas. The risks that most concerned Susan were linked to the museum's future: succession planning for a volunteer-run museum, and the likelihood of economic recovery after the closure period.

As introduced in Chapter 6, the Yackandandah Museum holds a diverse collection of materials relating to the social history of Yackandandah and its surrounds. The collections are displayed across two historic buildings in Yackandandah, the former goldfields Bank of Victoria and a Manager's Residence with furnishings. There is also an outdoor display of fire-damaged items salvaged from a fire in the bank building in 2006. A third space consists of a purpose-built collection store; the construction of the store in 1996 helped the Yackandandah Museum become one of the first museums in Victoria to be accredited through the Museum Accreditation Program (Museums Australia [Victoria] 2020). Susan spoke of the potential national significance of certain items, as well as the significance of the collection locally. A significance assessment of the Bank of Victoria museum collection was completed following the fire (Russell 2007).

The importance of local significance can be obscured in the standard hierarchies of significance where there is an assumption that significance increases with scale – from local, to state, national or international.[131] The case of the Yackandandah Museum exemplifies the unique and irreplaceable role played by regional community museums in preserving social history collections, thus calling into question such hierarchies. To illustrate how local significance operates, Susan provided an example of a collaborative project undertaken in 2017 to conserve the Yackandandah Shire Map, a cadastral map produced and used by Shire planners in the 1970s.[132] The oversized map – composed of smaller maps adhered together – was 'hung on the wall in the Yackandandah Shire offices for a long, long time, and was brushed past and handled and rolled and unrolled' (Reynolds 2020). Both its history of use and method of construction contributed to its fragile condition. With support from conservators, and staff and students from the Grimwade Centre at the University of Melbourne, the map was conserved in public view in Yackandandah's Public Hall, where it is now on permanent display. Susan described the social and educational benefits of the project, with local school students watching the

[130] A research report by the International Council of Museums (2020) found that 94.7% of respondents reported that museums in their country were closed between the dates of 7 April and 7 May 2020.
[131] For a critique of the framing of national significance in remote and regional Australia see Waters-Lynch et al. 2015.
[132] Conservation of the cadastral map was undertaken by staff and students at the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation as well as members of the Yackandandah Museum and Historical Society. See Scott (2018) and a video of the project at ABC Goulburn Murray (2017).

conservation project, and using the map to locate their family farm or property. Writing on her involvement in the project, Marcelle Scott (2018) recalled that the map 'proved to be a perfect talking point, with conversations ranging from how the map was made and how it was being conserved, to why they like knowing about where they live' (p. 20). As a record of the boundaries of the old Yackandandah Shire prior to its amalgamation into Indigo Shire in 1994, the map forms part of the historical record of the area. Predating the use of digital geospatial technologies, is also indexes the changing methods and materials of cartography.

A dialectical tension arises between the high significance and community benefit of the Yackandandah Museum collection, and risks which threaten its survival. Unlike other regional museums (see Table 6.10 in Chapter 6), these risk factors are not derived from the building, its infrastructure or storage, as the museum has a dedicated storage and collection management space. With this extra layer of protection, the physical condition of the collection is less of a concern for Susan. As she explained, the design of the storeroom utilises passive environmental features that were unique at the time of its construction:

> …that's always been our aim, to be sustainable. So the building itself we built in 1996 is as well insulated and as well kept from outside influences as we could afford to do it. There's no climate control. We have no windows into the storage area and the storage parts of the building are kept dark and locked when not in use. (Reynolds 2020)

Susan has also been able to draw on her own training and networks to implement preventive conservation measures, and to undertake basic conservation treatments in-house, such as flattening two-dimensional paper objects. Apart from some photographs, which 'need professional care' due to their condition, the collection items seem to be less at risk of physical damage due to the combined effect of these preventive factors – purpose-built storage, prior good condition, and the level of preservation knowledge embedded in the collection through Susan. Rather, the risks faced by the collection relate to wider environmental, political, economic and social forces. Successive crises – of the economic impact of the 2019–2020 bushfire season, and then the Covid-19 pandemic – have placed the museum in a precarious position. Susan identified the limitations of the museum's disaster management plan in accounting for this type of risk: 'we've got to go back to our disaster plan and make it stronger for exactly this sort of situation'.

Another issue, that of succession planning, is exacerbated by the downturn in tourism numbers and loss of income during closure periods. Susan highlighted some of the tensions that exist within a volunteer-run organisation, as her qualifications, skills and years of expertise with the collection may, in fact, hinder her ability to find a new person to take on the role, 'because there are not too many people out in the community with the time and the energy and the qualification to come into the collection and know what to do'. Susan also pointed to the changing nature of volunteerism in regional areas as an impediment to succession planning; many volunteers prefer to work on time-limited and project-based activities rather than taking on an ongoing role within an organisation. In light of these uncertainties in terms of funding, ongoing stewardship and access to skilled volunteers, Susan stated that 'it'll be up to the resilience of this community, really, and of every community all over the place as to which ones survive and which ones don't'. Similar concerns were reported by other respondents, particularly those working in regional museums, and also with built heritage.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the potential impact of any loss to their collection. This was intended to obtain insights into the effects of unmitigated risks on collection materials, and by extension, the people who use or work with the collections. In the history of the Yackandandah Museum, there has already been a distinct episode of loss; in 2006, a structural fire destroyed one of the museum's buildings, an 1860 stone bank, and its furnishings and contents, including a travelling exhibition. The separate, purpose-built collection store which contained the majority of the collection items was untouched by the fire – demonstrating the preventative effect of good storage methods – but the fire still caused a 'a huge loss' for the museum and its community. Although the bank building, which is part of the Yackandandah Historic Area listed by the National Trust for its regional significance, has since been restored and reopened, the loss 'still resonates' 14 years later. Local visitors may assume that objects on display in the museum have been 'restored', under the belief that everything was destroyed in the fire. This is despite the incorporation of the event of the fire into the history of the museum; fire-damaged collection items are displayed in the garden of the bank building, as what they evince of the region's social history now includes the fire. Having experienced recovery from a fire may also place Susan and other staff at the Yackandandah Museum in a better position in terms of dealing with subsequent disasters: 'that's certainly what I learnt out of the disaster recovery, which was probably the most valuable lesson: we can actually do this' (Reynolds 2020). It remains to be seen if this will enable the museum, and others like it, to recover from the cumulative effects of large-scale social and economic crises, which are disasters of a different form and temporality.

Case study 2: Herbaria collections

In this case study, interviews with two respondents from Australian herbaria collections are analysed together, continuing the examination of the dialectical tension between holdings of significant materials and risk. Both interviews were conducted in-person: the first, with collection curator Dr Brendan Lepschi, at the CSIRO's Australian National Herbarium (ANH) in Canberra on 13 December 2019; and the second, with collection manager Dr Pina Milne, at the National Herbarium of Victoria in Melbourne, on 24 January 2020.[133] In contrast to the example of the Yackandandah Museum, these collections are located in urban cities, showing the effects of this dialectical tension across different collection types, locations, and forms of value. However, similarities arise in the centrality of place and location to herbaria collections, echoing the theme of local significance found in Susan's interview.

Herbaria collections typically consist of dried and pressed plant specimens mounted on paper, spirit or fluid-preserved specimens, and associated historical, archival, and artistic materials.[134] Of crucial importance are their holdings of type specimens, which set the baseline for species identification.[135] Traditionally, herbaria have functioned primarily as research collections, but that is shifting with increased public engagement in the form of digitisation, exhibitions, and collaborations with artists. As introduced in Chapter 6, both collections have significant holdings of specimens and related materials. The State Botanical Collection (SBC) at the National Herbarium of Victoria holds approximately 1.5 million specimens collected in Australia and overseas, of which more than 40,000 are type specimens; as well as around 40,000 items in the associated Library, Archive and Botanical Art Collection (Context Pty Ltd 2016).[136] The Australian National Herbarium (ANH)[137] holds approximately 1.25 million specimens, including 8500 type specimens, across its two sites (Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research 2011a), and is of comparable significance.

The timing of the interviews – both were held during the 2019–2020 bushfire season – highlighted the significant contribution of herbaria collections to the scientific record and

[133] The NHV preserves and makes accessible the state botanical collection for Victoria; and the ANH is part of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) national research collections.
[134] The term 'plant' includes plant, algae and fungi specimens.
[135] 'Type specimens are those nominated by a botanist describing a new plant as the benchmark or standard for the name given to the plant. A type specimen is nominated for a species or sub-species at the time the plant is first described' (Australian National Herbarium 2011b).
[136] The international herbarium code of the State Botanical Collection at the National Herbarium of Victoria is (MEL).
[137] The international herbarium code of the Australian National Herbarium is (CANBR), and that of the Australian Tropical Herbarium in Cairns (CNS). The CNS collection was not a focus of the interview discussed in this chapter.

to research. As was becoming apparent even at the time of the interviews, the ecological impact of the bushfires would be immense: over 10 million hectares of land were burnt in southern Australia, with accompanying loss of lives, property, wildlife, forests, and ecosystems (CSIRO 2020). In this context, herbaria collections can provide a 'baseline' for land management and regeneration in bushfire-affected areas. As Pina explained of the SBC

> …without plants, whether it's as a habitat, or whether it's a source of food, this ecosystem doesn't function. This collection is critical, particularly at this point in time, to know what plant material or fungal material occurs at those sites. (Milne 2020)

Like the ANH, it is a 'working archive', with its collections utilised in scientific research in many fields; as such, the principles of access and use are highly regarded. As Pina added, however, this critical role played by herbaria collections in 'backing up' information about rare and threatened plants and fungi is not well-understood by governments.

At the ANH, Brendan similarly defined herbaria collections as 'a permanent record of the occurrence of a taxon in space and time', a record which may then be used to verify plant identifications, to study the phylogenetics of different taxa, and to investigate phylogeographical patterns of the spatial distribution of plants (Lepschi 2019). Although the ANH collection primarily exists to be used for scientific research, there is also the acceptance that, as Brendan stated, 'we don't know when the collection is going to be used', nor what it 'potentially may be useful for in the future'. New techniques of scientific analysis, such as DNA extraction and sequencing, are applied to older herbarium specimens which were not collected with those techniques in mind. This aids in taxonomic revisions, such as a CSIRO study published in 2009 on subspecies of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* (river red gum) (McDonald, Brooker & Butcher 2009), where 'a lot of the initial work was done using herbarium specimens that were collected well before [the] project was started' (Lepschi 2019). As a 'spatial and temporal record', the ANH collection reveals more information with advances in scientific methodologies, meaning that the collection 'only ever increases in value' over time. Countering a static notion of 'historical value', this temporal aspect means that the collections continue to accrue value. They have been developed incrementally in relation to other research work, as Brendan outlined:

> If you were to try and replicate that, even if you could, leaving out the temporal thing, if you were trying to replicate that spatially from scratch, the cost is enormous, because so much of it is incidental to other work that's gone on. Again, if you take our collection in context with all the other Australian herbaria, the dataset and the value of that data just is incalculable. It really is. That goes, I think, for all biological, all research collections, because on their own they're valuable – every specimen is valuable – but taken together, the sum of their parts just far outweighs the individual. (Lepschi 2019)

Both collections also engage in digital repatriation through online databases such as the Australasian Virtual Herbarium and JSTOR Global Plants, allowing international specimens held in Australian herbaria to be viewed in their countries of origin.

The value and benefits of herbaria are underpinned by ongoing conservation activities to maintain appropriate environmental conditions and storage; to reduce the risk of pest infiltration; and to ensure that the collections are accurately and consistently documented. Despite their different locations, histories and structures, the ANH and the SBC have several risks in common which have the potential to affect their collections. Both buildings were not purpose-built to hold collections, with associated risks of limited storage space and pest infiltration. Their collection materials, being largely organic, are also at risk of damage from disaster events involving fire and/or water, although mitigation strategies are in place to reduce the impact of such events. Another protective factor is the temperate climate in both Canberra and Melbourne. However, in the context of the significance of the collections described above, some potential risks remain a concern for Pina and Brendan. This also demonstrates how risk factors are high even in state-supported collections in urban areas, with collections of known significance. Due to a lack of space, the SBC is housed in an area of the National Herbarium of Victoria in which staff also work, resulting in a higher set range and diurnal fluctuations in temperature; humidity is also uncontrolled. This has a compounding effect on other risks, as higher temperatures may favour infestations of pests that feed on herbarium specimen material. A past cigarette beetle infestation was 'devastating' for the SBC; while the specimens damaged – from the *Brassicaceae* family – were not historic type specimens, Pina stated that 'it potentially could have been, and then that's a huge, huge loss' (Milne 2020). In response to this issue, additional protective barrier bags are now used in the SBC to house specimens from families which are predisposed to insect damage.

While this example shows the compounding effect of different risk factors, preventive conservation practices such as re-housing type specimens and integrated pest management – in conjunction with the knowledge and expertise of curatorial staff with specific types of material – are likely to mitigate the effects of risks which cannot be removed entirely. Where damage has occurred, the combined effects of preventive conservation and good fortune have prevented total loss. For instance, in 1958 a collection of *Characeae* (freshwater algae specimens) on loan from the SBC to researchers at the University of New England in Armidale were damaged when a fire destroyed the herbarium, but:

> By a strange coincidence, the fire burnt away the floor, and the cabinet on which the entire pile of *Characeae* had been lying was tipped over into water accumulating from the fire hoses. A colleague entered the gutted building shortly after the blaze was controlled, and, finding the pile of *Characeae* only moderately disassembled, brought the wet heap out en masse. The junior author separated and dried the papers and specimens to prevent fungal damage, and assembled parts of specimens to avoid further loss by misplacement. The pile of folders had been seriously burnt on the outside, but the centre portions of many sheets were untouched so that a considerable portion of the specimens survived. The labels remained intact in many cases, but some had become unpasted and were misplaced or lost, while others were more or less completely burnt. (Wood & Williams 1967, p. 175)

The experience of loss was instructive, as the authors realised the shortcomings of ballpoint ink used for labels compared to graphite and Indian ink. At the time of salvage, Mary B. Williams 'undertook to reunite labels and specimens and to record as much of the data as could be gleaned from the more severely burnt labels' (Wood & Williams 1967, p. 175). It was returned to the SBC, and as Pina explained:

> The material came back to us and had sat in the cupboard un-curated for an extremely long period of time. A lot of the material was 19th century material, historic material from right around Australia. We have a researcher who [is] contracted through projects here and this is her area of expertise. We couldn't give her access to this material because it was too fragile. (Milne 2020)

However, it was not for another 50 years that conservators – through the then Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC) – were engaged to stabilise the paper labels, thus allowing for access to the material record to be regained.

The existence of similar risks at the ANH, also a non-purpose-built building, points to the link between infrastructure and collection condition. Although the ANH has a separate room for its type specimens, the remainder of the collection is stored in collection halls which also function as thoroughfares for staff: 'the building design is not ideal for a herbarium, or for any biological collection' (Lepschi 2019). In addition, Brendan reported that parts of the type collection – including eucalypts and orchid types – are stored in the main collection due to insufficient space, where they may have been damaged due to the difficulties of controlling risks in the main collection space. However, complicating the diagnosis of cause of damage is that, as Brendan explained, 'it's difficult to know with types if they've been damaged prior to their status as a type, or after'; that is, the level of protected afforded by storage is not the sole factor determining their condition. The risk of dissociation is also of particular concern for scientific collections, where the use of a specimen in research depends on its secure provenance and documentation.

Both the ANH and the SBC are involved in digitising their collections in terms of digital imaging, and also electronic database management (which can mitigate the risk of dissociation described above). Digitisation can increase the accessibility of collections, particularly important given the history and origins of herbaria collections – collecting practices in earlier centuries have meant that 'sometimes there's no record in the country of origin', as Pina put it (Milne 2020). However, the many benefits of digitisation – increasing accessibility and limiting handling of specimens – do not outweigh the value of retaining the physical material. This awareness of the importance of the material itself – which, as discussed in Chapter 6, formed an 'inferential code' across several categories of collections – was reflected in discussions about the potential impact of loss, particularly of historic type specimens. The ramifications of loss of these, as Pina explained, would be serious:

> It's a record – and if you've lost that record, you don't know. You haven't got a point of reference; you've lost a point of reference. Depending on the nature of that material, and whether it was associated with a particular collector or a particular event, a particular exploration expedition, you've lost that information. (Milne 2020)

In herbaria, physical loss poses a threat even if digital images of the specimen have been taken because of how the collections are used by researchers, as Pina clarified: 'sometimes it might be the flowers are so small, and they need to see that', or 'it might be hairs in particular parts of the plant, it might be along the stem, leaf axel, and they need to physically see the specimen'. Similarly at the ANH, the use of collections in scientific research sometimes necessitates the extraction of physical samples from specimens; this is research that cannot be undertaken solely with digital records. What digitisation can offer herbaria, however, is a way of minimising risks associated with loaning specimens to other institutions for research. Citing incidents in which incoming loans of type specimens have been destroyed by Australian customs and biosecurity officers due to issues with specimen documentation (Stokstad 2017),[138] Brendan concluded, 'I like the idea of a specimen not getting damaged in the first place by making images available'. The necessary co-existence of digital and physical materials can be seen to form a parallel dialectic, in that one does not cancel out the other and it is necessary for collections to retain both.

Case study 3: Indigenous community collections

The third case study is based on an interview held with a respondent, Kirsten Thorpe, at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research at the University of Technology, Sydney. It forms a counterpoint to the previous two case studies in that the Jumbunna Institute is not a collecting institution itself, but works to support Indigenous Australian communities across New South Wales in preserving their collections through its Indigenous Archives and Data Stewardship Hub. In partnership with the State Library of NSW and Washington State University, the Jumbunna Institute also hosts the NSW Australian Mukurtu Hub, an international project for preserving Indigenous digital cultural heritage. Due to this positioning, Kirsten was able to provide insights into issues affecting many collections across the state, with a particular focus on libraries, archives, digital collections, and the importance of holding materials locally.

At several points in our interview on 1 June 2020, Kirsten, who is a Worimi woman from Port Stephens, NSW, addressed the broader socio-political context of worldwide Black Lives Matters protests against the deaths in police custody of Black and Indigenous

[138] In an incident in March 2017, six type specimens sent by the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle in Paris to the Queensland Herbarium were destroyed by Australian customs after miscommunication about their value: 'According to Australia's Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, which enforces biosecurity rules, part of the problem was that the samples had a declared value of $2—and its agents routinely destroy low-value items that have been kept longer than 30 days. Michel Guiraud, director of collections at NMNH, says his museum's policy is to put minimal values on shipments. "If it is irreplaceable, there is no way to put an insurance value on it," he says'. (Stokstad 2017).

people. Similarly to the background of bushfires in Case study 2, these contemporaneous events pointed to the collections' co-existing intrinsic and instrumental values, and their relationship to the 'colonial archives' of Australia – those which are based on Western archival epistemology (McKemmish, Faulkhead & Russell 2011, p. 218).[139] Kirsten explained that the term 'significance', as it is used in frameworks such as *Significance 2.0* and in other heritage contexts, does not fully account for the value of heritage collections to Indigenous communities, nor their needs for use and/or preservation. She and other Indigenous scholars and custodians see the value of collections in terms of 'cultural maintenance', but 'because the model of preservation has always been to collect and preserve, it doesn't really suit the needs of communities to maintain culture and preserve' (Thorpe 2020). This produces another dialectical tension between the 'symbolic alienation' of Indigenous Australians in mainstream collecting institutions, and the 'potential to preserve things and give access to things that are respectful and authoritative, if they're collected in the right way, that can kind of counter that narrative of what the media can do, or what government might try and portray'. As there were several instances of this kind of contradiction in my interview with Kirsten, Chapter 8 extends the case study in relation to impediments to enjoyment of the community benefits associated with Indigenous-held collections and their preservation.

Juxtaposed against the significance of these collections are risks to both their material integrity, and their capacity to be accessed and used in such a way as to realise their value. On a physical level, the collections are faced with the standard risks caused by environmental factors and disasters, risk that may be exacerbated by, as Kirsten stated, an absence of 'access to facilities to care for material' (Thorpe 2020). The condition and preservation of digital cultural heritage is a particular concern, and exemplifies the risks that can arise at the nexus of material vulnerability, and structural social issues. While there is a wealth of significant material held digitally, and digital media is also used to circulate materials, the situation across the board is that people 'aren't keeping these in a way that is about long-term preservation or use'. Kirsten believes that this will be an area

[139] The interview took place one week (24 May 2020) after the destruction of the Juukan Gorge caves in the Pilbara, Western Australia, by Rio Tinto. Juukan Gorge is sacred to the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP) peoples. As Marcia Langton wrote: 'Our knowledge of these places is only partial. There are thousands of threatened Indigenous heritage places, and their destruction is an existential crises for many extant cultural practices. If these places are destroyed, their foundational meanings for group identity, social cohesion and social life will be severely impaired and cause distress, sorrow and trauma. The detrimental effects on individuals with cultural authority for these places – and their social, ritual, ceremonial, clan and family life – will be profound… The caves that Rio Tinto destroyed had a fundamental religious significance to the PKKP peoples, for whom these places constitute a part of their identity and a central place in their social fabric. The loss of the Juukan Gorge caves is also a travesty because they held significant evidence for the further understanding of human history. Along with several other places, they held the evidence of the astonishing antiquity of human occupation of this continent' ('A cultural property crime in moral terms', *The Saturday Paper*, no. 319, 19 September 2020, p. 5).

of 'massive loss' in the future, as the responsibility for the preservation of digital cultural heritage is not always clear: 'someone would have thought that someone else was looking after it and they weren't'. On top of this, digital media poses risks in relation to privacy and trust in the relationship between collections, conservators and conservation services, and communities. Even if there are facilities for preservation, 'if people aren't brought on – if I'm thinking about community members that have the biscuit tin under their bed with their treasured photos – they're not just going to go and hand it over to a public library and say, yes, digitise it'. Similar concerns were raised by other respondents working with Indigenous collections; it constitutes a specific risk factor.[140] Distrust has been engendered by the past collecting practices of public institutions which often removed cultural materials from communities without consent; in addition, due to the types of records created about Indigenous peoples by government departments, their archives 'are regarded as repositories of materials seen to be the result of surveillance and oppression' (McKemmish, Faulkhead & Russell 2011, p. 219).[141] Another risk factor lies in the competing demands faced by Indigenous communities in particular, as Kirsten asserted: 'in the context of Aboriginal communities and collections, there's so much other really vital stuff happening that often this kind of work, it isn't a priority because people are fighting for land, water, justice'. Compared to looking after or advocating for collections, other issues understandably take priority, Recalling, however, Kirsten's statement that the value of collections lies in how they enable cultural maintenance, there is nevertheless an opportunity cost if the benefits of collections cannot be realised. Kirsten highlighted this quandary, stating: 'if you look at the fabric of what, to me, the kind of wider GLAM [galleries, libraries, archives and museums] space does, it has the ability to really support and nourish communities'.

Due to the nature of these risks, the impact of any loss of cultural material is also related to structural issues. Starkly apparent in the context of this case study – but undoubtedly affecting many more types of collections and community groups – is the form of loss that is related to the inaccessibility of collections. This was discussed at three main points in our interview. Kirsten is in favour of retaining local ownership of collections in regional areas, as 'there's just intrinsic loss' in centralising collections, even if storage and conservation facilities are more readily available in major cities. The ramifications of this model of preservation are that 'it ends up speaking to this idea that the regions – they shouldn't keep their history there' (Thorpe 2020). Opportunity loss also occurs when Indigenous Australian history and culture are excluded from, for instance, local studies

[140] See also see Chapter 6, and transcripts of interviews with Shaun Angeles and Daniel Featherstone.
[141] Kirsten is an author of the article 'Respect, trust and engagement: creating an Australian Indigenous data archive' by Gardiner et al. (2011).

collections in regional public libraries, resulting in 'not having a sense when you go somewhere of who the local people are'. Collecting institutions such as libraries, archives and museums have a symbolic function in that they represent, and materialise, the shared abstractions of culture and history. To illustrate the impact of this 'symbolic alienation' – when there is neither representation in collections, nor authority over what is represented when it is included – Kirsten gave the example of access to records for survivors and descendants of the Stolen Generations in Australia.[142] Many survivors do not have access to archival records that document their experiences of removal by the government; without access to records about their pasts, 'it ends up making people really sick, people's wellbeing is affected'.

For collections with a role to play in cultural maintenance, preservation must be coupled with access for these forms of significance to be made possible. Expanding on this, Kirsten connected the value of collections for Indigenous Australians to a wider 'social fabric' of 'healthy people, healthy country, healthy water', where cultural knowledge is needed to look after natural resources, and the act of caring for country can, in turn, improve people's wellbeing (Thorpe 2020). These concepts were also discussed in detail by Shaun Angeles. However, these aspects of significance are not reflected in the formal assessment frameworks which are often the first step for collections to receive funding for preservation and collection management activities, activities that activate and sustain their significance (Waters-Lynch et al. 2015). As a result, there is a 'big gap' between archival collections which are relevant to, or should be returned to, Indigenous people, and access and use of collection materials 'in a way that suits communities' (Thorpe 2020). Further to the emphasis on local significance in Susan's interview, and place and location in Pina and Brendan's, the importance of 'keeping cultures locally' in communities – regional or urban – was returned to by Kirsten: 'major collecting institutions hold all the privilege and I want to see if my skills can start to change that view, so that communities look after their material and don't have to take it away'.

Discussion

Each of the three case studies shows how collections with significant materials are exposed to different forms of risk. They have been chosen as examples of a general dialectical tension which is present in many collections. In the case studies, two points have arisen that require further elaboration: the intersection of place, risk and local

[142] A report commissioned by The Healing Foundation into disadvantage experienced by Stolen Generations and their descendants estimated, in 2018, there to be around 17,150 surviving members of the Stolen Generations, and 114,800 descendants (2014–15 figure) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018). See also Murphy (2011) on the emotional impact of researching archival materials for Stolen Generations survivors.

significance; and, from this, the impact of actual or potential loss of materials. To extend the insights of these case studies, examples from interviews with other collections are also given.

The first point to emerge is that local significance should not be occluded by national significance, but recognised as a singular feature of collections, particularly those located in regional areas. The kind of value created and held locally is not widely recognised, and also gives rise to specific risk factors. This paradox has been explored as a macrocosm in the mapping studies of Chapter 5, but here finds a grounding in the details given by respondents at each collection. In addition to spatial variation in environmental risk factors, there is spatial variation in access to conservation services; low access to conservation can be theorised to limit the potential mitigation of risk. As Susan explored in her interview, the major collecting institutions do not tend to hold 'the same sort of local significance material as small museums do have' (Reynolds 2020). To retain this local significance, there is a need to support the capacity of collections to hold materials locally. When collections are centralised in major cities, as Kirsten pointed out, 'it ends up speaking to this idea that the regions shouldn't keep their history there' (Thorpe 2020). In the two herbaria collections studied, the significance of the collection material was closely tied to place, with specimens functioning as records of phylogeographical data to show what was present at a particular time and place.

The question of access to conservation, studied quantitatively in Chapter 4, has been further examined using examples drawn from the case studies. Both Kirsten and Susan identified as a problem how formal models of significance neither fully account for local significance, nor align with the needs of collections and wishes of their custodians. Beyond the collections which are the subject of this study, the misunderstanding of the significance of remote Indigenous community collections – and the effects of this in terms of access to grant funding – was noted in *Safe Keeping: A Report on the Care and Management of Art Centre-based Community Collections* (Scott 2017, p. 21). In this context there is also a need to support on-site collection care and training activities. Place attachment is defined by the anthropologist Setha Low as 'the emotional and affective relationship of people to a space or piece of land and the associated symbolic meanings and modes of attachment' (2017, p. 78). Extrapolating from place attachment, local significance can be theorised as more than a scaled-down version of state or national significance. On the role of heritage in the social construction of space, Low describes 'memory and memory-making as a dominant mode of inscribing meaning at various scales from the most intimate to the national and transnational' (2017, p. 76). The

example of herbaria specimens, and phylogeographic data as a record of place and time, is another instance of how collections inform place-making processes such as bushfire recovery.

The third term raised in the dialectic of significance and risk is loss. This is so because the stakes of unmitigated risks are very high for collections of cultural material, however significance is measured. To recapitulate, in Chapter 6 the potential or actual impact of loss was found, through a categorical analysis, to be related to: access to collections; the physical integrity of materials; restrictions on use; loss of status as a cultural or scientific record; the cultural impact of loss; and the personal effects of loss. Different experiences in the aftermath of loss were also recorded. The case studies presented here have shown the impact of such loss in the words of each respondent. At the two herbaria interviewed, Brendan and Pina discussed loss in relation to the irreplaceability of physical materials such as specimens even if they have been digitised. At the Yackandandah Museum, Susan spoke of the effects of a fire in one of the museum buildings in 2006. While the existence of a separate collection store – rare among the smaller regional museums – prevented more damage from occurring, the fire nonetheless caused 'a huge loss' for the museum and continues to affect its perception by the community. In displaying fire-damaged collection items, the museum has given the fire a place in its history, and has created something new out of loss. This has resonances with the experiences of Roxanne Missingham and Heather Jenks at the Chifley Library at ANU. Following a major flood at the library in February 2018, 8% of the physical collection was lost (Missingham & Fletcher 2020, pp. 251-252). In rebuilding, the custodians not only replaced losses but also acquired items to broaden the collection's scope, thus transforming it from a repository of different researchers' interests to something more 'holistic' and 'representative of a broader range of voices' (Missingham & Jenks 2019). As Roxanne stated, 'if we hadn't had a flood, we would not have looked at it, [or] done it in that way'. While the impact of loss is often disastrous, human responses to it can also have a dialectical function by changing the value or significance of the collection affected.

This chapter has lingered on the issue of risks because unmitigated risks to collections can lead to losses of collection materials; when that material is highly significant, the impact of such potential loss is greater. Losses occur on a scale ranging from total destruction, to minor damage; but the extent of physical loss does not necessarily correspond to the meaning of that loss. As distinct from attempts to quantify loss in risk assessments (such as in Ashley-Smith 1999), here it is explored through the participants' own words. The

conceptual link between risk and loss has been developed by scholars of preventive conservation. In developing their risk assessment model the *QuiskScan*, Agnes W. Brokerhof and Anna E. Bülow (2016) write that 'when risk is considered to be the probability of loss, then the biggest losses will occur where high value meets high vulnerability' (p. 21). This is especially the case for Indigenous community collections, as became clear in my interview with Kirsten. The impact of loss (and loss of access to) the collections with which Kirsten works would be profound, exacerbating the 'symbolic alienation' already experienced by many Indigenous people in relation to cultural institutions in Australia. This has already been seen in the cultural and personal effects of a lack of access to records among Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants. Although I was not able to conduct any interviews at Aboriginal art centres, the *Safe Keeping* report is a valuable resource for understanding the causes and effects of loss in this sector.[143] The report found that 'some centres are very concerned that they are at real risk of losing the entire collection because their buildings and infrastructure do not provide the level of protection needed in the case of fire or severe weather events' (Scott 2017, p. 20). A lack of disaster preparedness, resources and on-site training increases the risk. After a flood in the community of Warmun, Western Australia,

> 'The worst thing about the flood in 2011 was the damage to our collection and the loss of paintings,' said Ralph Juli, Warmun Art Centre's Studio Coordinator. His mother Mabel is one of the community's senior artists. 'The old people worked so hard to paint those artworks, to tell their stories and share them with the world, and the creek just came up and washed them away' (Scott 2017, p. 20)

Although a new purpose-built collection space has since been constructed – and the Art Centre now better prepared to respond to disasters – the changes to collection management, while positive, cannot ameliorate the loss of cultural materials.

This is the case because the loss of heritage has a broader impact on people and their environment. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1999) describes the sorts of cultural benefits which are lost when we fail to provide the right conditions for heritage to be preserved:

> …no proper archive, no regular exhibitions, no critical apparatus… no definitive histories, no reference books, no comparative materials, no developing

[143] An interview with Edwina Huntley at the Mary Mackillop Place Museum – which holds a collection of artworks from Warmun – is analysed in Chapter 8.

> scholarship, no passing-on of a tradition of work to younger practitioners and curators, no recognition of achievement amongst the relevant communities… Heritage-less. (p. 11)

Some in the field of heritage studies have argued that the focus on risk in accounts written by conservators – such as this chapter – makes conservation politically reactionary and fearful of change. Rodney Harrison (2013), for instance, questions how 'heritage has often been defined in the context of some sort of *threat* to objects, places or practices that are perceived to hold a form of collective value' (pp. 26-7). Rather than preventing loss – particularly of physical materials – they promote an approach of managing change. Caitlin deSilvey (2017) links this to concerns around the sustainability of preservation, contending that 'massive amounts of energy are invested to keep heritage systems in a steady state so that the matter contained within them will continue to function as a cultural mnemonic device' (p. 11). As alternatives to viewing loss as something to be prevented, she raises three points: material deterioration is not the same as loss of meaning; processes of decay and destruction can be culturally and ecologically generative; and material change may be understood in terms other than outright loss (deSilvey 2017, p. 5). These are not new critiques of conservation. In a 1989 article, 'Material Preservation and Its Alternatives', David Lowenthal observed how 'preservation is charged not only with preventing progress but inducing moral and social decay' (p. 70). His three alternatives to preservation ran to: saving fragments; allowing for processes of destruction and creation; and drawing on representations and surrogate images (Lowenthal 1989, pp. 71-72). Also in this lineage, Cornelius Holtorf (2018) situates conservation in opposition to the values of innovation, change, and creativity. These critiques stake a claim for the distinctness of heritage studies as a field at the expense of seeing the nuances of conservation theory and practice; defining 'acceptable change' and gradations of loss, material or immaterial, is what contemporary conservators do (Hölling 2016). Also missed is the connection between historical inequities in accessing conservation, the distribution of risks, and the effects of loss of cultural materials on different communities. Stuart Hall's warning of the effects of losses to heritage – particularly for non-dominant cultures – should be remembered.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to use case studies to illustrate the dialectical tension proposed at the outset, between collections of significant material, and risks to that material's preservation. While the collection types chosen for these case studies are not exhaustive, it is hoped that by presenting examples from people working with Indigenous

community collections, scientific collections, and regional museums and historical societies, the pervasive nature of the problem is reflected.

The dialectical tension that animates this chapter – between the high value or significance of collections, and the risks they face – cannot easily be resolved. However, as Freeman (2017) points out, synthesis should not be the goal of dialectical thinking; rather, the intent is to 'uncover inherent tensions that are believed to exist in humans and societies and put these in dialogue with one another for transformational purposes' (p. 11). In terms of the transformative potential of research and its praxis, this is taken up in Chapter 9 on the role of this research in informing future policy. Following on a discussion of Adorno's 'negative dialectics', Freeman (2017) continues:

> In other words, dialectical thinking involves working *with* dialectics by actively engaging with the friction generated when a thesis is brought into relation with a counter-thesis, and *against* dialectics, by finding ways to continuously defer or suspend closure, or a final synthesis. (p. 55)

The ascription of value or significance to a collection does not mean that it is then appropriately funded and supported to reduce its risks, nor that it is ever possible to eliminate all risk. This exploration of risks to collections is not intended to expose deficiencies in any individual collection, but rather to juxtapose risks that are endemic across the sector with the value of significant material that collections hold.

Two further discussion points have emerged from an analysis of the case studies. Location is also important to consider because collections are often formed in response to the needs of specific place-based communities. At the same time, the place where a collection is located affects both its exposure and its vulnerability to different kinds of risks affecting heritage. These risks of damage, loss and disaster are also, therefore, spatially variable. When considering the benefits associated with communities having agency in terms of their own conservation and heritage, there is clearly a real need to make conservation more geographically accessible. Second, the impact of loss of cultural materials delineates the particular role played by conservation in relation to the dialectical tension. Against critics who have proposed that conservation intervenes in natural processes of loss and decay – and who cast it as politically conservative because it opposes the nominally progressive values of innovation, change and creativity – the unequal impacts of loss have been elucidated by the case studies. Access to collections is enabled by conservation; insufficient access to conservation leads to various forms of

loss. In this chapter, the product of the dialectical tension is the loss of cultural materials; in the next, where a dialectic of need and benefit is similarly tracked across different collections, it emerges as an opportunity loss where potential benefits of conservation are not shared equitably.

Chapter 8: Further case vignettes of the dialectic of impact and need

Introduction

Following on from the dialectical tension explored in Chapter 7 between risks faced by collections, and the significant cultural materials they hold, this chapter examines a second dialectical tension. It lies between the positive impact that collections have on communities, and the various impediments that prevent the extension of these benefits to as many people as possible. In Chapter 6's categorical analysis, these were framed as future challenges and needs. They include such factors as low levels of staffing and other resources; a lack of disaster preparation or training; difficulties in accessing conservation services; and the need for more digitisation, advocacy, training and funding. The types of impact to which collections are linked are categorised in terms of social, cultural, economic, educational and health-related benefits.[144] By documenting how this dialectical tension arises in the experiences of people caring for collections, the aim in this chapter – as with Chapter 7 – is not to resolve the tension, but to utilise case study interview data to describe what occurs in the gap between impact and needs. If the public value of conservation is clearly evinced by its links to different forms of social impact, then how can conservation become more accessible for these benefits to be more widely shared?

Enriching the issues identified in the categorical and sectoral analyses, the approach taken in this chapter also allows for the dialectic of need and benefit to be understood as it occurs in practice. By using the respondents' own words to describe the benefits linked to collections, the limitations of the categorical analysis in Chapter 6 are overcome; impact and need are considered here not as separate themes, but in their co-existence in the cases presented by different collections. The idea followed in Chapter 7 – that risks to collections with significant materials may lead to loss – is developed into a study of how unmet need leads to an opportunity loss whereby the benefits associated with collections and conservation are not accessible to all.

The initial structure for this chapter was a mirror image of Chapter 7, with three case studies drawn from interviews with different collections. However, in attempting to select case studies, it quickly became apparent that the issue captured in the dialectical tension of impact and need was pervasive, and that this ubiquity needed to be reflected in the analysis. A return to the sectoral structure of Chapter 6 was therefore warranted, as

[144] For the remainder of this chapter, 'impact' can be taken as referring to positive impact, or benefits. Potential negative impacts are not considered in this research, but would make an interesting line of inquiry.

it can show similarity and difference in the types of conflict between needs and benefits across different types of collections. The background to dialectical analysis and method of dialectical thinking outlined in the previous chapter should be kept in mind here. Distinguishing this chapter, however, is the use of the case vignette form to exemplify the tension between needs and benefits in each collection interviewed. The emphasis on using the respondents' own words to describe their situations nevertheless remains, as does the position taken of not proposing easy resolutions, but exploring what people working with collections are able to do in terms of preservation in the present.

Several interviews are omitted from the analysis, as they are extensively covered in other chapters (Chapters 2 and 7). This is indicated in the relevant sections. The reflections made in the concluding discussion touch on their cases.

Case vignettes: impact and need across collections

University collections

University museums and collections have previously been the focus of *Cinderella collections*, two sector-wide reports in 1996 and 1998 by the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee and University Museums Review Committee that identified a range of issues specific to the sector. Over 20 years later, the place of collections within university structures remains an issue. Two respondents interviewed in this category – Rhonda Davis at the Macquarie University Art Gallery (MUAG), and Caine Chennatt at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Cultural Collections – spoke of the need for greater advocacy on behalf of collections within universities. This is the case even when collections are linked to innovative research such as the MUAG Art and Object Engagement Program for people living with dementia in nearby communities, with positive impacts on health and wellbeing.[145] As Rhonda explained: 'it's trying to change people's perceptions of the collection and how it fits with the university – it's not an add-on' (Davis 2019). She continued: 'we are sort of slowly changing the culture… the collection is part of our working environment and it's here every day'. This example also shows how the appreciation of benefits linked to collections can give rise to other challenges. Rhonda spoke of being 'inundated with loan requests' for artworks, with too few staff to meet demand, and linked this to the effects of budgetary constraints at the university.

[145] There is a strong focus on this topic internationally, particularly in the UK, where it is linked to the practice of 'social prescribing' in healthcare settings. See publications by Daykin (2020), and Fancourt, Steptoe and Cadar (2018), as well as a policy report by Fancourt, Warran and Aughterson (2020).

Similarly at UTAS, Caine highlighted the necessity of advocacy for university collections, which 'fall between the cracks' of higher education, and the arts and culture sectors (Chennatt 2020). The potential for the collections to be used in future research, while clearly of benefit to the university, is difficult to articulate using *Significance 2.0*. This is because the framework does not sufficiently account for situations where, as Caine explained, 'the staff member who has produced this [i.e. created the research object] has sufficient reason to believe that in time it will become important'. As well as their research value, Caine sees university collections as having an educational impact and a broader community benefit. Describing collections as 'primary source material', he spoke of how students in fields such as drama and media can utilise the collections in different ways, depending on their disciplinary approaches. Our interview took place in May 2020, when the long-term effects of Covid-19 on the university sector were becoming apparent. In this context, Caine was concerned that:

> …the first thing that unfortunately gets cut is the art and the collections, which might speak to another point about the larger threats to these collections. In my view, it's not the environmental factor, it's the idea of advocacy and relevance to why does the university have these collections? (Chennatt 2020)

The relative remoteness of Tasmania presents another challenge, especially when, as Caine stated, it produces 'an issue of brain drain where really skilled experts' in fields such as conservation 'don't find enough work so they move to Melbourne or Sydney'.

Remoteness is also a challenge for Wayne Doubleday at Charles Sturt University's (CSU) Regional Archives and University Art Collection. Located in Wagga Wagga, it is the largest archival repository outside of a capital city in Australia. According to Wayne, this affects access to conservation: 'I think a lot of regional collections perhaps feel a bit isolated in terms of accessing the services of conservation and preservation' (Doubleday 2020). In addition to educational impact, Wayne discussed the community benefit of the collection of private records and manuscripts deposited at CSU. As well as ensuring the items are stored safely, arranged and described to maintain their public accessibility, there is extensive community engagement with associated 'mental health benefits'. While Wayne's team of four full-time staff members is larger than that of other regional collections, it is still inadequate to the work that could be done in order to extend the benefits of the collection as far as possible. Digitisation is time- and labour-intensive and requires specialist technical expertise rather than volunteer labour; as a result, less than 1% of the collection is currently digitised. Like others, the CSU Regional Archives relies

upon external grants to fund digitisation projects. As Wayne explained, due to the requirements of funding bodies, 'quite often, these funding applications that I'm putting in are targeting areas which are perhaps not our highest priority' – that is, the archives' collection of at-risk audiovisual materials on 8mm and 16mm film. The time required to devote to preparing such grant applications is a further challenge.

The example of a small university sporting club demonstrates that even centrally located organisations can struggle to access the resources they need to establish collections out of extant materials. The longest continually run Victorian netball program, Melbourne University Lightning is significant in the history of women's sport, and sport in universities. Despite this, the club lacks a centralised collection, and materials relevant to its history are dispersed across the university and in private hands. The most pressing need identified by Lindy Murphy was for the disparate materials relating to the history of the club to be brought together as a collection, with an appropriate place to house it found within the university. Framing this in terms of the ongoing stewardship of the collection, Lindy stated: 'because we're all going to move on in time, so it's better if there is some sort of archival area established at the university that we can constantly add to and maintain' (Murphy 2020). Prior to Covid-19 closures, an exhibition was planned to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of netball at the university in 2020. The social benefits understood as being linked to community collections of sporting history are under-researched, particularly for women's sports, but this is an example of their potential wider impact.

At the Australian National University's Chifley Library, Roxanne Missingham and Heather Jenks took a different view of the challenges facing collections.[146] Canberra's environment at the time of our interview, when the city was blanketed with smoke from nearby bushfires, led Roxanne to comment that 'things that have been at moderate risk are now at higher risk, so we really need to think about conservation and disaster management a bit more strategically' (Missingham & Jenks 2019).[147] Concerns about open access digital publishing and preservation were also raised. However, compared to other respondents in this category, Roxanne and Heather did not seem to consider these challenges as impediments to the general functioning of the Chifley Library. There are several possible reasons for this. As the university takes an 'open access' to knowledge policy, digitisation of the collection is well-supported internally, and the librarians 'use digital as an access methodology that helps preserve the collections that are fragile'; the

[146] This interview was held in late 2019, placing it in quite a different context to those undertaken in 2020.
[147] The changing risk levels referred to by Roxanne are developed in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2014).

entirety of the thesis collection of around 12,500 items has been digitised. Institutional support for access to collections at the Chifley Library may therefore make challenges more surmountable. An example of this is in the library's recovery from disaster after major flooding in February 2018 (as well as other less severe floods over the years).[148] However, through their experiences in rebuilding the library collection, Roxanne and Heather are in a position to perceive the paradoxical benefits that can come from loss.[149] After the flood, the library acquired material to cover flood losses, but as Heather explained: 'we actually also gained additional material, we were replacing the collection we had but we've supplemented it as well, so it's actually broadened' (Missingham & Jenks 2019). A strategic acquisition was made in the area of Indigenous Studies with the Jack Waterford collection. Roxanne has also drawn on this experience in a paper on disaster recovery in university libraries (Missingham & Fletcher 2020).

School archives

The one collection interviewed in this category – Brisbane Boys' College – appears to have resources sufficient to meet its needs. This is aided by Helen Jackson's expertise in preventive conservation; for instance, while the collection store has no HVAC system, Helen utilises passive methods of environmental control to limit light infiltration, and encourage air circulation. She stated that she would be 'worried about having air con in the school, because it would be flicked on and off' (Jackson 2020), potentially for long stretches of time over the school holidays, and is aware of other school archives in Queensland where this causes problems with mould. Without funding for conservation treatments, Helen has drawn on her own skills for 'patching, mending, fixing tears', and also utilises informal networks with craftspeople at the school, for example to have materials reframed. This depends on her ability to perceive and assess conservation skills. Storage space is an area of concern for the future, as the collection is almost at capacity with acquisitions expected to continue.

Helen described in detail many of the benefits linked with the collection. It is used in the teaching of history in the school, and is also the site for points of connection between present students and alumni. Donors know that the collection is used in the school, and they appreciate that items are shown and handled by students where appropriate. In

[148] In the 2018 flood, 'the ANU Library lost approximately 8% of the ANU Library's total physical collection – around 113,000 monographs, many serials, audio visual resources, official documents and reference resources' (Missingham & Fletcher 2020, pp. 251-252).

[149] While there were also manuscript leaves from rare books on display at the time, these were not on the same level affected by the flood. Following conservation advice, they were taken off display due to concerns about humidity levels in the library after the flood, and rare books have since been relocated to Level 4 from Level 1 of the ANU Menzies Library. In the Chifley Library, collection materials are no longer housed on Level 1 due to the flooding risk.

addition to its direct educational benefits, the archive is also used to develop connections across the school community, such as when Helen provides copies of historical photographs for display in different departments. As this analysis is limited to one respondent, there is a narrow understanding of issues affecting the sector of school archives. In other school archives, a relative lack of resources is likely to impede the benefits able to be enjoyed by the school community. Further research is necessary in this area.

Scientific collections

Two interviews were undertaken in this category at the CSIRO's Australian National Herbarium (ANH) in Canberra, and the National Herbarium of Victoria in Melbourne. As these were the subject of extended analyses in Chapter 7, they are not discussed here.

Corporate collections: hospital archive

In addition to its historical significance, the St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne (SVHM) Archives and Heritage Centre benefits the community in multiple ways. Connecting past patients, staff, and their families to each other and to the hospital, the archive has a strong social benefit. Collection items are also used by researchers in health and other fields. Barbara Cytowicz has undertaken research into the way heritage collections are managed at top hospitals around the world, finding that many focus on heritage as part of their 'continuing story' of caring for patients (Cytowicz 2020). Studies from the UK have demonstrated the link between heritage in healthcare settings and improved outcomes for patients (Ander et al. 2013, Paddon et al. 2014), leading into the idea of 'social prescribing' of arts, culture and heritage (Chatterjee et al. 2018). Further benefits of the SVHM archive, and other health, medicine and hospital collections, came to light in the context of Covid-19: Barbara referred to instances where historical material relating to the twentieth-century Spanish flu pandemic was shared to provide a historical context for the emergency response and control measures. For the collection to continue to provide these benefits, Barbara believes that 'dedicated funding for hospital heritage' is needed. As the one paid staff member of the archive, she is limited in what conservation projects she can initiate, with 'what is given priority probably being the immediate rather than the long term'. Having experienced minor emergencies with instances of water infiltration and flooding, Barbara is also concerned about resources for mounting a response to a major catastrophe. The archive's involvement with the Museum Accreditation Program, a module of which focuses on disaster management, helps to mitigate this; so too does its location within a hospital with its own emergency system. While Barbara has a list of emergency contacts who can provide advice and

services, she pointed to the question of what to do in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, such as a flood, in order to minimise damage and loss to the collection.

Corporate collections: performing arts archive

At the archive of the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation, Neil Pollock focused on the need to raise the profile of the archive within the organisation. Again, as the sole paid staff member, Neil's time is limited and does not allow for many conservation activities to be undertaken even for significant items – for instance, broken glass plate negatives from the 1860s. Neil is also aware of vinegar syndrome affecting audio and film reels which are stored in general office environmental conditions (with air-conditioning switched off overnight, risking problems with diurnal fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity), and no cold storage is available to be used. This intersects with the issue of stewardship, as he would prefer that the National Film and Sound Archive took over vulnerable audiovisual materials. Two needs relating to digital materials were also prominent. Neil stated that his 'biggest worry in terms of disaster is the electronic records rather than the actual artefacts here' (Pollock 2020). There is also the need to begin digitising the collection – particularly a sub-collection of photographic prints –to make it more accessible. As the collection continues to accept donations, Neil expressed a need for more staff and volunteers with technical and research expertise. One of the key practical benefits of the archive is that it houses collections from many smaller companies with no storage space of their own, and provides a more accessible research environment compared to bigger institutions. Similarly to SVHM, the collection is also a place of connection for past theatre workers, 'creating a sense of community again with these puppeteers who were working here in the 60s and 70s'. Discussing the challenges inherent in the task of appraisal, Neil described the difficulty of knowing the potential future value and benefits of the collection – 'we don't have any real idea what that will be' – a task that nonetheless must be attempted when conservation resources are so limited and require prioritisation.

Audiovisual archives

Of the benefits linked to the audiovisual collections in this study – the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Archives, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC), and First Nations Media Australia (FNMA) – one stood out as unique for this category: their adaptation for the creation of new works. Reference to this use of archival audiovisual materials recurred across the three interviews; the role of conservation in preparing analogue materials for digitisation was also well-understood. As an example of the reuse of linguistic records, Dr Nick

Thieberger at PARADISEC described how PhD students have reanalysed a corpus of material that he created for a language in Vanuatu, thereby testing and verifying lexicons developed in earlier research (Thieberger 2020). To be reused in scientific research, the quality of the digital record must be very high. Digitised collections which are accessible online may also be used in unexpected ways, furthering the benefits of digitisation. The Digital Daisy Bates collection[150] has been used by 'biologists going through and finding plant and animal names that they were interested in, but they couldn't find them before'. There is, however, a need for digital infrastructure to store such collections long-term, as Nick has previously called for:

> As research produces more and more digital material, often of considerable heritage importance, the onus is on the research community to provide long-term repositories for this material. In fact, there is no other choice for preservation of analog recordings but to digitise them. (Thieberger 2018, p. 240)

The ABC Archives are also in the process of being digitised, and are used substantially in the creation of new programs. Janelle Mikkelsen described how techniques of film preservation and digitisation are used in tandem to prepare archival film footage from the ABC Natural History Unit for use in new productions such as *Australia Remastered*, a documentary series running from 2020–2021. When deciding what to digitise, the ABC Archives use a value-based decision matrix that includes the potential 'content making value' of material (Mikkelsen 2019b). The environmental conditions in Sydney at the time of our interview directed our discussion of challenges to natural disasters such as bushfires. Analogue audiovisual materials are held in cold storage vaults in the National Archives of Australia's repository on the outskirts of Sydney. While Janelle stated that 'it can be challenging to work with collections that do require the resourcing around conservation and preservation', her opinion was that 'there's acknowledgement across the wider organisation of the value of the archive', meaning that its needs are relatively well understood and supported (Mikkelsen 2019a).

Dr Daniel Featherstone, the project manager for First Nations Media Australia's Archiving Project, underlined the importance of the various audiovisual collections thus: 'in many of these communities, no one else has recorded these stories – there are no other recordings'. Recording song, dance and other performances, in dozens of Indigenous languages, 'the collections were created primarily for the local community,

[150] A digitised collection of over 23,000 pages of wordlists of Indigenous Australian languages compiled by the ethnographer Daisy Bates. See Thieberger (2017).

and particularly have a strong cultural maintenance agenda – they were developed with the aim of keeping language and culture strong with the influx of Western media' (Featherstone 2020). Their unique cultural benefit stems from the fact that 'no one else is going to get the depth of that storytelling – they're not going to ask the right questions… these collections have significance that nobody else would be able to produce'. As an example of the community benefit, Daniel discussed PAW Media in Yuendumu, the Northern Territory, which has an archive of highly significant video footage and photographs dating back to the 1980s. Archival material is also used in the creation of new documentaries.

However, these collections have pressing needs which stem from the inherent degradation of their media. Most of the audiovisual collections held by First Nations media organisations across Australia are yet to be digitised, despite the impending deadline of 2025 for the digitisation of magnetic tape (National Film and Sound Archive 2017). Improved collection storage is also needed for analogue and digital materials in hot, humid and dusty environments, as well as more training for staff – and funding for staff positions – in preventive conservation. This is exacerbated in the context of audiovisual collections by inherent problems with the media, carrier degradation, obsolete playback devices and a worldwide loss of technical knowledge and expertise in maintaining equipment. As Daniel stated, 'those conditions have meant that there's significant loss already within our collections, but we're only just starting to scratch the surface to find out how much that loss is' (Featherstone 2020).

Regional art galleries

While the respondents at regional art galleries reported similar benefits attached to their collections, their perceptions of the type and extent of needs or challenges varied considerably. At the Naracoorte Regional Art Gallery, Lesley Barker was most concerned with issues of collection documentation, and a lack of funds and staff time to devote to conservation of the collection. The gallery plays an important role in the community as a longstanding centre for local artists in a small regional town, with exhibitions, education programs, and an annual art prize. As Lesley put it, the collection 'is actually owned by the community, the community needs to see it and have access to it' (Barker 2020). However, as the sole paid employee, Lesley lacks time to devote to caring for the collection; combined with insufficient past documentation, this means that there are some gaps in knowledge about what it contains. Although there is not a backlog of material to be accessioned, Lesley has observed that what has been catalogued is often too sparse and lacking in important detail. Due to these documentation problems,

digitisation of the collection is yet to begin. Lesley is aware of the effect of this lack of knowledge and time on how the collection is preserved and accessed. While the collection contains an important sub-collection of prints by Indigenous Australian artists, Lesley has not had the opportunity to familiarise herself with the works. She also expressed concerns about her lack of experience and expertise in conservation.

The contrast of Gippsland Art Gallery demonstrates the variance in the category of regional art galleries: compared to the one staff member at Naracoorte, director Simon Gregg oversees a staff of nine. Following a large-scale redevelopment, the collection was moved into a new gallery in 2017. With a wider focus on the region of Gippsland, the gallery is 'more than just a collection of artworks, but a collective history of people in the region' (Gregg 2020). The challenges discussed by Simon included the problem of planning for storage to keep up with acquisitions over time, and staff resourcing, especially in collection management, where there is no dedicated staff member. Simon also detailed the various types of benefits linked to the collection, including its educational impact:

> …we're 220 kilometres away from Melbourne, so for the majority of the school students and even just all the permanent residents, they don't have access to all the galleries that people have in Melbourne. For many that come in of the residents, this might be the only experience of art they ever have. So we're trying to provide a really broad understanding of art, and [we] try to have examples of all the key periods of art over the years. (Gregg 2020)

In addition, the focus on collecting artworks that document the natural environment of the Gippsland region is crucial in the context of recurrent bushfires affecting the area. A recent acquisition, *Known unknown* (2018) by artists Jeremy Blincoe and James Hayward, is composed out of materials which are the by-products of earlier bushfires, and as Simon described, is 'part of telling the story of Gippsland'. Compared to smaller regional galleries, the Gippsland Art Gallery does not encounter as many impediments to accessing conservation. While the majority of the collection is in a good condition, Simon explained that each year one or two pieces are sent to a conservator in Melbourne to prepare them for exhibition.

As a combined collection, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) brings together scientific and other natural history materials, and cultural and artistic materials, in exhibitions, research and public programs. This provides, as Sandra

Yee put it, a 'sense of the place' for visitors to Darwin, and both material culture and natural science specimens are highlighted in exhibitions such as *Between the moon and the stars* (21 March 2019–22 March 2020). In addition to educational programs for children, Sandra and fellow conservators frequently provide training workshops for other regional museums, with talks on topics such as preventive conservation during the wet season. The challenges that Sandra considers most pressing for MAGNT are also related to its remote location. The conservation department is small for a state-level collection with three conservators, and there is often the need to hire additional contract staff from out-of-state for project work. Sending materials to be conserved elsewhere is prohibitively expensive due to the distance of Darwin from other capital cities with a conservation workforce. Materials may also be too fragile to be transported, such as works on paper; but without many local conservators, it is also expensive to bring in conservators from other cities for larger projects. There is also the problem of not having high-level conservation training available in Darwin, with locals needing to travel interstate or overseas to access training. Sandra expressed similar concerns to Simon regarding storage into the future: 'like most institutions, we're continually collecting and we're running out of space' (Yee 2020). As she also stated, it is not only funding for more storage that is needed but for 'staff adequate to deal with that, so if we have space, you still need people to prepare the space and to relocate… and to monitor it'.

Public libraries

Due to the nature of their type of collection, public libraries tend to have a strong focus on community benefit. At the State Library of Queensland (SLQ), Rachel Spano connected this to the origins of public libraries and their mandated responsibility to support the distributed heritage collection of Queensland. For conservators at the SLQ, this takes the form of answering public inquiries; providing conservation advice and talks on different topics for smaller collections; creating videos and other digital resources; leading conservation workshops in person; and running a regular free 'conservation clinic' with Queensland Museum object conservators to provide basic conservation advice for the general public. According to Rachel, conservation and previously the bindery have always had a 'very strong connection and involvement in the community activities of the library' (Spano 2020). This continues to be made possible due to institutional support: 'conservation has always been invited to contribute in some form, and supported and actually encouraged to be involved'.

Alongside these benefits, Rachel raised several challenges. Storage is an issue, as the collection is nearing full capacity and 'is getting to critical point'; there is also the need

for funds to purchase the most appropriate storage materials, such as plan cabinets. This is important because if maps and plans remained rolled, conservation work cannot be undertaken and both digitisation and access are impeded. Funding for specific projects can be secured through the conservation department's close links with The Queensland Library Foundation's fundraising activities, for example the 2018 'Reel Rescue' campaign to digitise at-risk moving picture film collections. However, projects such as this which seek to raise awareness can inadvertently exacerbate other problems such as storage, as Rachel explained: 'along with that came a whole lot of donations of extra film that people gave us'. More broadly, Rachel also identified future challenges in supporting family and community history collections, particularly those with born-digital materials, as these are rarely created and collected with digital preservation protocols in mind. The paradoxical necessity and risk of sharing and communication was also raised in relation to disaster preparedness and response. Since the 2011 Queensland floods, the SLQ has taken a proactive approach to engaging with media organisations so that they know to contact conservators in the event of a disaster.

Also at the SLQ, Christine Ianna drew on her extensive experience to continue this discussion about the various distributed heritage collections supported by the library. Christine supported the need for more training before disasters happen, and is also concerned about materials which are yet to be digitised.[151] At several moments in this interview, the dialectical tension between need and benefit came to the fore. For instance, after the 2011 Queensland floods:

> …the library was seen to be a place that people could go, often the older person, the person who wasn't working, because that's where they also would be going anyway, and got a level of emotional support, and a similar thing is actually done by museums…it gives a physical example of what used to be – things have happened, but look, there's still examples: 'I'm still stable, I'm alive'. (Ianna 2019)

> Once that incident settles a little – and people do it at different times – people are going to the libraries and trying to get social support, because they won't go to a hospital, they don't need it, they won't go to their doctor and they often won't talk with family. (Ianna 2019)

[151] In 2019, Heather Brown and Christine Ianna updated the Australian Library and Information Association's guides *ALIA Disaster Management for Libraries Part one – Guide* and *Part two – Disaster Plan Template.*

What the aftermath of the 2011 floods also showed is that if funding is sporadic rather than ongoing, there is a tendency for that money to be spent on the exigencies arising from sporadic events (such as disaster recovery) rather than ongoing training, workshops, conservation, materials and resources to prepare collections for disasters. Where money is available for pre-disaster training and resilience, Christine theorised that people are 'better placed to go into an incident and a disaster'. Furthermore, the grant funding that is available – such as the Community Heritage Grants – do not necessarily account for the specific needs of regional and remote places, or states with large geographical areas such as Queensland where travel costs can be higher.

For Cristina Albillos at the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), the major issues were storage space for both physical and digital materials; the need to digitise materials; and low staff numbers, particularly in the area of digital preservation. Cristina also considered potential cyber-security threats as an area to be taken into account in the development of digital preservation policies. Discussing the effects of recent government cuts by the State Government of Western Australia, Cristina explained 'we can only make them aware, and we can only carry out the amount of work we can carry out' (Albillos 2020). As the SLWA has only two conservators, this constrains the potential benefits of the collection. The public programs that conservators at the SLWA are able to engage in are limited to tours and training graduate students; however, they do provide inter-departmental assistance and disaster response support to other government agencies.

Regional museums and historical societies

Several interviews in this category will not be presented here, as they are the subject of extended analyses in other chapters. Interviews with the Queensland Museum Development Officers are analysed in Chapter 2; and an interview with the Yackandandah Museum/Historical Society in Chapter 7.

At the Katherine Museum, Simmone Croft spoke of two major challenges facing the collection: the need for more suitable storage and housing for Katherine's climate, and funding shortfalls with the decline of tourism in the area. While Simmone has been able to secure grant funding to improve storage and security at the museum, and to engage a conservator intermittently, 'there's no recurring funding at all, and that's the biggest downfall – it's one of our biggest weaknesses for our collection' (Croft 2020). The climate in Katherine – with extreme heat and high humidity in the wet season, and also a dry season – necessitates work to mitigate the effects of environmental factors on the

collection. Although the museum has many volunteers to assist with preventive conservation, particularly with heritage machinery, Simmone is the only full-time paid staff member. This means that she cannot dedicate herself to the collection, especially during tourist season when the focus is on visitors. There is a backlog of materials to be both accessioned and digitised because, as Simmone explained:

> I haven't been able to do much of that over the last two years because I'm so focused on trying to keep the museum afloat, and keep the money rolling in, that I have to do these functions and write grants and do all these other community things that generate a bit of money for us. So it's really difficult. (Croft 2020)

This exists in tension with the benefits that the museum brings to its surrounding communities:

> I feel I don't spend enough time on our collection and really that is what we're about, but I have to keep the museum afloat so that we can be here for the community as a research centre and resource centre as well. It's a very hard thing to manage, actually. (Croft 2020)

An example of the social impact of the museum is its partnership with the Katherine Region Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation (KRSGAC) and the Healing Foundation to create a Stolen Generations Healing Garden on the museum grounds. This connects with education programs run by the museum for local and interstate schools, which often leads to children being able to 'identify their families through photographs and storyboards'.

The remaining respondents in this category – Amanda James at History Trust SA; Claire-Frances Craig in Western Australia; and Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno at Arts Tasmania's Roving Curators program – provided responses based on the range of collections they support in their roles. Due to the nature of their positions, they were able to identify a range of needs among different collections.

In Tasmania, Melissa and Veronica highlighted the need for improved storage and more education and training around conservation, such as what can and cannot be done in-house. They also observed that many community museums do not have a disaster management plan – potentially because they are yet to complete significance assessments, which are recommended as precursors to disaster plans. The need for more

funding to enable museums to purchase archival storage materials was also noted, as a lack of resources constrains the preventive conservation activities they are able to undertake; funding is also needed in the form of capital assistance to improve storage facilities. There is also a need for more conservators in the state outside of the major public institutions – which no longer take on private work – to improve access to conservation. In terms of impact, 'the cultural and social (local community, volunteers and visitors) benefits are the main community benefits linked to these collections' (Smith & Macno 2020).

At the History Trust SA, Amanda focused on the issues of staffing and stewardship of collections. As she explained, 'there's a big changeover going on in South Australia at the moment with the volunteer age groups' (James 2020). Places which are not as popular with tourists are less likely to attract early retirees who might take over management of collections. The transition period can pose challenges for the conservation of collections in terms of knowledge transfer, as collection policies and disaster management plans may not be reviewed, or work may be unnecessarily duplicated. Amanda also provided insight into another challenge that is likely to be present in other regions too: a 'huge focus' in historical collections on pioneer or white settler history 'to the almost exclusive detriment of Aboriginal history'. This means that museums may not be as representative of the history of their area, or of present day inhabitants, as they could be if their collecting scope was broadened. Crucially, there is the need for adequate trained staff as well as funding:

> We find through our grant funds, for instance, that being able to give people money is all well and good, but if they don't have the people on the ground to use the money, then it doesn't work. (James 2020)

Across her career, Clare-Frances Craig has worked with many community collections in Western Australia. Drawing on her time as a Museum of Western Australia development officer, Clare-Frances provided several examples of the benefits and challenges associated with the state's dispersed collections. Distance means that many collections experience impediments in accessing conservation services and resources. For instance, the Warburton community, in the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku, is home to the Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery, one of the largest community-managed collections of Indigenous art in Australia. Despite being a longstanding and distinctive collection, its remoteness proved a challenge in organising a significance assessment to be undertaken, as Clare-Frances reported that the amount of funding available (through the Community Heritage

Grants) was insufficient to cover travel to Warburton. Remoteness in relation to the major cities where conservators tend to work is a challenge across the country, particularly for the largest states of Western Australia and Queensland. However, while the Queensland Museum's Development Officer program is continuing (see Chapter 2), the equivalent service in Western Australia closed in 2016.

Indigenous collections

The interview with Kirsten Thorpe at the Jumbunna Institute is not discussed here as it appears in Chapter 7 as a case study.

My interview with respondent Shaun Angeles, now based at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin, focused on the needs and benefits associated with the museum's Strehlow Research Centre (SRC) in Alice Springs. Though this case vignette is longer than others in this chapter, it was felt that this interview captured the effects of the dialectic between need and impact in a way that warranted deeper exploration.

There are many ways in which 'museums can play a big part in this broader picture', as Shaun explained. Cultural heritage materials are 'integral to the health and wellbeing of the people, but on top of that, they're vital towards the health and wellbeing of our land' (Angeles 2020). They play a role in strengthening Indigenous cultures, in educating young people, and – reflecting Kirsten Thorpe's words in Chapter 7 – using traditional knowledge to maintain country has associated environmental and ecological benefits. Caring for collections is intertwined with caring for people and land; as Shaun continued, 'if you have healthy, thriving First Nations people in any country, you're going to have a more healthier country in general'. To Shaun, the repatriation of artefacts – including ancestral remains – to traditional owners is connected to processes of 'reconciliation, healing, empowerment, truth telling'. This will have benefits for all Australians: 'there's a lot of healing that needs to happen. For all of us. For me, this is what this repatriation is as well, it's healing'. The social and educational impacts of accessing collections were explicated as:

> We have seen the trajectory of particular young men's lives through our engagement with them and their senior men, through making collections accessible to them. Inside the Strehlow Collection, we have seen the positive effects of that with young men. Suddenly they have this purpose, an important

> purpose… a really strong cultural purpose that was in some cases disinherited to generations of their forefathers. (Angeles 2020)

The return of collections also has benefits for cultural materials. Discussing the enrichment of materials by Aboriginal elders, Shaun contended that they are 'the only people on the face of the earth who can do that', that is, who can 'understand and enrich collections'. In 2018, Shaun gave a keynote talk, *Ayeye digital-kenhe arntarntareme: Protecting our digital cultural heritage*, at the National Digital Forum at Te Papa Museum, New Zealand. In the talk, Shaun described working with an Arrente elder to annotate a collection of 44 of T.G.H. Strehlow's field diaries:

> These are annotations, so these are his words, this is his enrichment of the record, of the documentation, and only he could do that – nobody else, only him. Because this map here is of his country, so it's really localised knowledge. Nobody else in the world. And so he's actually giving more meaning to a document that's been sitting there for 60 years. (Angeles 2018)

For these benefits to continue, ongoing repatriation is required to engage other collections around the country. This is a time and labour-intensive process that involves, as Shaun explained, 'introducing our elders to the collections, and then working towards best practice models towards repatriation all of this material to the original owners'. As it is located in Alice Springs, the SRC forms a hub for surrounding remote communities. With echoes of Chapter 7's focus on place and location, Arrente cultural materials are more accessible here than if they were held in other states and territories. However, the need for materials to be held on country – which enables traditional owners to 'care for what's theirs, taking control of their own cultural heritage' – comes with its own challenges. Where materials have been repatriated, their traditional owners sometimes prefer to store them at the SRC because it is a purpose-built facility with a high level of security. Shaun explained:

> …there's some very valid reasons as to why men are choosing to store their heritage at the Centre. A lot of it's to do with the changing nature of country. Country is accessible to people, tourists, pastoral owners, station owners – many, many different people. So it's sort of regarded as being risky, storing some of this heritage in their places of origin, and I see it as a sort of risk mitigation from elders to ensure that history isn't repeated. (Angeles 2020)

There is also the need for greater levels of Indigenous employment, engagement, and leadership within cultural institutions, and for the establishment of Indigenous advisory committees. The 'support and guidance and expertise of elders' will help to avoid burn out for younger workers such as Shaun.

Religious collections

The significance and conservation of religious collections has been previously explored by Griffin (2014) in her study of the collections of the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst (Bendigo, Victoria). The Mary Mackillop Place Museum (MMPM) in Sydney provides yet another example of a collection with high community benefit. In our interview, Edwina Huntley described the impact of two aspects of the collection. The museum holds a large sub-collection of Indigenous Australian art and artefacts from the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. This collection stems from a relationship developed between the Sisters and the Warmun and Ringer Soak (Kundat Djaru) communities through bilingual Catholic schools in each community. From the beginning, art and education were linked in the schools. Edwina explored how the Sisters 'really saw art as a driver for understanding culture, and supported the community to produce art and tell the stories through their art-making'; they also invited local artists into the classroom who 'partnered with the Sisters as educators through the development of the schools' (Huntley 2020). Artworks were gifted to the Sisters over the years after the founding of the school in 1979 by renowned artists of the contemporary painting movement in Warmun. Sister Rosemary Crumlin writes:

> From the beginning the education was to be 'two-way' – to teach traditional culture and also Kartiya ('white fella') way. And so it was for its religious education. Most days Hector Jandany or George Mung Mung or Queenie McKenzie came down to the classroom, often carrying their paintings to tell stories of the ancestors or creation and the Gospels. (2013, n.p.)

The paintings and sculptural works collected by the Sisters were presented to the public in a 2013 exhibition, *Gifts of the Artists: Warmun Art of the Kimberley Entrusted to the Sisters of St. Joseph* (Warner 2013). Edwina also discussed the public value of the core collection of the MMPM for the Catholic schools community across Australia.

In terms of challenges faced by the collection, there is currently no disaster management plan due to tight resources – Edwina is the only curator, although there is also an archivist who manages audiovisual materials. She explained:

> A lot of people, I think, struggle – especially in smaller institutions where resources are tight – to actually complete a disaster management plan and undertake all the steps before then to be able to do one. We all realise that it's an important element, and we've all seen many examples of what happens when a collection becomes under threat, and we know it's important and that it's definitely something that we should all have in place. Yet getting to the reality of actually having it is another thing. (Huntley 2020)

Digitisation of the collection is underway, but Edwina reported that progress is slow as they are simultaneously working on enriching the description and provenance documentation of earlier digitised files. While the Warmun and Ringer Soak collections are currently in the collection store at the MMPM, a new display area is being designed to bring them together in the context of the wider collection.

Built heritage collections

Even though it is located in an urban location in a city with a high proportion of conservators, the Mission to Seafarers lacks access to conservation. Jay Miller stated that engaging conservators would only be possible with external grant funding or a donor; the heritage collection is not viewed as 'central to the purpose of the organisation' (Miller 2020). Jay also identified a need to engage paid staff with experience working in collections to enable continuity between funded projects, and a further need for advocacy within the organisation to 'explain to non-heritage colleagues the significance of the collection'. In terms of the benefits associated with the collection, Jay explored this primarily in relation to the economic impact of shipping – and the Mission's role in representing this to community and government – and social support through its outreach with ship crews and international human rights work. As Jay outlined, the collection underpins the ability of the organisation to advocate on behalf of the seafaring community in various areas. Bringing this together, 'the Mission has long argued since 1856 that respected and supported seafarers ensure safer and more reliable shipping, which underpins our national and domestic economy'.

At Sydney Living Museums (SLM), Sarah-Jane Rennie gave several examples of collections with positive impact on their surrounding communities, as well as the work of the SLM in this area. Conservation is associated with educational benefits through outreach activities such as tours of 'open storage' at the Museums Discovery Centre storage facility in Castle Hill. For school groups, the 'spirit of place' of built heritage is

important. Sarah-Jane also cited the re-performance of musical instruments as generating community benefits: for example, an 1814 cello belonging to Elizabeth Macquarie was played for Bathurst's bicentenary celebrations in 2014. In terms of the collections' needs, Sarah-Jane stated that the museums could be more embedded in their surrounding communities. There is also the need for knowledge transmission from the skilled volunteers who currently work with large technology pieces in the museum. Having also studied the community benefit of museums in Scotland, Sarah-Jane raised the point that such impact studies need to be brought together, as there are many such examples at collections across the country.

Private collections

Several concerns for the future of their collections are shared by the respondents of family or private collections interviewed for this research.[152] Neither collection has been digitised, although both respondents expressed a wish for that to happen for both preservation and access reasons. There are questions around what will happen to each collection in the future; the Family Collection Custodian (FCC) 'feels responsible for both wanting to do best by the collection in terms of its long-term preservation while also sharing knowledge of the collection with family members in the present' (FCC 2020). In discussing succession planning, both respondents commented that they would prefer their collection to stay together, revealing a common concern for a kind of conceptual integrity – beyond the physical integrity of materials – among those caring for private collections. In an earlier survey into the preservation and conservation needs of family and private collections in rural Victoria, it was acknowledged that:

> …some of the most important cultural material in Victoria is contained in family collections, particularly family collections in rural areas. But increasingly we are hearing stories of the stress created by the responsibilities of the management of these collections. (Sloggett 2001)

These observations resonate with the experiences described by the respondents in their interviews, both in terms of the benefits linked to the collections and the challenges they face. The FCC described how 'working on the collection has helped to illuminate a much stronger sense of what the family was really like… what sort of people they were, and their experiences of emigration'. On the other hand, the FCC also reported a 'tremendous sense of obligation' to the family member from whom the collection was inherited, and to the collection itself, as it has been 'carefully stored and handed down

[152] Both respondents requested anonymity and are referred to as (1) the Family Custodian (FCC) and (2) BB.

several times'. Serving as tangible reminders of family members and relationships, family collections seem to produce intense affects such as the sense of guilt attached to instances of damage or loss. BB, whose collection encompasses material related to historical events as well as personal items, is more concerned with the arrangement of the collection, digitisation, and access to it in the future. She believes that the materials she has collected on the history of ice-skating – both the portions held by the State Library of Victoria and that remaining in her home – could be part of a future exhibition on the topic.

Discussion

At the intersection of the dialectical tension between the needs of collections, and their potential impact, two points emerge. First, the needs and challenges faced by those working with collections can limit the potential benefits collections are known to bring to their communities, leading to a loss of opportunity. At the same time, as shown in several of the examples above, the impact of collections can be furthered by addressing their needs, particularly in relation to conservation.

One of the most prominent needs identified across the different sectors was for increased staffing levels, and dedicated time for conservation and collection management activities. This was a problem for those working with university collections, corporate archives, regional art galleries, and regional museums and historical societies, and persists despite earlier identification in the Pigott Report (1975); the 2000 audit of skills gaps in conservation by the Heritage Collections Council; and the *Cinderella collections* reports (Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee and University Museums Review Committee 1996, 1998). Reflecting on the latter reports in 2012, Andrew Simpson described various responses by universities to the issues identified, ranging from greater recognition of collections and the development of collections policies, to the deaccessioning of materials and/or collections. This resonated with Rhonda Davis's point that 'trying to change people's perceptions of the collection and how it fits in with the university' is a continual challenge (Davis 2019). Rhonda's experiences of workload pressures was a common theme among participants from the university collections sector, with frequent reference made to the tasks that could be undertaken – more loan requests fulfilled, more digitisation, and better integration of collections and teaching and research activities – with higher staffing levels.

A related issue that arose in the interviews was the type of funding available for conservation and collection care. Often this is applied for and obtained through grants from different funding bodies for specific projects, such as the digitisation of photographs

in the Possum Green collection at the CSU Regional Archives.[153] While this has enabled collections to undertake necessary work, many respondents expressed a need for ongoing funding. This need is prevalent across the sector, with instances recorded in regional museums and historical societies, Indigenous collections, audiovisual collections, public libraries, university collections, and built heritage collections. Especially in collections with few paid staff or those that are volunteer-run, the urgency of other demands means that long-term processes like conservation are not prioritised. It is not simply more funding that is needed but consistent support for ongoing jobs in collection management. Both Kirsten Thorpe and Daniel Featherstone addressed this issue in relation to Indigenous collections. On the poor condition of many audiovisual archives belonging to First Nations media organisations, Daniel stated that 'whatever types of issues there are, invariably they exist within our sector, simply because archiving has never been prioritised or funded as part of the ongoing activity' (Featherstone 2020). This is not due to a lack of desire for these collections to be preserved or digitised, but rather illustrates systemic problems with Australia's care for its distributed collections and Indigenous heritage, particularly in remote areas.

Several collections such as the Indigenous audiovisual archives discussed by Daniel also had urgent conservation needs. For collections of analogue media, there is a pressing need for improved public support in the form of funding, training and provision of equipment for collections to be digitised by traditional owners who can ensure that cultural protocols around access and data security are also maintained. In the narrative of 'preserving the past for the future', the needs of the present can be elided, even when there are urgent needs to address such as the digitisation of media becoming obsolete. This reflects broader cultural notions of time in the twenty-first century as in crisis, 'stuck, perpetually present, and unable to change' (Baraitser 2017, p. 8). According to Lisa Baraitser in her book *Enduring Time* (2017), the present is depicted as both continuous and contracted, compressed between an irretrievable past and a catastrophic future. However, the present is the time for responding to collections' needs and preventing further loss. Many Indigenous collections have not been able to access conservation support and resources to maintain autonomous control over their collections. This is despite these collections' significance and the benefits linked to their continued existence or return to on-country locations, as explicated in the interviews with Daniel Featherstone, Kirsten Thorpe and Shaun Angeles. The heritage materials

[153] The photographs of Alfred 'Possum' Greene document the New South Wales Snowy Mountains region during the 1950s and 1960s, including the commencement of the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the largest hydro-electric complex in Australia. Funding for a significance assessment of the collection was applied for and obtained in the 2020 Community Heritage Grants funding round (National Library of Australia 2020a).

they hold are both historically significant and crucial for cultural maintenance and transmission (Angeles 2020); they experience high levels of risk to their collections due to under-resourcing (Featherstone 2020); and they have a potent role to play in critiquing the present conditions of social inequity in Australia for Indigenous people (Thorpe 2020).

Where there is unaddressed need, there is also an opportunity loss of the potential impact of a collection. This intersects with the loss of cultural materials, as became clear in my interview with Shaun Angeles. With the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Shaun is involved in repatriating Indigenous artefacts which were acquired by collecting institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[154] The loss of these objects has had compounding effects on Indigenous communities, as Shaun explained:

> …the fact that thousands of cultural heritage or material cultural objects were removed from people, from communities, from country, played a big, big role in the disempowering of Aboriginal people all over the country – all over the world. That is why museums and the work that we're doing towards repatriating these important collections is so important, because it's empowering. As an Aboriginal man, I see the results of all of this sacred responsibility that comes with being a custodian, being a caretaker of your family's material culture, your heritage. I see the results of that being removed from generations of Aboriginal people, particularly Aboriginal men. It was our number one responsibility to care for these things to ensure that their wellbeing was healthy. It was our number one responsibility after caring for our wives, our mothers, our grandfathers, our children. When responsibility is removed, or taken away, you lose something. You lose something very, very important. Your wellbeing is affected, your purpose is affected. Your responsibility is affected. When somebody has purpose, meaningful purpose, sacred purpose, sacred purpose, you are empowered. (Angeles 2020)

Where collections have been repatriated, and access to collections restored, Shaun has observed the effects on wellbeing:

> We have seen the trajectory of particular young men's lives through our engagement with them and their senior men, through making collections

[154] Shaun clarified that some, but not all, of the secret/sacred collections were illegally acquired by museums. His research is revealing that there was also trade between Arrente men and early white settlers.

> accessible to them. Inside the Strehlow Collection, we have seen the positive effects of that with young men. Suddenly they have this purpose, an important purpose – not saying they didn't have purpose before, but this is a really strong cultural purpose that was in some cases disinherited to generations of their forefathers. (Angeles 2020)

In this example of Shaun's, addressing the needs of collections has increased their community benefit. The language used by both Shaun and Kirsten to speak of collections' 'health' or 'wellbeing' evocatively captures the link between the two: conservation improves the wellbeing of cultural materials as well as those caring for them. Echoes of this appeared in quite a different context in my interview with Christine Ianna. After a disaster, when people's sense of continuity is shattered, Christine has observed that the preservation of material culture helps: 'there's still examples: "I'm still stable, I'm alive"' (Ianna 2019).[155]

Conclusion

The dialectical structure followed in this chapter makes visible the tension between the positive impact of collections – and, by extension, their conservation – and the future needs and challenges they face. These needs include more appropriate types of funding available to support conservation; other material and financial resources; adequate staffing levels, training and time; digitisation; disaster preparation; advocacy and communication; stewardship into the future; greater alignment with environmental and ecological sustainability principles; protection for heritage; and, moreover, for conservation treatments and the implementation of preventive conservation principles. If these needs are not addressed, then the myriad benefits associated with collections – documented in each of the case vignettes – cannot be extended to as many people as possible.

As the examples in this chapter demonstrate, access to conservation forms a crucial link between collections and their community impact, and a well-conserved collection is necessary to enable safe handling, use and appreciation of cultural materials into the future. While some respondents were able to draw on their own skills and knowledge, networks, or institutional support to conserve items in their collections, others – particularly those that do not have conservation services in major cities nearby – found it more difficult to access the services they need. The cost of conservation can also be an impediment, and this is compounded by travel costs for conservators, assessors, or the

[155] A similar argument is made by Gamini Wijesuriya in his study of Maori taonga as living heritage (2008).

transport of works. However, not only do collections have a positive impact, but the act of conservation too has benefits for people and communities. Conservation can help to prevent the opportunity loss that is encountered when collections needs' outweigh the capacity to mitigate risk, and the potential benefits of collections are not accessible. The findings presented in the next chapter link this discussion to policy, and also reflect on the contribution of each of the three methodologies – discursive, quantitative and qualitative – as a form of evidence for advocacy.

Chapter 9: Future policy needs and indicators for conservation

This chapter incorporates material that was presented at a conference, *Making Conservation: AICCM National Conference* in Melbourne, November 2019, where a paper was given under the title 'Making conservation policy in Australia: Contexts and gaps'. At an Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials Foresight Workshop in the same month, a talk on social impact and conservation was also presented.

The research conducted in this thesis, building on earlier studies and reports, has identified highly significant material that is held outside of the large collecting institutions in Australia, and has elicited its substantial public benefit. However, this material generally exists outside of the influence of conservation policies, strategies and research; and typically at a distance – spatial, economic, or cultural – from ready access to conservation services. This material is also potentially at a higher risk of loss, damage or destruction compared to materials held in more well-resourced collections, or those with embedded knowledge and skills in conservation. Mirroring this problem, the forms of knowledge about conservation, collections, and their impact derived from the types of collections studied herein are under-utilised in research and practice by the conservation profession. Work undertaken in the two parts of the sector lacks reciprocity, and the dissemination of research and practice in conservation beyond the major cities is insufficient to reach communities on the periphery of the sector. As research and practice informs what benefits the broader community can obtain from conservation, it should be translated more equitably to support collections which have historically been under-serviced by the conservation profession. The discrepancy between access to conservation, and the positive impact of collections, constitutes a further dialectical tension that requires a policy-driven response.

Section one: thematic findings

While each of the preceding chapters contains its own findings, there is much to be gained from drawing together the disparate parts. It is hoped that these reflections will be useful in developing a new national conservation policy. This section therefore focuses on two areas: the issues found in common across the various modes of analysis, which such a policy will need to address; and the new conceptualisation of the public value of conservation, which may help garner support for future policies to be implemented.

Risk

Following on from Chapter 3's theorisation of social inequity as a risk factor for collections, how this functions in practice was delineated across both the quantitative

studies of Part 2 and the qualitative interviews of Part 3. Given the close attention paid to risk in collections conservation, this consideration of its social and economic determinants is a necessary bridge between the collection object, the human subject and the external environment. The work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas on risk underlines this connection. In her 1986 book *Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences*, Douglas criticises 'a wider failure to think systematically about distributive justice' in Western social and economic thought (p. 11). She draws on the work of Amartya Sen to argue that discussions of risk acceptability must address problems of justice, and that there is an absence even in risk-benefit literature of what is at stake here, namely 'the uneven distribution of risks over social categories' (Douglas 1986, pp. 11-23). In conservation, the perception of risk is a skill that is utilised in different contexts, from disaster preparation to the decisions made in relation to potential treatments. On a larger scale, risk perception is also involved in the prediction of how the risks associated with a changing climate will affect collections according to their location, as in Chapter 5. Behind these efforts is the formulation that accurately perceiving risks is necessary before they can be mitigated. In addition to risk perception, a framework for understanding how access to conservation is distributed across geographic and social categories is also critical. One such analytical model was presented in Chapter 4.

The question of perception is also pertinent to Chapter 6, where the process of synthesising interview data from thirty-nine interviews was worked through. Developing the concepts that guided the dialectical structures of Chapters 7 and 8 – significance, risk, need and impact – required an attempt at grasping 'the relationship between the account provided and the phenomenon studied' (Freeman 2017, p. 19). Each part of the thesis explored the implications of its particular methodological mode – theoretical, statistical mapping, or qualitative interviews – for the questions posed in the introduction. As well as asking, for instance, what factors inform access to conservation in Australia, a parallel inquiry took up the question of how access can be modelled (using quantitative techniques) and elucidated in speech (through semi-structured interview conversations). As the thesis began with a sizeable research gap, the task was not only to generate data, but to test each methodology for what it could contribute to a sustained response to the problem. Thus, the research findings extend to an assessment of the evidence generated by each of the different methodologies in relation to the motivating questions.

Funding

Alongside the distribution and perception of risks, a new national conservation policy will need to take into account the need for an equitable funding model. This issue of funding for conservation and collections in Australia recurred throughout the various studies included in this thesis. At present, provision for funding for collections, and their conservation and preservation, is enabled by a wide range of sources, both public – through Federal, state and local governments – and private funding streams. Depending on the nature of the collection, funding may be linked to specific policies in arts and culture, heritage, the built environment, or other areas. Funding for the arts is a recurrent issue taken up by different advocacy groups, including the AICCM; a particular focus for advocacy in recent years has been in relation to the Commonwealth Budget decisions on funding the Arts. This and other points in relation to future policy are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Disaster

A further theme that arose over the course of the research was the susceptibility of collections – not just their materials – to environmental and socioeconomic factors. The successive crises of the 2019–2020 Australian bushfire season and the Covid-19 pandemic became prominent topics of discussion in the case study interviews. While the maps produced in Chapter 5 did not extend to overlays of collection locations and bushfire risk projections, the study nonetheless grappled with the potential impacts of some of the drivers of bushfires – climate change variables (CSIRO 2020). The loss of income for collections during closures necessitated by Covid-19 control measures presents a risk for their long-term viability. In a survey conducted in April–May 2020 by ICOM, 12.8% of participants globally reported that their collections may never reopen (ICOM 2020a, p. 6). A follow-up survey found that 'while many institutions are struggling to reopen to the public with major limitations, others are still closed or have recently been forced to close for a second time' (ICOM 2020b, p. 27). Further to economic impacts, the report raised the issue of the 'short and long-term effects of the lockdowns on museums' links with the local community' (ICOM 2020b, p. 27). As was highlighted by more than one respondent in my research, even when disaster preparation had been undertaken, this did not include scenarios such as a pandemic, meaning that most collections were unprepared for its consequences. The widespread effects of these crises sharply demonstrates how a new national approach to managing conservation is warranted.

Inequity and the public value of conservation

An earlier study of funding for community heritage conservation in Australia (reproduced in Chapter 4) explored inequities in the spatial distribution of grant funding. As the effects of climate change on collections are also likely to vary geographically, this will intersect with ongoing pressures for funding, and the need for improved infrastructure, to produce poorer outcomes in regional and remote areas. To demonstrate the value of historic preservation, Max Page (2016) has linked it to economic justice and environmental sustainability with the argument that: 'since nearly half of all greenhouse gases are produced in the construction, demolition, and operation of buildings, saving old places and reusing them must be the cornerstone of any plan for sustainability' (p. 108). The connection between cultural materials conservation and sustainability is perhaps less direct, but the examples of policy changes given in Chapter 5 demonstrate the Australian conservation profession's commitment to lessening the environmental impact of caring for collections.

Understanding the various forms of inequities present in accessing conservation also provides context for the discussion of loss in Chapters 7 and 8. Both loss of cultural materials, and opportunity loss, are not experienced equally – and present inequities are compounded by poor access to conservation services, resources and knowledge in the past. As a result, inequitable structures in society have been replicated in the conservation industry, with both access to conservation and the potential to share and enjoy its benefits unevenly distributed. Moreover, cultural capital continues to accrue to those with well-conserved collections. This reality contradicts the discourse around conservation that is promulgated by scholars in heritage studies, who – following David Lowenthal (1989) – contend that an ever-expanding canon of heritage has proliferated to the point that appreciation and use are impeded. Their call to reject preservation and embrace loss fails to take into account prior injustices in access to conservation and heritage. Especially in places such as Australia, the historical divide between institutional support for Indigenous and non-Indigenous forms of heritage means that such positions risk perpetuating inequities that have not yet been remedied, and thus maintaining cultural hegemony. Lowenthal (1989), in response to this series of rhetorical questions –

> Is material preservation our only option? What else might secure the benefits we associate with it? Can the difficulties I have sketched be avoided or mitigated by putting less emphasis on material preservation or perhaps forswearing it altogether? (p. 71)

– offered three alternatives to material preservation: saving fragments rather than wholes; attending to processes of destruction and creation; and the use of representations and surrogates (pp. 71-77). The final section of this chapter contends that conservation, as a discourse and practice, already encompasses these and other strategies.

Section two: policy needs

At the time of writing, there has not been a national cultural or arts policy in Australia since 2013, when the short-lived *Creative Australia* policy (Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport) was delivered and quickly abandoned following a change in federal government. Previously, 1994's *Creative Nation: Commonwealth cultural policy* had made reference to several aspects relevant to conservation, as well as including 'the right of access to our intellectual and cultural heritage' in a proposed charter of cultural rights (Department of Communications and the Arts 1994, n.p.). As David Throsby commented, *Creative Nation* 'at least existed for long enough for some of its programs to be put into effect' unlike the ill-fated *Creative Australia* (2018, p. 25). A section on recommendations for movable heritage collections in *Creative Nation* called on the national institutions to 'assist individuals and communities to preserve and present material of cultural significance in their original locations or regions' via the administration of funding programs (such as the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grants) and community outreach (Department of Communications and the Arts 1994, n.p.). Chapter 4's historical analysis of data from the Community Heritage Grant program found that while many conservation projects have been enabled by this policy, spatial inequities persist in the distribution of funding for conservation. Further misgivings with the outreach model were reported in my conversations with interview participants. These are detailed in the synthesis of policy needs below.

Two national policies have focused specifically on conservation. These were the 1995 *National Conservation and Preservation Policy for Movable Cultural Heritage* (developed by the Heritage Collections Committee's Conservation Working Party and endorsed by the Cultural Ministers Council) and the subsequent *National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy: Australia's Heritage Collections* (Heritage Collections Council 1998). The latter made ten key policy statements in the areas of: advocacy, and affirming the importance of heritage collections and their link to wellbeing; acknowledging the heritage of diverse cultures; significance; recognising the need to conserve and preserve Australia's heritage collections; the right to equitable access to heritage collections; the role played by conservation in providing ongoing access; the need for a coordinated

response across different levels of government and other sectors; raising awareness about conservation; community-wide skills development, education and training; and research. Despite the interim publication of several reports into collections' needs (e.g. Deakin University 2002), there has been no successor to these policies.[156] It is in this context that Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien have written that:

> The decision by the Cultural Ministers Council in October 2009 to cease funding of the Collections Council put back 20 years the development of a national policy for the distributed national collection comprising the collections of the museums of Australia. (2011, p. 5)

The Cultural Ministers Council was removed from the Council of Australian Governments in 2011 and there has been no subsequent national policy specific to movable heritage conservation in Australia.

However, at the state government and local government levels, there are several more recent examples of arts, cultural and conservation policies. Policies where the different sectors of arts, culture and heritage appear particularly well-integrated are the 2015 *Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework* and Bathurst Regional Council's *Bathurst Region: A Cultural Vision 2036*. In an environment where 'the distribution of funding is heavily biased in favour of larger metropolitan institutions', small and regional collections increasingly rely upon local governments to support their activities, including preservation (Robinson 2018, p. 720). While legislation exists to protect built and environmental heritage in all states and territories, there is little consideration of other forms of heritage, nor of crossovers in policy for the heritage, arts and culture sectors. Some states' cultural policies neglect to consider conservation or forms of value beyond the economic. The Victorian Government's *Creative State 2016–2020* strategy targeted the 'creative industries' and thus was weighted towards economic value, with other forms of impact less well-considered.[157] Publicly-owned collections are highlighted for their economic value, but 'preservation' and 'conservation' are not referred to in the strategy, apart from two measures to improve storage for the State Library of Victoria's facilities in Ballarat, and to develop a new art museum in Shepparton. Again, conservation falls in between the policy areas of built and environmental heritage, and the cultural sector; conservation and collections are not leveraged in the 'social impact'

[156] The 2015 *Australian Heritage Strategy* (Commonwealth of Australia) did not directly consider movable cultural heritage or collections, instead focusing on heritage places.
[157] At time of writing, the Victorian Government's updated policy, *Creative State 2021–2025*, was yet to be released.

projects included in the strategy; and the needs and benefits of smaller collections, or those not owned by the state, are left out altogether.

The last few years have also seen a renewed interest in arts and cultural policy. In 2018, the independent think-tank 'A New Approach' was established at the Australian Academy of the Humanities with $1.65m of philanthropic investment. The organisation aims to lead arts and cultural policy advocacy by pushing for 'a more robust discussion about cultural policy, one which is based on good data and informed by shared understandings, and through a non-partisan and independent approach' (A New Approach 2019, p. 2). Data included in their first report, which looked into public expenditure on arts and culture in Australia, reflects the point that growth in funding is now at the local government level. Per capita expenditure on culture increased by 11% for local governments and 3% for state governments over the decade from 2007 to 2018; by comparison, it has fallen by 18.9% for the federal government over the same time (A New Approach 2019, p. 5). The use of three overarching categories to understand the division of funding – film, radio and television (receiving 32.5% of total funding); museums, art museums, archives, libraries and cultural heritage (37.7%); and arts (29.7%) – renders the data less translatable to understanding changes in funding for conservation without disaggregation. It is unclear if an audiovisual archive attached to a media organisation, for instance, would be included in the first or second category – the latter where a sub-category 'other museums and cultural heritage' covers 'the acquisition, collection management, conservation and exhibition of heritage objects' (A New Approach 2019, p. 34).

Cultural policy affects funding, public awareness, professional sustainability, and the direction of the industry. There is opportunity to better position conservation in policies at each tier of government as well as advocating for a new overarching national policy. In the interviews, respondents were also asked about how a new national conservation policy could reflect the needs of their collection or sector. This section considers what a new national conservation policy should account for in order to represent the needs of such collections, to ensure that more than just the voices at mainstream collecting institutions in Australia are heeded. Participants' own words are used to connect their needs, as articulated in the qualitative interviews, to ideas about what a future national conservation policy could do to support their collection or type of collection. These are organised under the following themes: appropriate funding to support conservation activities; preparing for and responding to disasters; advocacy and raising the profile of collections and conservation; mutual support and the distributed cultural record; digital

preservation and materials; Indigenous collections; and regional collections. Unlike the structure of the chapters in Part 3 of the thesis, not every interview is cited, but a few cogent examples are drawn upon.

Appropriate funding to support conservation activities

This issue was discussed in Chapter 8 as a need identified for many types of collections. It is supported by a different kind of evidence in Chapter 4, with the statistical analysis of funding available for community heritage conservation. Briefly, in Chapter 8 it was found that many respondents report that short-term, sporadic grants are an inadequate form of funding to support conservation. While such grants enable project-based work, the nature of conservation work requires ongoing funding. Not only is more funding needed, but also greater consistency in funding to allow for collections staff to be employed permanently. Chapter 4's geographical analysis of the distribution of grant funding showed that collections in regional and remote areas of Australia receive less grant funding than those located in major cities. While this may be driven by several factors, including fewer applications for grants from collections in these areas, the net result is that regional and remote collections – with historically lower levels of conservation – are less able to access services and resource conservation activities.

In her interview, Kirsten Thorpe connected these points in relation to the potential expansion of Indigenous heritage collections:

> I think Australia needs to be a lot more clever than that. I think that it ends up speaking to this idea that the regions shouldn't keep their history there, and it all goes down to Canberra for researchers to come and research it, rather than it being something that's valued locally. I think structurally, one of the things that needs to change if people want to advance this area – and I really see with the Mukurtu hub – there is so much potential for the area of cultural heritage management and maintenance that there's a whole new workforce that could be developed. But instead, people are reliant on short-term grant possibilities, so they spend all the time trying to mould what their needs are into a specific grant. And then that becomes their focus rather than saying, Okay, well, locally what are our needs in terms of keeping cultures locally and using them in a variety of ways? (Thorpe 2020)

Several other respondents spoke of how this problem affects collections in their regions or sectors. In university and regional archives, Wayne Doubleday reiterated Kirsten's

comments, stating: 'quite often, these funding applications that I'm putting in are targeting areas which are perhaps not our highest priority' (2020). It is also prevalent in Indigenous audiovisual collections, as Daniel Featherstone articulated:

> The funding to manage collections, there simply is no fund available for that. Organisations have been applying to different sources for it over the years but there's no dedicated place to get funding to do archiving of community collections. Some areas have a bit of success with mining royalty money or lottery money or something like that, but generally [for] most of our collections, there simply isn't a budget, and there isn't funding for a position to do that work. (Featherstone 2020)

This also arose as a significant issue in regional areas of Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania. As the Queensland Museum's Museum Development Officer program has transitioned to an ad hoc working model, Ewen McPhee (2019) has found that it is still necessary to 'prompt communities' to apply for support as they may not know (a) that support is available and (b) 'that things need to be actively looked after or worked on'. Substantiating Chapter 4's findings, Susan Reynolds (2020) explained how for 'the National Library of Australia, their prime significance of course is national significance, and that's where their funding is directed and their community awards'. This means that it is very difficult for small museums to 'make a strong enough case to actually get that funding through the NLA' (Reynolds 2020). Even if funding were accessible, items of likely national significance are not necessarily those which the Yackandandah Museum and Historical Society, and other collections, wish to focus conservation attention on. The Arts Tasmania Roving Curators identified 'low levels of funding/availability of grants in Tasmania for capital assistance', explaining that collections would be more able to mitigate risks with 'grant funding available to support the sector from different levels of government' (Smith & Macno 2020). University collections also 'fall between the cracks' of funding, as Caine Chennatt (2020) reported, 'between the arts sector or the cultural sector and the higher ed sector'.

It also presents an issue for under-resourced collections in urban areas, such as the Mission to Seafarers in Melbourne. An idea raised by Jay Miller would see collections receiving a flexible annual grant for employing staff or purchasing equipment; this might encourage further in-kind donations to aid funding of conservation projects. Separately to the need for ongoing funding for staffing, future policy will also need to consider the need for resources for storage, housing, equipment and other materials.

Preparing for and responding to disasters

The scale and impact of disasters affecting collections requires a coordinated national approach. As shown in Chapter 2, the process of engaging in conservation can also be beneficial for communities post-disaster. There is great potential for further research to be undertaken in connecting knowledge about the social benefits of conservation with research in the field of disasters and community wellbeing (Gibbs et al. 2015). The final report of the *Beyond Bushfires: Community, Resilience and Recovery* study, which looked at the impacts of the Black Saturday and related bushfires of February 2009 on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of affected communities, directed several recommendations to government and service providers (Gibbs et al. 2016).[158] Two of the recommendations – to invest in community groups 'as critical influences on social connection and individual and community level recovery, and to promote inclusion and facilitate wide participation', and to 'prioritise restoration of community parks and recreation facilities as an important post-disaster support to mental health and wellbeing' (Gibbs et al. 2016, p. 23) – suggest a possible place for culture and community heritage conservation in bushfire recovery. The link has been made more explicitly in research elsewhere. For instance, in a PhD thesis that looked at responses to four disasters in Australia, Margaret Moreton (2016) has identified 'strong attachment to local history' as a factor that supports community recovery post-disaster (p. 157). Research from the Recovery Capitals (ReCap) project – based in part on data and findings from the *Beyond Bushfires* study – includes heritage in its description of cultural capital as an element of disaster recovery. The 'cultural factors' compiled by the study authors which enable 'some communities to fare relatively well in recovery' align with the impacts of conservation found in Chapter 8:

> …cultural cohesion, common narratives of shared history, sense of collective identity, shared meaning-making and cultural strategies. In particular, the shared histories and close ties that characterise many migrant and Indigenous communities have the potential to support resilience. However, external forces during recovery may degrade this cultural capital or [inhibit] its use in recovery. (Quinn et al. 2020, p. 14)

The need for disaster preparedness, response and recovery to be addressed in any future national conservation policy only became clearer over the course of my research. In

[158] A continuation of this study, *10 Years Beyond Bushfires*, began at the Centre for Health Equity at the University of Melbourne in 2019 to track changes in people's experiences over time.

addition to the examples given in Chapter 2, interviews with Christine Ianna and Johanna Garnett proffered more ideas about what could be done in Australia, such as the benefits of investing in training compared to the cost of responding to disasters, and the need for an overarching national plan. On this last point, Christine commented that training and networking in disaster preparedness does not need to be expensive, but could be used in small communities to bring people together from different organisations and collections. Linking in to the findings of Chapter 2, Christine also called for a reconceptualisation of 'preventive conservation and disaster preparedness to not just focus on that particular sector [of collections] – let's expand it and consider it as social support' (Ianna 2019). Johanna Garnett, an expert in disasters and resilience, gave suggestions for how the emergency management and culture heritage sectors could be better integrated. For example, training SES volunteers in every unit in basic preventive conservation could help in the immediate aftermath of disasters; on a larger scale, Johanna mentioned the possibility of attaching cultural heritage experts to each of the state emergency committees (Garnett 2020). Better communication between the two sectors is also key, as is the timing of any conservation intervention post-disaster, when it can take a long time for communities to be ready for engagement with external support and services.

Advocacy and raising the profile of collections and conservation

Another potential outcome of a new national policy for conservation would be to increase the profile of collections, both within their organisations and in the government and broader public sphere. While for some respondents, there was support – whether in terms of security, coordinated disaster response, or funding – to be obtained from their overarching organisations, others reported misperceptions of the role and purpose of collections, or problems that might be remediable with the right institutional support.

In some sectors, such as hospital heritage, there is no dedicated funding available either internally or externally. In large institutions, this means that the needs of heritage collections can be invisible among competing priorities, as Barbara Cytowicz (2020) explained: 'people do value it, but it often falls down the list in terms of if we're talking about development and buildings and things like that'. To counter situations where 'the business development is invariably given higher priority than heritage', Barbara proposed that more dedicated funding, combined with 'stronger priorities and protections' for heritage, 'might put a higher priority on it and emphasise its importance' (Cytowicz 2020). Barbara also raised the issue particular to hospitals of a disjunct between the requirements for accreditation – which involve high standards of hygiene and efficiency for buildings and their contents – and the existence of heritage buildings, objects and

collections. In response, she posited the development of state government policies and heritage council guidelines on the retention of movable heritage; a centralised point-of-call where small collections could seek help in case of emergency; and a focus on 'big picture work' like that undertaken by the former Collections Council of Australia (Cytowicz 2020).

In other sectors, respondents echoed Barbara's suggestions. To begin to mitigate the risks endemic to audiovisual collections, Daniel Featherstone argued that what is needed is:

> …advocacy to government, which is that we need money to do this – none of this can be done with available resources. It's just such a huge amount of work, and requires special equipment and storage facilities and staff to do that work, so having a dedicated fund for archiving is a really critical part of the puzzle. (Featherstone 2020)

Advocacy within organisations is also important, as Cathy ter Bogt (2019) explored in her interview:

> In our institutions or wherever we work, we need to be profiling, we need to sell ourselves to our own institutions and get them to realise that it's important before government will even understand what it is we do. I do think that's a big barrier… resourcing does come into that because here, for example, we spend so much time just delivering loans, exhibitions, last minute requests, we don't have much time to sit around and really make a difference and put in training packages for all staff or just do all the stuff that we should be doing, that would raise our profile, and would care for the collection. (ter Bogt 2019)

The issue was also addressed in interviews with private collectors who were particularly concerned about ongoing stewardship and sharing the benefits of their collections with others, including researchers. However, raising the profile of private collections must be measured against privacy concerns.

Mutual support and the distributed cultural record

Following on from advocacy, another finding to be recognised in future policy is the necessity of strong relationships between collections, institutions and levels of government. The benefits of a 'more articulated partnership [or] relationship' between

bigger institutions and small collections could be realised in emergency or disaster contexts (Cytowicz 2020). Kirsten and Daniel – both working with collections of digital and audiovisual media held by Indigenous Australians – concurred, but added the caveat that such a relationship must be more equitable than is often the case with outreach models. For Kirsten, 'a really big radical move' is necessary for institutions to 'really change the way they operate'; rather than 'someone going out somewhere for a week and doing a bit of work here and there', the focus should be on developing appropriate 'infrastructure and workforce' to enable materials to be held and preserved locally (Thorpe 2020). This intersects with the issue of intellectual property and ownership of materials raised by Daniel, who commented:

> At this stage, the government are still very focused on institutional collections, and community collections haven't really been seen as part of the funding pie. So we've worked closely with some of the major institutions, and have really pushed the concept of a national distributed collection where major institutions don't own and manage all of the content, but can actually support the frameworks and the infrastructure around collections being held all across the country, and smaller organisations having capacity to manage their collections as well. (Featherstone 2020)

In the absence of overarching national conservation or cultural policy, there are discrepancies in terms of what kinds of heritage are managed and supported by different levels of government. As an entrenched issue in the 'administration of heritage policy', it has also been characterised by Throsby (2018) as a 'lack of coordination between jurisdictions, such that there is often inconsistency or confusion regarding obligations and requirements relating to heritage protection at different levels' (p. 59). Working with regional collections in Queensland, Melanie Piddocke (2019) has found that 'local governments have more awareness of the value of these collections than the state government'. Moreover, in Queensland and in other states, 'what funding is available tends to be more around preservation of built heritage rather than movable heritage, even if that built heritage has significant movable heritage associated with it' (Piddocke 2019). This connects with an idea raised by Tilly James[159] for paid positions with regional councils to support volunteer-run collections. From her position, Tilly – like respondents in other states such as Susan and Amanda – has observed that the nature of volunteering is changing, with fewer volunteers or volunteers who prefer intermittent

[159] Pseudonym used.

rather than ongoing work. As Tilly explained, however, there is then a need for someone to coordinate and manage volunteers in an ongoing capacity:

> I think if we want to keep these collections in some of these areas then we need to think quite creatively about who's managing them, who's responsible for them, and whether or not there's possibilities for sharing responsibility across some of the groups. (James 2019)

Melissa Smith and Veronica Macno suggested that consensus must be attained from each state and territory for a national policy to be successful, as well as 'appropriate input and consultation from conservation and museum peak bodies, the museum sector and be endorsed/supported by appropriate levels of government' (2020).

Digital preservation and materials

Future policy will also need to respond to the specific requirements of digital preservation and preserving digital materials. The urgent need to digitise magnetic tape collections has been explored in Chapter 8, and in almost every interview respondents expressed an understanding of the dual benefits of digitisation to preserve materials, and to make them more accessible. In her interview, Rachel Spano focused on the need to engage private collectors in digitisation and collection management. One of the factors limiting engagement with these types of collections is that family history tends to be undervalued, and 'some people don't put a lot of value on the things that they have or the contributions that they make, because they don't think they're important enough or they're not significant' (Spano 2020). Intersecting with the issue of the fallibilities in consumer digital technologies, Rachel believes that 'there may be potentially a big gap in our social history, because people at home in their day to day life don't think that their own photos on their phone are very important' (Spano 2020).

Indigenous collections

Respondents who work with Indigenous Australian cultural materials suggested several ways in which future policy could support their needs. For Kirsten, the 'uniqueness of Aboriginal cultural centres and community centres' that hold cultural materials means that 'we have to bring in a whole other element of reparations and truth telling… I'd be quite excited to see public policy that spoke to that' (Thorpe 2020). Appropriate digital infrastructure, data privacy, and provisions for access are necessary for materials to be held locally in communities. Kirsten also stated that such policy needs to be 'an actual

handing over [of cultural materials] to people' to avoid repeating past practices which make cultural materials less accessible to the communities to which they belong.

Similarly, Shaun Angeles called for 'more support and more resources put into community based facilities [and] storage facilities' (2020). Using the example of the national Indigenous Repatriation Program, which provides funding to major museums in Australia to undertake research in repatriation, and repatriate materials to custodians, Shaun explained that 'having that sort of a program federally funded really elevates this cause' (Angeles 2020). As an effect of the program, Indigenous elders are also recognised as specialists and experts in this field; there are only 'a select few around the world who are the only people who can understand and enrich collections' (Angeles 2020).

Regional collections

For policy to support collections in regional and remote areas of Australia, there are several points to consider. Overly prescriptive policy is to be avoided, as it will alienate those at smaller collections; Amanda James called for flexible policy that 'recognises that there are many different ways of doing conservation' (2020). Many regional collections also experience geographic isolation that affects their access to conservation resources, training and services. Variation in the conditions and supports available at different regional collections must also be taken into account, as Wayne Doubleday pointed out:

> …we are regional, but we're quite fortunate in the fact that we do have those supports in place for us through the State Archives NSW or the university. I know that there would be a lot of smaller collections, be they archival, artworks or museum collections, that are being looked after by historical societies, for example, that just don't have either the level of expertise, or the level of support that we do. (Doubleday 2020)

Improving the condition of regional collections will subsequently have positive effects for major collecting institutions, such as the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, when they acquire items. Sandra Yee explored how 'grassroots education' in preventive conservation and documentation for regional museums could improve the condition and provenance of items.

A further aspect to consider under this theme arose in my interview with Nick Thieberger, who spoke of the need for a 'cultural policy that recognised Australia's place in the region as well' (2020). Unlike other collecting institutions, PARADISEC looks

beyond Australia to collections in its geopolitical region. While this could be framed in terms of soft diplomacy, Nick reported that federal agencies continue to miss the potential of funding work to help 'small cultural agencies to preserve their collections' in neighbouring countries (Thieberger 2020).

Non-policy influences on conservation

Even in the absence of overarching national policy, collections are being conserved and community needs met due to the decisions and actions of different people at the individual level in a variety of circumstances. Across Chapters 6–8, examples proliferate of how people working with collections preserve significant items, undertake preventive conservation, mitigate risks, and share their collections with the public; all of which are achieved in a highly unfavourable policy environment. A further dialectical tension is important to acknowledge, appearing between top-down policy approaches, and what is able to be achieved on the ground even without the greater support that policy might enable.

In this vein, when asked for their thoughts on a future national conservation policy, some respondents expressed dissenting views on the need for such a policy, or its likely effectiveness. The Private Collection Custodian is of the opinion that resources are widely available for those wishing to preserve their collections at home, and that 'some initiative needs to be taken by collectors in relation to understanding the preservation needs of collections', as there are 'simple methods for safely caring for materials at home' (BB 2020). Having advised other custodians in the past, she sees a role for more custodians to share their experiences in this way, for instance in recommending affordable but archival quality materials that are accessible to the general public.

There were also contrasting viewpoints among those working with established collections. For the Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation, which has a secure private funding base, Neil Pollock stated that 'I don't know if [policy] is so relevant for us because I don't think we need public funding' (2020). Rather, standards and guidelines published by larger collecting institutions are of more practical use. Simon Gregg at the Gippsland Art Gallery also felt that his collection was well-supported, in this case by the Victorian state government, who through 'Creative Victoria are very supportive of our regional collections, and they're doing what they can to support us in terms of maintaining them and helping them to grow and sharing them as well, so people can access them' (Gregg 2020). At the Chifley Library at ANU, Roxanne Missingham added that centralising conservation or funding for digitisation must be balanced by its

opportunistic nature: 'we can't control it, and we shouldn't seek to control it' (Missingham & Jenks 2019).

Of these examples, only one – Gippsland Art Gallery – is located in a regional area. That the other collections mentioned are based in major cities – Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra – is possibly a contributing factor to this variation in the data. With relatively secure access to conservation services and other supports, their perception of need, as well as their actual need, may be lower. The situation at Gippsland Art Gallery, by comparison, exemplifies the point made above about happenstance. Simon explained that:

> In a way we're lucky that our collection has never been seen as a great asset so much before I came in. I've always been a very collections-focused person so I've really used the collection and I've drawn on it for exhibitions, much more so than anyone before me. I think when I went through the collection initially, I found that it basically just hadn't been touched. A lot of it, for decades, it was dusted, and that was about it. So that has kind of helped save it in a way too because it hasn't been altered or mismanaged. It's just kind of been left to sit and gather dust. (Gregg 2020)

In the absence of national policy, there is a lack of clarity in how governments at different levels determine their strategic priorities in arts and culture. The next section examines a variety of cultural measures and indicators to propose a clearer way forward.

Section three: indicators for conservation

As is well-known, collections contribute to aspects of society including education, health, wellbeing and community connectedness. Growing interest in social impact is driving changes in collections, through accessibility programming, engagement and preservation strategies that foreground how collections affect people and communities. Understanding the social value of arts, culture and heritage is also receiving renewed attention in research, particularly around new ways of quantifying social impact. Research in a range of fields, including museology, psychology, education, and preventative health, has uncovered strong evidence for specific areas of demonstrable social impact for museums. For example, a ten-year longitudinal study into ageing published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* shows that frequent visits to museums reduces the risk of dementia (Fancourt, Steptoe & Cadar 2018). Examples in my own research support these findings through qualitative methodologies, and one respondent, Rhonda

Davis at Macquarie University, utilises her collection in an Art and Object Engagement Program for people living with dementia.

Following, in Chapter 2, an elucidation of the historical distinction between intrinsic and instrumental forms of value, the argument was made that both forms are at play in conservation practice, but tend to be taken as self-evident. This produces a gap between anecdotal accounts of conservation's value, and a full understanding of its place in relation to the public good and other policy domains. To work towards such an understanding, this section commences an analysis of the indicators of the value of conservation with a focus on wellbeing indicator frameworks. It also presents a critical study of the concept of impact and the metrics of culture, wherein the instrumentalist approach that requires culture to be linked to quantifiable outcomes is challenged. The impacts of conservation gathered in my research interviews are summarised to demonstrate that conservation's role in enhancing collection access, and thus delivering social benefits, is particularly well-understood in Australian regions and in different Indigenous communities.

Wellbeing indicators

Since World War Two, the gross domestic product (GDP) of a nation has been used to measure its economic progress. At the same time, the GDP has become a proxy measure of social wellbeing, despite the fact that, as Kenny et al. (2019) point out, it was never even 'intended to be a measure of economic wellbeing', but became so 'based on the underlying assumption that increased marketed economic activity is linked to increased wellbeing, and that growth in GDP is equivalent to growth in "progress"' (p. 1). In addition to its failure to account for social progress, the 'economic activity' tracked by the GDP is often deleterious to the wellbeing of humans, other species, and the planet. From 1976, when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) first looked at measuring wellbeing through social statistics or indicators, there has been a shift to developing alternatives to the GDP. The need for this become more pronounced in the period after the Global Financial Crisis, when 'a number of international research bodies stressed the purpose and shortcomings of economic indicators for the measurement of progress' (Reeve et al. 2016, p. 115). It is in this context that other indicator frameworks have been proposed to measure changes in social wellbeing.

In Australia, these alternative indices include the *Genuine Progress Indicator* (Hamilton & Saddler 1997; updated several times including by Kenny et al. 2019); *Australian Unity*

Wellbeing Index (Cummins et al. 2001); *Measures of Australia's Progress* (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002–2013); *Australia's Social Pulse* (Reeve et al. 2016); and the *Australian National Development Index* (ongoing). There are also population specific frameworks such as the *Interplay wellbeing framework, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders* (Cairney et al. 2017). Not all of these remain current, however: the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP)* was discontinued in 2014.

Cultural indicators

In this context, the research problem has arisen of how to understand and measure the social impact of arts, culture and heritage. While reports on economic impact also demonstrate how these fields contribute to positive change via measurable outcomes,[160] there is a need to counter the 'overreliance', as Throsby terms it, on economic outcomes of the arts through which cultural policy has become undistinguishable from economic policy (2018, pp. 7-8). Two factors identified by Emma Blomkamp (2015) that influence the uptake of cultural indicators are a bias towards the 'great symbolic power' of numbers and reliance on quantitative measurement, and the rise of 'evidence-based policy' and theories of governance (pp. 12-13).

Many of the alternative indices incorporate indicators of cultural progress, or cultural development (see Table 9.1, Appendix 1). They are also found in separate sets of cultural indicators which have been developed from the 1970s onwards, when UNESCO first put forward a paper on *Indicator based Classification, Grouping and Statistical Analysis of the 25 Least Developed Countries* (1974). For the area of cultural development, indicators were proposed of quantified collective facilities (e.g. number of books in public libraries), quantified individual facilities (e.g. time devoted to cultural activities), indicators of artistic production, and state cultural policies (e.g. proportion of the national budget devoted to cultural activities) (UNESCO 1974, pp. 45-46). The authors acknowledged the practical and conceptual difficulties of producing cultural indicators, writing:

> In the case of cultural indicators the reliability of statistical data is not the only factor involved. What raises greater problems is the precise delimitation of what is being measured and subsequently the choice of a set of representational figures. A cultural indicator is the quantifiable expression of a cultural variable. (UNESCO 1974, p. 45)

[160] See, for example, *Contribution of the Arts and Culture Industry to the UK Economy* (Centre for Economics and Business Research 2019) and, in Australia, *Measuring the Economic Value of Cultural and Creative Industries – Statistics Working Group of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers* (Commonwealth of Australia 2018).

This problem of identifying and agreeing upon the appropriate cultural variables to measure remains unresolved in the twenty-first century, despite the proliferation of models listed in Table 9.2 (Appendix 1). A subsidiary problem of how to transform subjective experiences of art and culture into quantifiable outcomes also eludes final determination.

Critique of metrics and indicators

The reliance on quantitative data and impact measures in indicator frameworks has, however, been questioned (Adkins & Lury 2012; Onyx 2014). Explaining that 'metrics are the means by which data can be used to ascertain value' (pp. 9-10), the sociologist David Beer (2016) has argued that metrics can be wielded by those in power 'to limit, to define value, and to contain the social, bodily and human life' (p. 40). What is often elided in the publication of high-level indicators is the politics of measurement to which Beer refers, and how choices about what to measure, and how to measure it, shape the statistics or metrics that are produced as a result.

Furthermore, rather than leading to greater support for the arts and culture in and of themselves, the push towards evidence-based metrics often ends up prioritising economic concerns above all else. In 1988, John Pick warned that:

> The danger… is that "policy-making" will boil down to being a simple question of how *the* "arts industry" is to be "funded". Then all questions about the nature of creativity, about interpretation and criticism, about freedom and complexity, about diversity and choice, about value and about excellence will take second place to the supposed higher truths of economics. (p. xi)

Twenty-five years later, Claire Bishop (2013) added this to the critique of the circular logic of metrics:

> Neoliberalism's subordination of culture to economic value denigrates not only museums but the humanities more broadly, whose own systems of assessment increasingly have to justify themselves according to metrics (grant-income revenue, economic impact, citation as a measure of influence). (pp. 61-62)

When the arts, culture or heritage are co-opted to serve economics ends via the quantification of value, there is a missed opportunity to develop policies that speak to

other issues. For conservation, this could entail looking at the range of policy needs identified in the second section of this chapter – disaster preparation and response; advocacy for collections and conservation; mutual support across levels of government and different collecting organisations; digital preservation; and specific measures for Indigenous and regional or remote collections – as well as policy measures for employment conditions, education and access, regulation and legislation for movable heritage, sustainability, and discussions around public benefits, cultural rights and justice.

Applying wellbeing and cultural indicator frameworks to conservation

Bearing the above critiques in mind, it still seems a worthwhile exercise to identify common indicators used for measuring the impact of heritage, arts and culture, and to suggest how such measures may be adapted to understanding the impact of conservation. This approach was suggested by Coutts and Wallace (2016) in a report for the OECD and Carnegie UK Trust:

> A typical starting point for wellbeing policy and measurement is to develop a theoretical framework. Also, a review of wellbeing policy and indicator development elsewhere can provide a basis for a new framework. Then indicators are sought which closely relate to those domains. (p. 15)

As a theoretical framework has been developed in the preceding chapters of this thesis, the next stage is to collate and analyse a range of indicator frameworks to aggregate findings relating to indicators for heritage, arts and culture. First, wellbeing indicator frameworks were assessed to identify cultural measures. In *Australia's Social Pulse* (2016), Reeve et al. have synthesised recurring indicators across 22 Australian and international reports. They found the following domains to be in common across the various reports: education, employment, health, disability, living standards, housing and homelessness, social cohesion and life satisfaction (Reeve et al. 2016, p. 10). To avoid replicating this thorough work, the analysis focused on indicators which are specific to heritage, arts and culture, with the exclusion of frameworks which did not incorporate cultural indicators. The wellbeing indicator frameworks analysed are listed in Table 9.1, Appendix 1.

Second, a set of specifically cultural indicators were assessed. Many different models have been proposed for identifying, measuring and assessing social impact and value in relation to arts, culture and heritage. The cultural measures included in a set of such

models are listed in Table 9.2, Appendix 1. Those that solely examine economic impact have been excluded.[161]

The measures in each set of indicators were then synthesised to produce 15 common categories of cultural measures. In developing a method for applying these to conservation, it was necessary to separate the measures into two types: (a) internal measures of progress in the Australian conservation field, and (b) external measures of conservation's impact on other domains. In category (a), the following measures were found: collections-based indicators; support for conservation; and people working or volunteering in conservation. These measures tended to utilise quantitative data. In category (b), drawing upon a blend of quantitative and qualitative forms of data, the following measures were identified: culture and cultural identity; education and knowledge transmission; participation and engagement; equity and diversity; artistic and creativity impacts; social impacts; health and wellbeing; environment and place; economic impact; global impact; Indigenous Australian cultural materials and heritage; and broad instrumental effects.

a) Internal conservation indicators

1. Collections-based indicators:
    - Percentage treated of total items requiring treatment
    - Number and type of collections
    - Preventive and planning, e.g. prevalence of disaster management plans
    - Number and type of conservation organisations
    - Level of digitisation and digital preservation
    - Cataloguing, conservation and digitisation backlogs
    - Number of publications
2. Support for conservation:
    - Expenditure by collections on conservation
    - Expenditure by government and private support on conservation
    - Existence of cultural funding legislation
    - Existence of policies and measures to support conservation
    - Policy-making is informed and involves multiple public bodies
3. People working or volunteering in conservation:
    - The number of people employed
    - The number of people volunteering

[161] For example, *Measuring the Economic Value of Cultural and Creative Industries – Statistics Working Group of the Meeting of Cultural Ministers* (Commonwealth of Australia 2018).

- Median incomes

b) External conservation indicators

4. Culture and cultural identity:
    - Conservation and the maintenance of cultural identity
    - Cultural inclusion
    - Enabling practicing culture and cultural expression
5. Education and knowledge transmission:
    - Number of students and education visits
    - Shaping reflective individuals, understanding of history
    - Object handling
    - Developing skills (in language and culture)
    - Intergenerational transfer of knowledge
6. Participation and engagement:
    - Attendance at collections
    - Access and use of collections
    - Opportunity to participate and rates of participation
    - Digital engagement
    - Support for people to engage with conservation
    - Perceptions or feelings about conservation, what needs are being met, how conservation benefits them
7. Equity and diversity:
    - Existence of policies that promote equity and diversity in conservation
    - Evaluation of levels of representation, participation and access
    - Policies and measures facilitate access to diverse cultural expressions
    - Policies and measures support equity in the distribution of cultural resources and inclusive access to such resources
    - National policies and plans include action lines to support diverse cultural expressions
    - Availability of grants and funding
    - Diversity of forms of conservation appreciated
    - Existence of barriers to conservation
8. Artistic and creativity impacts:
    - Links between conservation, artistic expression and creation
    - Policies and measures support creativity, promote and protect freedoms of creation and expression and participation in cultural life

- Policies and measures promote and protect the social and economic rights of artists and cultural professionals

9. Social impacts:
    - Social engagement, interaction
    - Reminiscence, connecting, sharing experiences
    - Connection, belonging, identity
    - Resilience
    - Social cohesion
    - Community engagement
    - Sense of community, shared identity, active citizenship
    - Reduction in systemic discrimination
    - Sense of belonging to a shared cultural heritage
10. Health and wellbeing
    - Improving health and wellbeing
    - Self-esteem, self-expression
    - Dementia programming in museums
    - Object handling
    - Experience of leisure, or the meaning it holds for people in relation to quality of life
11. Environment and place:
    - Reducing regional disparities
    - Conservation and identification with place, attachment to place
12. Economic impact:
    - Household expenditure
    - Visitor expenditure
    - Investment in conservation
    - Growth of sector
13. Global impact:
    - Global reach (cultural exports)
    - Interest in foreign cultures
    - Peace-building and healing
14. Indigenous Australian cultural heritage and materials:
    - Conservation and language preservation
    - Country and connection to country
    - Indigenous beliefs and knowledge
    - Self-determination and leadership
    - Kinship and community

15. Broad instrumental effects
    - On other cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions
    - Conservation participation in other state/federal programs
    - Civic/conservation partnerships
    - Using cultural and linguistic interventions to address wider societal issues

The rationale for examining the place for conservation in cultural indicator models is due to the way in which it is frequently linked to different social benefits, such as 'identity formation, sense of connectedness, mental health and wellbeing' (University of Gothenburg 2018). The influence of cultural heritage is said to extend to 'enhancing social inclusion, developing intercultural dialogue, shaping identity of a territory, improving quality of the environment, providing social cohesion' (Dümcke & Gnedovsky 2013, p. 7). Socio-economic values developed by the ICOM-CC Working Group History and Theory in 2013, and extended by Iwona Szmelter (2013; 2016), include economic value (including social welfare); educational value; functional or use value; social value (focussed on jobs, regional identity, participation); cultural identity value; operational or administrative value; newness value; situational or associational value; value of cultivating local crafts and material processes and systems (Szmelter 2016, pp. 25-26).

Considered in light of the theoretical argument of this thesis – that the public value of conservation lies in its contributions to, and enablement of, social justice – the use of indicators and metrics may risk the reproduction of forms of cultural hegemony. This is in large part due to the history and purpose of indicator models. Developing out of the need to create alternatives to economic measures such as the GDP for tracking the social progress and wellbeing of nations, they can be seen to promote a nationalist agenda and to uphold 'national identity' as an unquestioned good.[162] The linguistic emphasis in many indicator models on ideas of innovation, progress and growth also bears closer examination; as Justin O'Connor posits, policies must move beyond facile recommendations to 'give a sense of what "growth" might mean. What kind of growth? And to what end?' (2016, p. 47). Growth in one place is usually at the expense of wellbeing in another, as the work of political geographers on uneven geographical development and distribution of labour has consistently shown (Harvey 1982, 2006; Smith 1982, 2008; Massey 1995). Equity and diversity measures hold promise for encouraging accountability in policy, but sit uneasily within the larger project of cultural

[162] This can be seen in the language of texts such as *Telling Australia's story – and why it's important: Report on the Inquiry into Canberra's National Institutions* (Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories 2019). The 'story' is implicitly singular.

indicators to reproduce forms of symbolic capital. As became clear in Chapter 3, Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) concept of cultural capital can be glossed in two ways in relation to conservation: first, it applies to how conservation is essential for ensuring safe access to cultural materials, and second, how when access to conservation is impeded by social inequity and other factors, some individuals and communities are excluded from the benefits or forms of capital (the list of 'external conservation indicators') that flow from collections. This results in 'the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these classes' (Bourdieu 1973, p. 56), or the continued accumulation of conservation knowledge, skills and resources in collections that have historically benefitted from access to conservation.

The path towards this analysis of indicator models and their applicability to conservation was driven by the question of how to identify and measure the impact of conservation on other domains in order to argue for greater provision of conservation services. Indicator models, with their methodologies for categorising and quantifying change in society, offer one way of communicating need and value in policy. This is supported by the other forms of data and evidence mobilised in this thesis, from the theoretical arguments of Part 1, through the large-scale mapping studies of Part 2, and the qualitative case study interviews of Part 3. While the formal evidence base for the social impact of museums is still in an early stage of development, this thesis has demonstrated how conservation's role in enhancing collection access, and thus delivering social benefits, is well-understood across Australia, particularly in regional and remote areas and with different Indigenous collections and communities. Such data provides a complement to studies from the sectors of healthcare, and disaster response and recovery, that develop a rigorous evidence base for the transferrable impact of art, culture and heritage (Thomson et al. 2012; Moreton 2016; Quinn et al. 2020). As Leigh Tabrett (2014) has suggested, where there is 'little formal evidence available', then 'qualitative measures, including personal stories about cultural encounters and experiences, need to be collected and reported' (p. 90). The decision to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews – with their generative meanderings – rather than pose strictly quantitative questions means that the interview data is less readily adapted for indicators. What it has produced, though, is a rich collection of narratives and testimonies from people working with conservation beyond the mainstream collecting institutions.

In adapting cultural indicators to the field of conservation, a further step needs to be taken that is beyond the scope of this research: to analyse the indicator measures in Tables 9.1 and 9.2, Appendix 1, in terms of what data has been used in their

development so that new indicators relevant to conservation can be devised based on what kind of data the field can contribute. This would enable conservation to be properly reflected in national wellbeing indicator frameworks interlinked with a new national conservation policy. From this, the work begun here could be furthered in several ways. For example, a democratic process could be utilised to determine conservator indicators, similar to the Australian National Development Index; consultation could take place with experts in the Australian conservation field to identify their versions of internal and external measures; or an experimental approach could be implemented, initiating a conservation program aimed at addressing social equity, and assessing impact. Conservation is a field that studies change; policy, in the future tense, is also concerned with change. To know if change has occurred, it is necessary to have a baseline understanding of the state of conservation policy, activity, resources, and needs, as has been attempted in this thesis.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Within the dialectical framework of this thesis, the aim has been twofold: to describe present levels of access to conservation, impediments to access, and the effects of collections on communities, and to contemplate a future in which its 'normative commitments' might be realised (Douglas 2013, p. 6). There have been temporal shifts not only in the thesis's content but also in the mode of argument and the relation of the research to its subject. While a strong focus has been on reading the geographical concepts of place and location into conservation, time is implicated in both conceptions of space, and the theory and practice of conservation. The normative and the descriptive have political valences – Theodor Adorno, whose theory of negative dialectics informed the final third of this thesis, rejected utopian images of the future, or normative conceptions, for their dependence upon the ideologies of the present. Writing in Europe in the mid-twentieth century, his idea of a negative utopia is premised upon an acceptance that it 'cannot provide a blueprint for what the good life would be like, but only examines what our "damaged" life is like', through a critique sufficiently attentive 'to allow intimations of a possible, undamaged life to show through' (Jarvis 1998, p. 9). Both modalities – future-normative and present-critical – are active in this research. To argue for conservation's value, it has been necessary to imagine a future where it is more accessible; and in documenting the many needs and challenges affecting people's capacity to undertake conservation, what they are nonetheless able to achieve has shone through.

Thinking through time and space – and the imagining of possible futures – extends the limits of the ethics of conservation. Each of the thesis's three parts has contributed to the formulation of a place-based approach to conservation wherein the location or spatial framework of a collection, object or work is considered integral to its meaning or significance, posing unique risks and giving rise to spatially determined histories, trajectories and conservation approaches. Doreen Massey crystallised this relationship of place to ethics in her Hettner-Lecture in Human Geography at the University of Heidelberg in 1998. In the lecture, she offered three propositions on space: first, that it is a product of interrelations; second, that these interrelations disclose the co-existence of multiple places and voices, such that space and multiplicity can be said to depend on, and produce, each other; and third, that due to this relationality, space is not static, fixed or closed, but is always in the process of being made (Massey 1999, p. 2). Reasserting the co-constitutive nature of temporality and spatiality against theories which would oppose them, she found a logical relation between the two: '*for there to be time*, there

must be space' (Massey 1999, p. 6).[163] Her second proposition on space and multiplicity has underscored the contention that where collections are held – and where conservation takes place – matters. Collections in multiple places, reflecting multiple voices, provide evidence of the multiplicity of human experience; this is politically salient in resisting injustice. Chapter 3 drew on the work of Iris Marion Young to call for collective responsibility to be taken for conservation in order to achieve equity and justice within the field, but this adaptation of Massey's line reveals how the potential for multiplicity is inherent to a place-based theorisation of conservation.

In the two years before beginning this research, I worked in conservation and collections access at two large (national and state) collecting institutions in urban Australian locations. While this thesis has contrasted the paucity of resources available for smaller collections against institutions such as these, from my own experience I know that even where conservation appears well-supported and embedded, its position may be precarious. My awareness of the dialectical tension at the heart of this thesis grew out of these observations. The contradiction lies in the co-existence of the following points:

- Access to conservation, and thus to cultural heritage, is beneficial to individuals and communities
- A lack of access leads to loss, both of material objects and of economic capital, social connection, and cultural identity
- Socio-economic inequities impede access to conservation in Australia, particularly in areas beyond the major cities

Rather than attempt to resolve the gap between these statements, implementing a dialectical framework meant that the tension could be navigated, even if not fully resolved. Methodologies have been tested, and evidence produced, to substantiate each of the three claims. A place-based analysis has shown the implications of impact, loss and access to conservation to be heightened for people living in regional and remote areas of Australia; Indigenous collections; and collections with limited prior engagement with conservation. Building on a wide array of studies, reports, policies and theoretical works – and the experiences of those working with collections – it is hoped that this model for embedding conservation within collections, communities and places will be further extended in the future.

[163] Italics in original.

Throughout the thesis, the argument has been made that community collections, formed in response to the needs of particular places, require a decentralised policy approach that prioritises the embedding of conservation within collections. Value, benefit, equity and access – theorised in Part 1 – have then been given form in the quantitative and qualitative case studies of Part 2 and 3. Access to conservation, which improves the material stability and thus the ongoing accessibility of collections, has a multitude of positive effects, whether social, cultural, economic, educational, or health-related. By documenting these benefits in qualitative interviews, and interrogating levels of access through statistical mapping studies, an important precedent has been established for broadening access to conservation.

Part 1 established a conceptual basis for this argument. Excavating the history of the concept of value in conservation and heritage, Chapter 2 proposed a shift away from the fixing of value in objects or collections towards understanding the social value of conservation as a process. The method of critical discourse analysis was applied to canonical works by Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, Morris, Riegl and Brandi, and to doctrinal texts such as charters. Identifying certain aspects of the dialectical relationship between discourse and practice, this analysis revealed language to be a mediating factor even in an object-oriented field. The centrality of language was further highlighted through case vignettes of interviews held with museum workers about their experiences working in post-disaster contexts in Queensland, where the social value of conservation lies not in the objects themselves, but in the communities that form around collections, and in the opportunity for rebuilding – creating something new to respond to the past.

In Chapter 3, a theoretical account was also developed of the concepts of social equity, social justice and the public good. Drawing on theorists of ethical philosophy and political geography – Young, Sypnowich and Harvey – an account of the normative process of conservation was developed. A cultural rights approach to heritage was shown to be limited by its language of neutrality, and following Sypnowich, it was posited that a values-informed position needs to be taken in relation to histories of structural injustice. The social need for conservation was considered in relation to its proximity to other 'necessary needs' proposed by Marx. The argument that forms of social inequity function as indirect risk factors for heritage was grounded in a case vignette of issues affecting community collections in Tasmania. Young's principle of shared responsibility was raised as a way of countering the effects of social inequity on collections conservation.

Part 2 introduced quantitative methodologies to the study of access to conservation and risks to collections. Building on the theories developed in Part 1, in Chapter 4 the issue of social inequity was focused through a case study of spatial or geographical barriers to the accessibility of conservation services across Australia. A spatial distribution analysis was applied to longitudinal funding data from the Community Heritage Grants program to demonstrate that the majority of projects funded were located in major cities compared to regional, remote and very remote areas. The type of project funded was also shown to vary geographically. Maps of patterns of funding distribution were produced to provide a graphical representation of the issues. The predominance of one-off project funding also undermines the idea of conservation as a process. An approach of 'access relative to need' – adopted from the public health sector – was proposed to counter the centralisation of the conservation industry and the valorisation of national significance even in a program aimed at preserving 'locally owned' collections. Theories of spatial inequality drawn from cultural geography were discussed to understand the uneven distribution of conservation capital.

Chapter 5 extended the mapping methodology to examine the relationship between risk factors to collections and climate change. Compounding the issue of spatial impediments to access to conservation – and the uptake of conservation, where access is more feasible such as in urban areas – is the uneven distribution of environmental risk. In this study, overlay maps were created that mapped the locations of two sets of collections – national, state and territory collections, and regional art galleries – against climate change projection data obtained from the CSIRO for the variables of temperature, relative humidity and rainfall (fire weather was also discussed but not mapped). The influence of changing climatic conditions on the biological risks of insect pests and mould was discussed, as well as concerns about the environmental sustainability of climate control measures in collections. This chapter's major contribution was to design, implement and test a methodology for mapping climate change factors in relation to hypothesise the geographical distribution of their effects on collections held in Australia's regions.

Part 3 turned to qualitative data, presenting, analysing and discussing a series of case study interviews. Chapter 6 began by reporting the results of 39 interviews with respondents who care for collections of cultural material across Australia. Drawing on categorical thinking, a sectoral analysis was undertaken to assess the interview results against previously identified sub-sectors of collections to produce 13 categories of collections. Setting up the in-depth analyses of Chapters 7 and 8, this chapter briefly

introduced each respondent, the collection or collections with which they worked, and discussed elements of significance. An extended thematic analysis was also included based on the coding key developed from the interview transcripts. This elicited six primary thematic categories – impact and benefit of collections; risks; mitigation of risks; access to conservation; the effects of loss on collections and their communities; and future challenges and needs – with further sub-categories. To elucidate the themes, examples were provided from each of the interviews. Conducting this analysis found dialectical tensions between value and risk, and need and benefit, to recur across several interviews, leading to the analytic mode adopted in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 7 examined the dialectical tension that arises between the impact, value and benefit of collections, and the risks they nonetheless face. Using Adorno's framework of negative dialectics, this tension was traced through three case studies of a regional museum, herbaria collections, and Indigenous community collections. Detailed examples of the co-existence of high significance and community benefit, and risks posed by different factors, were provided. Discussing the intersection of place, risk and local significance in each case study, the need to support the capacity of collections to hold and conserve materials locally was emphasised. In the dialectic of significance and risk, a third term emerged to explain what occurs at their intersection: the loss of valued cultural material. With a focus on Indigenous community collections, the impact of such losses was explored to show how the effects of loss are also unequally distributed.

Continuing the dialectical analysis, Chapter 8 looked at a second apparent contradiction from the interviews: while collections have a positive impact on their surrounding communities, unmet needs mean that they are prevented from extending these benefits to as many people as possible. Returning to the sectors identified in Chapter 6, case vignettes of collections are used to depict the tension between need and benefit. Needs included factors such as low levels of staffing and other resources; a lack of disaster preparation or training; difficulties in accessing conservation services; and the need for more digitisation, advocacy, training and funding. Types of impact linked to collections were categorised in terms of social, cultural, economic, educational and health-related benefits. Between the factors of positive impact and unmet need is the potential loss of opportunity for collections to benefit individuals and communities. The reverse was also shown to be true, with examples given of the impact of collections being furthered by addressing their conservation needs in situ.

The three parts and methodological models were brought together in Chapter 9 in a discussion of the thesis's findings. The major issues in common across the different modes of analysis were found to be the extent of risks; the lack of funding; the need for better disaster preparedness and response; and inequity impeding the public value of conservation. Arguing that the discrepancy between access to conservation, and the positive impact of collections, requires a policy-driven response, it was proposed that future policy would need to consider the following points: appropriate funding to support conservation activities; preparing for and responding to disasters; advocacy and raising the profile of collections and conservation; mutual support and the distributed cultural record; digital preservation and materials; and the particular values and needs of Indigenous and regional collections. Articulating the social value of conservation in policy could be achieved through embedding it in wellbeing and cultural indicator frameworks. Identifying 15 common categories of cultural measures, it was contended that two types are needed: (a) internal measures of progress in the Australian conservation field, and (b) external measures of conservation's impact on other domains.

Across these chapters, the initiating research questions have been fully explored:

- Can ideas of public value, and social equity and justice, be used to reconceptualise the work of conservation? Is there a philosophical and theoretical basis for this reconceptualisation?
- What techniques can be used to understand issues such as access to conservation services, and risks facing collections, in relation to the centralisation of conservation services? How can quantitative data on these issues be displayed and communicated?
- What are the experiences of people preserving collections of cultural material across Australia beyond the major collecting institutions? How are forms of value, risks, needs, and benefits described?
- How can conservation's broader public value, or its impact in other domains, be translated into policy? Do the findings suggest a way forward in terms of mobilising evidence of the public value of conservation in order to improve access?

The absence of necessary baseline data at the outset of the thesis shaped its methodological reach. By using a range of techniques – discursive, statistical, geographical, qualitative and dialectical – to respond to the questions, the aim was also to test methodologies for future research. Based on this thesis, certain aspects can now be continued:

- Adapting the mapping methodologies to other conservation research questions
- Undertaking further interviews with collection custodians and workers
- Further investigation of additional barriers to accessing conservation services
- Developing the idea of conservation indicators, designing and testing a framework that addresses the two sets of proposed indicators
- Integrating conservation and cultural heritage in emergency management and disaster response at all levels
- Assessing the impact of the 2019–20 bushfire season and the Covid-19 pandemic on small collections in Australia

The ten policy statements made by the Heritage Collections Council in 1998 as areas for work remain pertinent. Several of the domains have seen strong advances in the past two decades, such as applications of the significance framework, and training, education and skills development models. Some areas, as highlighted in this thesis, require further policy work: the need for greater access to, and knowledge about, conservation; advocacy; coordinating responses; and better integration of research and practice. In addition, the approach to understanding, theorising and communicating the impact of conservation articulated in this research could form the basis for a future national conservation policy, as it provides clear (and potentially measurable) links between conservation and the communities it serves and benefits. Policy makes effective interventions by focusing efforts, making clear recommendations, and providing a means for assessing outcomes. Addressing the systemic problems encountered at the outset of this thesis – for instance, the absence of a national database of collections – will require the resources enabled by federal policy. As a start, this research has addressed some gaps and revealed still more on the path to a new national conservation policy for Australia.

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Appendix 1: Review of indicator frameworks

Table 9.1: Assessment of measures relating to culture in wellbeing indicator frameworks

Report	Context	Cultural measures
Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics	Australia, 2001	Participation and attendance measures Work measures Time use measures Expenditure and output measures Other measures
Cultural Indicators for New Zealand	New Zealand, 2009	Cultural employment Employment in creative occupations Median incomes from creative occupations Cultural experiences Barriers to cultural experiences Household spending on cultural items Heritage protection Access to arts, culture and heritage activities and events Speakers of te reo Māori Local Content on television Māori TV ratings The importance of culture to national identity New Zealand events Grants to minority ethnic cultural groups Attendance/participation at/in ethnic cultural activities Minority culture activities Income of the cultural industries Value-added contributed by the creative industries The creative industries' proportion of total industry value-added
Canadian Index of Wellbeing	Canada, 2011	Participation in leisure, recreation, arts, and cultural activities Perceptions, or feelings about leisure activities, including why people participate, what needs are being met through participation, and how leisure and culture participation benefits them Experience of leisure, or the meaning it holds for people in relation to quality of life the provision of leisure and culture Opportunities, such as access to recreation facilities, open spaces and parks, and other arts, culture, and recreation sites

Cultural Development Network (local government)	Australia, 2013-18	Creativity stimulated Aesthetic enrichment experienced Knowledge, ideas and insight gained Diversity of cultural expression appreciated Sense of belonging to a shared cultural heritage deepened
Wales Future Generations Act	Wales, 2015	Developing skills (in language and culture) Supporting people to engage with culture Using cultural and linguistic interventions to address wider societal issues Using culture and the Welsh language as a driver for economic and environmental change Enabling our citizens to access and engage with their own and other cultures.
Interplay wellbeing framework, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	Australia, 2017	Language Ceremony Family Importance of culture Practicing culture Country Law
Vital Signs Toronto	Canada, 2017-18	Per capita funding for arts and recreation Equity in arts programming and recreational facilities Recreation wait list Workers in arts, culture and recreation Median total income of workers in sector
National Performance Framework	Scotland, ongoing	Attendance at cultural events or places of culture Participation in a cultural activity Growth in the cultural economy People working in arts and culture
Indicators Aotearoa	New Zealand, ongoing	Engagement in cultural activities Intergenerational transfer of knowledge Te reo Maori speakers
Australian National Development Index	Australia (ongoing)	'Culture, recreation and leisure' an indicator domain but no measures published to date
Mayi Kuwayu: The National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing (Mayi Kuwayu Study)	Australia (ongoing)	Country and connection to country Indigenous beliefs and knowledge cultural expression Self-determination and leadership Language Family Kinship and community Identity

Table 9.2: Assessment of measures relevant to collections and conservation within cultural indicator frameworks

Report	Context	All Measures
Vital Signs: Cultural Indicators for Australia	Australia, 2010	Cultural employment Household expenditure on cultural goods and services Visitor expenditure on cultural goods and services Government support for culture Private sector support for culture Voluntary work in arts and culture Economic contribution of cultural industries Cultural assets (# of) Talent (human capital) Cultural identity Innovation (new work/companies) Global reach (cultural exports) Cultural attendance Cultural participation Access (regional provision) Education in arts and culture
Cultural development network: arts indicators for local government	Australia, 2010	Presence of opportunities to participate in the arts Rates of participation in the arts Support for the arts Outcomes of arts participation, on cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions
Indicator Framework for Linking Historic Preservation and Community Economic Development	Phillips & Stein 2013	**Gauging:** Historic fabric Districts, structures, landmarks Distressed historic neighborhoods Rehabilitation/certified tax credits Assessed property value trends Historic district/property reinvestment Amount and type locally-owned businesses Sense of place/Identification with place/ Attachment to place **Protecting:** Historic preservation element/plan and integration with community planning Design guidelines Historic preservation commission Preservation ordinances Historic preservation survey Historic preservation staff

		Certificates and enforcement actions **Enhancing:** Participation in Main Street or other nationally sponsored programs Certified Local Government status or other certification programs Participation in other state/federal programs Number and type of historic preservation nonprofit organizations Neighborhood participation Civic/museum partnerships Incentive programs Gentrification—programs to prevent **Interfacing:** Use and access by citizens—internal, external, visible, cost Housing affordability and percent affordable historic houses Business use and types Community draw factors Community use factors Heritage/cultural interactions and skills
Indicator framework for culture and democracy	Council of Europe, 2016	**Civic – cultural participation:**[171] Artistic expression and creation Interest in foreign cultures Non-partisan involvement Online creativity Online cultural participation Passive cultural participation Students in the arts **Policy – cultural funding:** Cultural funding legislation Direct funding of culture **Policy – cultural openness:** Support and promotion of cultural diversity **Policy – cultural education:** Arts education Intercultural education **Economic – cultural industries:** Cultural industry outputs Intangible assets Size of the cultural industry

[171] I have excluded the indicators for democracy studied alongside culture in this report.

		Economic – cultural infrastructure: Size of the cultural infrastructure **Freedom and equality – cultural access and representation:** Access to cultural sites and events Public measures for equality
AHRC Cultural Value Project	UK, 2016	Shaping reflective individuals Producing engaged citizens Peace-building and healing after armed conflict Impact on cities and urban life Economic impact Improving health and wellbeing Education
Australia Council Arts Indicators	Australia, 2017-18	Engagement: website visitor numbers (to websites of National Collecting Institutions) Arts audience and attendance: attendance at Australia Council supported activities, audience reach of Screen Australia supported productions Arts education: education visits to National Collecting Institutions Collection development: number of objects in national collections Arts digitisation: objects digitised in national collections Arts development and support: number of new and culturally diverse projects and events supported
Historic England wellbeing indicators	England, 2018	**Process – volunteering:** Social engagement, self-esteem, meaning, being useful, competence **Participation – visiting:** Positive feelings, knowledge, group activities, learning **Mechanism – sharing:** Social interaction, creativity, reminiscence, connecting, sharing experiences **Healing – therapy:** Self-esteem, self-expression, making and meaning, cultural inclusion **Place – belonging:** Connection, pride, making and meaning, belonging, identity, resilience **Environment – experiencing:**

		Physical activity, fresh air, autonomy, positive feelings
Monitoring Framework of the 2005 Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions	UNESCO, 2018	**Cultural and creative sectors:**[172] Policies and measures support the development of dynamic cultural and creative sectors Policy-making is informed and involves multiple public bodies **Digital environment:** Policies and measures support digital creativity, enterprises and markets Policies and measures facilitate access to diverse cultural expressions in the digital environment **Partnering with civil society:** Measures strengthen the skills and capacities of civil society Civil society is involved in the implementation of the Convention at national and global levels **National sustainable development policies and plans:** National sustainable development policies and plans include action lines to support diverse cultural expressions Policies and measures support equity in the distribution of cultural resources and inclusive access to such resources **Gender equality:** Policies and measures promote gender equality in the culture and media sectors Monitoring systems evaluate levels of representation, participation and access of women in the culture and media sectors **Artistic freedom:** Policies and measures promote and protect freedoms of creation and expression and participation in cultural life Policies and measures promote and protect the social and economic rights of artists and cultural professionals
Contribution of the arts and culture	UK, 2019	**Quantifiable impacts:** Expenditure by museums and galleries (capital and operating)

[172] Additional areas of monitoring not listed in this table were in fields of media diversity, mobility of artists and cultural professionals, flow of cultural goods and services, treaties and agreements, and international cooperation for sustainable development.

industry to the UK economy		Collections purchase Income of institutions Public funding Donations and sponsorship Trading income Admissions income Visitor numbers Website visitors # of staff, volunteers, friends # of objects loaned Publications **Non-quantifiable objectives:** Understanding of history Knowledge propagation Education Social cohesion Knowledge transmission Instrumentalisation Nation promotion Role of museums and galleries
Museums Galleries Scotland	Scotland, 2021	Dementia programming in museums Object handling Older visitors
Stats and stories: the impact of the arts in regional Australia	Australia, n.d.	**Community connectedness:** Individual community health, community engagement, volunteering **Economic regeneration:** Place marketing, widening opportunities, encouraging investment, growing the economy, improving people's lives, tackling disadvantage, community strategy and policy, tackling industrial decline **Social inclusion:** Feeling valued, respecting differences, human rights and moral imperatives, policies and programs, removing barriers to participation, systemic discrimination, crime reduction **Civic pride:** Sense of community, well-being, outward improvement in community, shared identity, events bringing people together, active citizenship **Regional development:**

		Reducing regional disparities, supporting economic activities, infrastructure development, inward investing, new approaches to regional development

Appendix 2: Interview questions

1. Can you provide a brief description of your role and the type/s of collection/s with which you work?
2. Who are the custodians of the collection, or what is its context (held in community, family, etc.)?
3. What is the significance of the collection? If a significance assessment has previously been undertaken, is it possible to view this?
4. What types of materials are held in the collection?
5. What is the general condition of the collection? If a preservation needs assessment has previously been undertaken, is it possible to view this?
6. How is conservation undertaken in or for the collection, if at all? If interventive treatments are undertaken, are these done in-house or externally?
7. To what extent are disaster management plans or strategies used by the collection?
8. To what extent are other forms of preventive conservation used, e.g. pest management, HVAC systems?
9. What is the approach to digitisation of the collection?
10. Is access to external conservation services, resources, training etc. possible for your collection?
11. What are the major issues or risks you are concerned about in relation to the conservation of your collection, or for this type of collection generally?
12. What do you consider to be the best ways of mitigating these risks?
13. What would be the effect of damage or loss to your collection on the broader community that accesses it?
14. How do you think that public policy could better support conservation in your collection?
15. What community benefits do you see as being linked to your collection? E.g. social, cultural, educational, economic benefit? Are there any examples of community benefit that you would like to share?

Appendix 3: Additional methodological information, interview and transcription guidelines

As there is no national database of collections in Australia, the selection of respondents for interviews was not straightforward. However, a guiding principle was to go beyond the major collecting institutions in Australia where conservators tend to be employed or otherwise service through private practice. While the position of conservation at these bigger institutions is by no means entirely secure, the aim was to document and analyse the experiences of those working with collections at a further remove from the mainstream with relatively poor access to conservation services, resources and knowledge. In approaching potential respondents, the focus was on those working in regional areas, or states and territories with limited conservation presence; on types of collections which have limited funds available for conservation, or which lack the cultural capital necessary, even with funding, to access and engage conservation services; and with communities that have been historically neglected or negatively impacted by the arts, culture and heritage sectors. With this aim in mind, and the knowledge that every respondent to whom I spoke would add something to what is a very under-researched topic, interviews were held until it was felt that sufficient representation of locations and collection types was reached.

The respondents held different roles depending on the nature and structure of their collection. In addition to respondents who were custodians, curators, collection managers, archivists, librarians, conservators and gallery directors at single collections, several worked in an outreach, advocacy or advisory capacity to support multiple collections in a geographical area. As explained above, respondents were identified based on the factors of access to conservation; collection type; and location. Several respondents suggested other potential interview subjects; this corresponds to the technique of 'snowballing'.

Interviews were conducted in various forms. Some were held in person and recorded on an iPhone. Some were conducted remotely by phone or using Zoom software, and audio-recorded using Quicktime software on a laptop. Two respondents requested not to be recorded, and in these instances notes were taken during the interview which were later written up as the transcript; these were also checked and corrected by the respondents. Three respondents chose to supply written responses to questions. The 'live' interviews were, on average, an hour in length, and semi-structured to allow for

respondents to contribute to the direction of each interview. Respondents were given the option of receiving a copy of the transcript, and some accepted this option.

The method of semi-structured interviews enabled a broad list of topics to be discussed in depth, with the flexibility for follow-up questions to be asked based on specific responses to questions. It also allowed for respondents to deviate from the list of questions to discuss other areas of importance to them. A copy of the list of interview questions provided to participants is included in Appendix 2. To different degrees, each interview touched on the following topics: the respondent's role and collection or collections with which they work; custodians and context; significance; material types and extent; condition; access to conservation; interventive treatments of collection items; preventive conservation strategies; digitisation; major issues or risks; ways of mitigating risks; the impact of damage or loss; community benefits; and the potential for public policy to better support conservation at the collection or collections.

Transcriptions were then completed using Otter transcription software. The initial transcripts produced by the software were corrected by the thesis author. The interviews were corrected to standardise spelling and grammar, and edited to improve their legibility as written documents, while staying as close as possible to the respondent's own words. The transcripts were also edited at the beginning and end to remove unnecessary material; and on occasion sections were edited to remove identifying or confidential material at the request of the respondent, and extraneous comments by the interviewer. The full audio of each recorded interview was retained and will be held in the Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation for five years.

Prior to the conducting of interviews, respondents were provided with a copy of the interview questions, consent form, and plain language statement. Throughout the thesis, and a letter of introduction, in accordance with the requirements of the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne (Ethics ID: 1750057.2). Some interview questions were revised slightly from those listed in Appendix 2.

Quotations are attributed to respondents by their names where consent was given. One respondent requested the use of a pseudonym to protect anonymity.

Appendix 4: Coding key

Table 10.1: Impact, value and benefit of collections (Theme 1, Chapter 6)

Impact, value and benefit of collections	Value of the cultural or scientific record
	Impact for research
	Educational benefit
	Historical value
	Scientific value
	Environmental value
	Artistic value
	Cultural value
	Social value
	Value to custodian's own life
	Economic benefit
	Access to collections necessary to enable value and benefits

Table 10.2: Risks to collections (Theme 2, Chapter 6)

Risks to collections	Building and infrastructure
	Storage capacity and housing
	Pests
	Environmental risks and/or lack of environmental controls
	Water
	Fire
	Dissociation, inadequate cataloguing and/or documentation
	Handling risks
	Risks associated with digitisation
	Dust, drought and dryness
	Security
	Lighting
	Intellectual property and ownership of materials
	Social and economic risks

Table 10.3: Mitigation of risks (Theme 3, Chapter 6)

Mitigation of risks	Disaster management and response
	Storage
	Housing
	Digitisation
	Pest management
	Fire suppression

	Collection management, documentation and policies
	Light reduction
	Security
	Environmental controls and management
	Accessioning and deaccessioning strategies
	Training
	Staff knowledge and expertise
	Context of broader organisation providing support

Table 10.4: Access to conservation (Theme 4, Chapter 6)

Access to conservation	Access to conservation treatment
	Access to conservation advice
	Access to resources and materials necessary for conservation
	Access to conservation networks and professional associations
	Capacity for in-house conservation
	Engagement of external conservation services
	Involvement in conservation outreach programs
	Demonstrated use of conservation decision-making
	Demonstrated use of conservation knowledge and skills
	Repatriation as a form of conservation

Table 10.5: Effects of loss on collections and their communities (Theme 5, Chapter 6)

Effects of loss on collections and their communities	Access to collections is limited
	Physical integrity of materials
	Restrictions on use
	Loss to status as a cultural or scientific record
	Cultural impact of loss
	Personal effects of loss
	Aftermath of loss

Table 10.6: Future challenges and needs (Theme 6, Chapter 6)

Future challenges and needs	Sharing and communicating the collection
	Digitisation
	Funding

	Type of support available for conservation
	Advocacy
	Environmental and ecological sustainability
	Staffing, training and time
	Stewardship and keeping the collection together
	Conservation
	Disaster preparation
	Heritage protection
	Inequities conditioning needs

Table 10.7: Inferential codes

Perceptions	Participants' perceptions of risk/s
	Participants' understanding of value and impact
Contexts	Impact of Covid-19
	Impact of the bushfires (summer 2019/20)
Policy	Ideas for a future national conservation policy
Ideas	Presence of dialectical tensions
	Enduring importance of material collections
	Change inherent to a collection
	Benefits of keeping collections locally