

## Review Article

# Characterising Archives: A Review of Archives Survey 2007

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As the chief investigator of the Collections Council's *Conservation Survey 2006*, Veronica communicated with over 300 of Australia's archives, galleries, libraries and museums. This experience is informing the development of the Collections Council's proposed Australian Collecting Organisation Register (OzCOR).

Veronica has also contributed knowledge to several Australian Bureau of Statistics projects aimed at improving the statistical representation and characterisation of Australia's collections sector.

*Amongst collecting organisations, archives are especially difficult to identify. This makes characterisation of archival activity difficult, and the task of developing suitable questionnaires for people working in archives somewhat unenviable. In spite of these challenges, the Report on Archives Survey 2007 demonstrates the value of investing resources in quality survey work, as this survey yields useful baseline information about Australian archives.*

*This paper discusses aspects of the Report on Archives Survey 2007, and recommends that the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) and the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) build on this*

*'experimental' foundation by investigating particular matters raised in the survey methodology and results to ensure that Archives Survey 2012 yields stronger advocacy outcomes.*

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The *Report on Archives Survey 2007* is easy to read, informative, and timely. Part of the ease in reading comes from natural and honest reflection on aspects of the survey throughout the document, including survey limitations and suggestions of possible areas for further investigation in future surveys. Readability is enhanced by the use of the 'snapshot of results' and 'implications of findings' boxes, and the comprehensive appendixes supplied all the extra information I felt was needed. I am particularly grateful for the introduction to the insider term 'lone arranger'!

The four purposes and six objectives of the survey have each been achieved to a significant extent. This means that a range of interesting research questions have been raised to guide survey and other research efforts in the archives domain.

Backgrounding is helpful, and the survey methodology has been thoughtfully developed and well described. An appropriate amount of response moderation appears to have been performed, for example, re-assigning of organisation type.<sup>2</sup> I would agree with the author, however, that the offer of a prize appears to have skewed the respondent base.

Reporting of results is faithful to the dataset and clearly expressed in a format that includes a description of the aim of each question, citation of the question number, and a discussion of results and/or limitations of the question or results. I am proud to say that *Archives Survey 2007* builds on some protocols developed in the Collections Council of Australia's own survey reporting conventions.<sup>3</sup>

Valuable work in sub-sectioning the archives domain into 14 segments can be used to underpin smaller, focused surveys.

Some clear lines of advocacy emerge from this work for CAARA and ASA to take forward. Among these are observations that archives need: more skilled staff – particularly in digital archiving; more resources for

nineteenth-century photographs; more suitable storage; and improved servicing for virtual visitors – including revised policies and procedures.

Given that the work behind *Archives Survey 2007* is basically sound I would like to focus this paper on three salient points arising from the survey. These will address matters both of methodology and content that I hope may be of assistance in future work towards describing and analysing the Australian archives domain.

## 1. Defining the ‘target audience’ for future surveys

Archives tend to divide into two types: collecting and non-collecting.<sup>4</sup> The latter are typically accountable to a government for the custodianship of official memory, and are financially supported to enable the achievement of best archival practice. In 2009, cornerstones of best archival practice involve identification of the value of a record before it has even been generated (well before it becomes an ‘archive’ document), and confident management of the digital realm.

Collecting archives may strive to emulate the professionalism rooted in non-collecting archives. However, they often receive records or archives from disparate sources (whether they are commercial, personal, organisational, or community) as opportunities arise. This relatively *ad hoc* collecting activity, often combined with inadequate resourcing, necessarily produces a different style of custodianship.

This dichotomy is reflected in official Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures about Australian archives. Only information relating to the six state archives, one territory (NT) archive, and the federal archive, inform the conclusions reported in such products as the ‘Public Libraries 2003–2004’ Service Industries Surveys.<sup>5</sup> Whereas, the self-identifying Directory of Archival Organisations on the Australian Society of Archivists’ website contained more than 500 organisation listings at the time of the survey in 2007.<sup>6</sup> These collecting archives have been, at best, under-represented in official statistics on archives.<sup>7</sup>

*Archives Survey 2007* was formulated in awareness of this dichotomy and the bold decision was made to include as many archival organisations as possible in the survey population. For this reason I find no issue with keeping the survey ‘open’ for belated respondents.<sup>8</sup> This motivation for inclusiveness makes perfect sense when aiming to represent archives as a single collecting domain to external groups, like

government or community, for advocacy purposes. However, in survey analysis it is difficult to reconcile the qualitatively different answers that may be expected from these two fundamentally different types of archives.

Some questions might be differently cast or even skipped for each 'target population', in recognition of their different roles. For example, greater investigation of digital archiving might be made with the non-collecting archives, and more investigation of governance matters might prove valuable for collecting archives. As has already been done in the *Survey*, answers to all questions (including all 'skip' options) can be integrated in a summary report.

The Collections Council of Australia commonly faces the same issue when advocating for a 'collections sector', which comprises four quite complementary collecting domains – archives, galleries, libraries and museums. Indeed, the 'industry councils' that provide a voice for each collecting domain on the Collections Council Board generally comprise the state and federal organisations which are supported to achieve best practice in each domain. In the case of the archives domain, this means the non-collecting archives.<sup>9</sup>

The definitions of archives offered in the *Survey* provide useful context,<sup>10</sup> and help, for example, to explain why the ABS has collected data about archives in the way that it has.

The 2008 ABS paper titled *Information Paper: Towards Comparable Statistics for Cultural Heritage Organisations* (cat. no. 4916.0) was produced after more than eighteen months consultation with the collections sector. The paper signals the interest of the Cultural Ministers Council in commissioning work (from the ABS but also from elsewhere) that aims to achieve more coordinated recording and reporting protocols across the whole collections sector. All eight state, territory and federal non-collecting archives referred to earlier, plus the National Film and Sound Archive, contributed to this consultation. The ABS hopes to extend the scope of this initial project to encompass diverse and geographically dispersed organisations within each collecting domain – for example, collecting archives around Australia in the archives domain. Based on such advances, it is possible that ABS statistics may more truly reflect the reality of archival practice by the time of Archives Survey 2012.

The three-part definition of 'archive domain' for *Archives Survey 2007* also articulates another ongoing challenge for the Collections Council of

Australia – namely, the embedding of ‘child’ organisations within larger ‘parent’ organisations. For archives, an archival collection may occur as part of a larger cultural heritage organisation, or as part of a completely different type of organisation, such as a school, business, or religious order. One of my few criticisms of the methodology employed by *Archives Survey 2007* is that ‘de-duplication’ of the sample does not appear to have been performed. As a consequence, it is possible that some archives may have been counted twice: a large organisation could have responded on behalf of one or more smaller archive units which it controls, while those individual archive units may also have responded separately.<sup>11</sup>

The Collections Council is initiating work in classifying Australia’s collecting organisations to a level of detail that should help to resolve such dilemmas in relation to parent–child organisations. Cooperation with each collecting domain to assemble a definitive register of collecting organisations will have benefits for each domain, including archives. As we work to identify as yet unknown archives for the Australian Collecting Organisation Register (OzCOR), incentives could be offered by peak bodies to organisations willing to supply basic identifying information without influencing a survey event.<sup>12</sup>

With the risk of skewing future survey results removed, more reliable survey results can be expected – whether the survey addresses a whole domain, a sub-domain or multiple domains. Such rigour also allows for more efficient follow-up with organisations not submitting a return or submitting an incomplete return.<sup>13</sup> A necessary corollary to this is that the survey population is more fully developed ahead of the release of a questionnaire, and access to the questionnaire by new participants is not allowed during the live survey period.

### **Suggestion**

To aid the Collections Council with its aim of producing a central Register of Collecting Organisations, and also for improved identification and characterisation of archives towards Archives Survey 2012, CAARA and the ASA might consider coordinating some more focused surveys of archives sub-domains. Results from sub-domain surveys can be aggregated to yield whole domain outcomes. In this case, Archives Survey 2012 could simply comprise the results of all archives sub-domain investigations to give whole domain data. There would be no problem

with offering prizes for participating in sub-domain surveys, as this would not affect a broader survey population pool.

### **Conclusion**

Archives Survey 2012 will benefit from updated consideration of its 'target audience(s)'.

## **2. Usefulness to external groups**

The Collections Council eagerly awaited the production of the *Report on Archives Survey 2007* as it is regularly asked to provide reliable data about the Australian collections sector and its constituents to government, the media and researchers both in Australia and overseas.<sup>14</sup> To date, responding effectively to such requests has been a challenge because available data have been collected under fundamentally different survey regimes. These intrinsic differences in datasets preclude their successful aggregation.<sup>15</sup>

Although we are aware of their limitations, ABS data do provide a basis for such work. A distinct advantage of using ABS data is that they are readily available as discrete numbers which have been rigorously extrapolated to be of Australia-wide relevance. A challenge facing other organisations conducting their own surveys is that statistical expertise often does not reside in-house. Although the ABS has developed some effective services to support organisations conducting surveys,<sup>16</sup> it remains a time-consuming and expensive task to resource quality survey work.

Data in the body of *Archives Survey 2007* are usually presented as percentages. This works well if the report is read from beginning to end. For the external user who needs data fast, I suggest going straight to appendix 5 to obtain the raw number results, organised by question. To improve the usefulness of survey results to external groups, I would suggest future archives surveys provide a clear introduction to the numerical data they contain at the beginning of the document under a heading such as 'How to read and use the data in this report'.

However, it is important for an external user to understand the context of a question, in order to accurately portray the enquiry and the response to it. The format of the *Report on Archives Survey 2007* suggests that external users should read the whole publication as a preliminary, and then read

appropriate passages of text at the time of use in order to accurately contextualise a given result. In some cases it may even be necessary to read the entire relevant 'Results' section.

Also, due to uncertainty in relation to the representativeness of the data collected in *Archives Survey 2007* (ultimately deriving from the survey population),<sup>17</sup> an external user may not be entirely comfortable with making statements along the lines of 'X people visit Australian archives'. This is, quite simply, the kind of very basic information that third party enquirers want to know. A statement like '[a]round three quarters of archives (77%) have less than 500 visitors in person per year, with nearly half (45%) serving less than 50 visitors per year'<sup>18</sup> does not provide a succinct answer to external users of the data. To a certain extent this depends on the way the question is asked. Pre-defined ranges presented as multiple choice options are a valid way to structure responses to questions in surveys. To achieve more transparent and usable results, it may be advisable to refine suggested ranges in the proposed sub-domain surveys, and to provide stronger guidance on how to answer questions.<sup>19</sup>

For such an initial survey of a whole domain as *Archives Survey 2007*, there may have been some value in using the same questions that the ABS has asked in surveys such as the relevant Service Industries Survey.<sup>20</sup> If the eight large non-collecting archives were excluded from the analysis, the resultant data from the rest of the domain should have provided a complementary dataset to the existing ABS dataset – together creating a picture of whole domain activity.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, the ABS encourages the development of quality 'administrative' datasets as a way of making relevant industry data more frequently available to a range of organisations (including the ABS). Such a decentralisation of quality data gathering also supports the ABS's aim to focus on higher issues, that is, informing government policy development in a climate of diminishing ABS resources.<sup>22</sup>

Having said that, the ABS is reviewing the questions it asks in collections sector Service Industries Surveys,<sup>23</sup> and in other work has defined 16 'key measures' for use across all Australian cultural heritage organisations.<sup>24</sup> This project reflects a more open approach by the ABS, and archives are a part of this dialogue. The commissioning body for this work, the Cultural Ministers Council, hopes that collecting organisations will begin to use applicable key measures in their survey work, and that these measures will be refined over time through further consultation. It is also hoped

that additional key measures be developed and that the suite can be used by any collecting organisation in Australia, whatever its size and circumstances. If these developments are embraced, Australia will lead world best practice in the gathering of quality, coordinated information about its cultural organisations.

Still other ABS survey instruments may inform future investigation in such areas as use or visitation, cultural funding, volunteers and Internet usage.<sup>25</sup> In addition, trends revealed by survey instruments developed in other collecting domains may contain items of relevance to archives: for instance, the evolving annual survey conducted by the Council of Australasian Museum Directors.<sup>26</sup> By 2012 it is also likely that the international benchmarks referenced in *Archives Survey 2007*<sup>27</sup> may have been revised.

### **Suggestion**

Archives Survey 2012 can benefit from research that has been occurring at the same time as, and subsequent to, *Archives Survey 2007*. It is suggested that a fresh environment scan be conducted as part of Archives Survey 2012. The aims of this scan would be to incorporate useful developments by the ABS and other collecting organisations into survey design, and to format survey questions and results to make them more accessible for external groups, including advocate organisations like the Collections Council of Australia. It is also suggested that the *Report on Archives Survey 2007* be made discoverable via the Australian Society of Archivists' website, and that existing and future reports on archives surveys be published with an ISBN for enhanced findability.

### **Conclusion**

Archives Survey 2012 results could be made more accessible for use by external groups. This may include further consideration of the questions asked.

## **3. Interesting research questions**

A number of suggestions for further useful work are made in the text of the *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, notably in the 'Implications of findings' boxes. These are all worthy of pursuit. If resources are limited, it may be useful to develop a strategy to prioritise research and survey activity arising from *Archives Survey 2007*. It also seems important to

begin work on developing guidelines or standards to underpin future work.

Although uncertainty over the validity of survey results derives partly from the complexity of the survey population (as discussed above), more useful results are also possible if greater guidance is available to survey participants when answering questions.<sup>28</sup> For example, if the data collected at appendix 6 regarding 'quantity of archival holdings' could be analysed to help devise a guideline or even a standard for measuring the size of archival collections, this could be cited when asking such questions in future.

Following up determinations already made in the *ABS Information Paper: Towards Comparable Statistics for Cultural Heritage Organisations* (cat. no. 4916.0), CAARA and ASA could arrive at a system of measurement that should have the effects of improving the quality of information gathered and making analysis a more manageable and rewarding task (thereby increasing confidence in survey results). Similar approaches may be taken for a range of other measures such as types of physical archival holdings (where categories in ABS cat. no. 4916.0 may supersede those from the *Heritage Health Index*), and user or visitor numbers. Further research into user and visitor numbers would be valuable as this information can strongly support advocacy.<sup>29</sup>

Other questions may simply require more explanation, perhaps in the form of an accompanying fact sheet, for instance, on eligibility for grants and scholarships. More respondees may have been able to answer 'yes' or 'no' rather than 'don't know' at question 43 if more information was provided to support the question. More substantial pieces of background work would be required in the areas of education and digital archiving. The existing ASA education strategic plan may be reviewed using information from the survey, particularly with regard to the large number of staff without formal archival qualifications, and the level of understanding people working in the sector have of digital processes and management.

The archives domain is already at the forefront of research on digital heritage collections in this country. Continuation of this work is vital. It will be important for archives to continue to contribute to such developments as the Collections Council's proposed 'Australian Framework for Digital Heritage Collections'.<sup>30</sup> Sharing experience and expertise with digital experts from other collecting domains will

contribute to taking the whole collections sector forward. The Collections Council values and depends upon such contributions.

I agree that 'a measure of the relative proportion of digital archives to physical archives formats would be a useful statistic to collect in the future and to monitor over time',<sup>31</sup> and it is very important to rectify the reported finding that 'federated catalogues are probably missing important archival collections and items'.<sup>32</sup> Other hopes expressed in the survey text require similar inputs. For example, archives offering website services should 'consider collecting data on unique visitors' that 'could then be used in performance measures',<sup>33</sup> and increase the amount of archival content held on organisational websites.<sup>34</sup> In order to achieve better outcomes in these areas by 2012, the ground-work will need to be laid soon.

Interpreting a number of *Survey* responses I observe that the following two ideas are evident, but not clearly articulated:

- Little mention was made of the 'sustainability' of archives and current archival practice in the identified challenges, such as the consolidation of archives and more efficient forms of governance, although this principle underpins many individual comments. Is there a role for the Australian Society of Archivists to help archives sub-domains to work together to build approaches to the challenges identified from pages 79–89 in regard to the health and persistence of archives? Perhaps ASA might consider conference themes focusing on areas identified as challenges in the *Survey* – or even facilitate chat groups or a help line (regarding grants and sponsorships) to support aspects of this work.
- An issue that requires further research and survey attention is workforce planning.<sup>35</sup> The suggestion that 'volunteers are used to fill the shortfall in resources required to adequately document archive holdings'<sup>36</sup> bears further investigation, especially in a climate of dwindling numbers of volunteers due to ageing. Succession planning, tied perhaps in part to greater engagement with school students should help to alleviate this challenge.<sup>37</sup> 'Crunch time' has been identified as a challenge for libraries, beginning in 2010 and peaking in 2016. Workforce planning is being actively addressed in the libraries domain,<sup>38</sup> but what are the parameters for archives?

### **Suggestion**

It is recommended that a strategy be developed to further define and prioritise specific research tasks arising from *Archives Survey 2007* and that research and survey work begin on priority tasks. The 'blue sky' research exercise conducted by the ABS during 2006 provides some interesting background regarding the probable value of future research in the arts and cultural heritage in Australia.<sup>39</sup> It would be good to check proposed areas of archives research against this 'big picture'.

### **Conclusion**

Archives Survey 2012 will benefit from investigation of valid research questions identified in *Archives Survey 2007*.

### **General Conclusion**

CAARA seeks to 'promote a sense of understanding and consistency in the management of records' across its member organisations and across the broader archives domain. The ASA's aims include establishing and maintaining standards of archival practice, publishing and disseminating information relevant to the archival profession, and cooperating with other organisations and groups with common interests and concerns.<sup>40</sup> Given these aspirations, both organisations can rightly be pleased with the advance in data collection about archives through *Archives Survey 2007*.

Both CAARA and ASA are to be congratulated for taking on this task, and archives practitioners are to be thanked for the time they have given in contributing to the survey. It is hoped that the archives domain will build on the foundation of *Archives Survey 2007* and earlier Australian Council of Archives, CAARA and ASA surveys, to achieve improved outcomes for the whole domain. *Archives Survey 2007* is a competent piece of survey work which, like all good research, has thrown up as many new questions as it has answered.

One of the purposes of *Archives Survey 2007* was to assist 'the Collections Council of Australia to understand the archival domain, particularly the domain's relationship with other collections domains such as libraries and museums.'<sup>41</sup> *Archives Survey 2007* has significantly increased our understanding of the archival domain. Suggestions have been made above in parts (1) and (2) that would make the planned Archives Survey 2012 even more useful. Surveys that seek to characterise a whole domain bear

a particular responsibility to be comparable with datasets from other domains. Attention to this fact will certainly aid the Collections Council as it advocates for each domain and the Australian collections sector as a whole. Likewise, it will also benefit the advocacy objectives of CAARA and the ASA. Clearly, improved advocacy is required to bring the resources for processing and documenting archival materials that has been identified as a challenge.<sup>42</sup> This may be achieved through in-domain research, and through cross-domain collaboration.

It is heartening to read that survey participants regard collaboration as an opportunity, not as a challenge.<sup>43</sup> Collaborations between collecting and non-collecting archives, as well as between the four major collecting domains, are necessary to achieve solid progress. The fact that 88% of archives report holding items other than archival documents in their collections<sup>44</sup> opens the door on cross-domain discussion.<sup>45</sup>

I mentioned in the introduction to this article that I was grateful for being introduced to the incisive insider term 'lone arranger'. The humour, intelligence and frankness of archivists is also evident in the admission that one of the main challenges they face is gaining 'control over the collections'.<sup>46</sup> I'm not sure that other collecting domains would admit to this, even though they are beset by the same kinds of challenges.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Darren Peacock and Margaret Birtley for helpful discussions about *Report on Archives Survey 2007* during the preparation of this review article, and Charlotte Smith for suggestions toward revision of the final draft. I would also like to thank Tony Leviston for contacting the Collections Council of Australia to discuss *Archives Survey 2007* before and after its release – some interesting discussions.

<sup>2</sup> Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, CAARA, Canberra, 2008, pp. 20–21, at <[http://www.caara.org.au/ArchiveSurvey2007/Report on Archives Survey 2007/Report on Archives Survey 2007.pdf](http://www.caara.org.au/ArchiveSurvey2007/Report%20on%20Archives%20Survey%202007.pdf)> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly, VM Bullock, MM Birtley and CJ Jenkins, *Conservation Survey 2006*, Collections Council of Australia Ltd, Adelaide, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> A Cunningham, 'Collecting archives in the next millennium', paper presented at the Australian Society of Archivists Conference, Adelaide, 1997. See 'Strategies for getting' available at <<http://www.nla.gov.au/nla/staffpaper/acunning7.html>> accessed 4 May 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Public Libraries – Australia 2003–04*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005 (cat. no. 8561.0), at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/cat/8561.0>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., *Archives Matter!*, Dickson ACT, Australian Society of Archivists, 2007, p. 23, at <<http://www.archivists.org.au/files/Brochures/ArchivesMatter.pdf>> accessed 15 April 2009 and *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Except where archives are counted as museums, for example, for the Australian Bureau of Statistics 'Museums' Service Industry Survey. The Collections Council of Australia Ltd has raised the unrepresentativeness of historic official statistics on archives with the Australian Bureau of Statistics on a number of occasions. The ABS is reviewing its practice in this area.

<sup>8</sup> *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Alongside the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities are the Council of Australian Art Museum Directors (CAAMD), the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD) and National and State Libraries Australasia (N&SLA). There are eight other board directors that complement this representation.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> The Collections Council will assign each collecting organisation a domain and 'designation', based on best available evidence and according to definitions agreed between domains. So, for example, the issue of organisations with similar functions self-identify variously as 'community archive', 'museum' or 'historical society' is decided. For archives, location of an archive in a commercial, university, local government or community setting (for example), will also be recorded and used in classifications. It is hoped that each major collecting domain (archives, galleries, libraries and museums) may assist this process by checking the categorisations proposed by the Collections Council.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 61–62. Information about the formal qualifications of archives practitioners and where they received them are particularly helpful.

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, the Australian Bureau of Statistics strives to minimise variation in questionnaires and survey populations over time, in order that quality, validly comparable, longitudinal data are obtained in each survey area.

<sup>16</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics Statistical and Information Consultancy Services offer fee for service advice in the following areas: statistical training; survey and sample design; data analysis and modelling; reviews and tender evaluations; and data management. See *Informing Decisions – Australian Bureau*

of Statistics Service Delivery Charter 2008–2011, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008 (cat. no. 1007.0), at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/1007.0>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Report on *Archives Survey 2007*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> At a number of questions it is stated that guidance was limited or not provided, for example at questions 10 and 11. See *ibid.*, pp. 33–4.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Public Libraries/ Archives 2003–04’ (ABS ‘ISLIS’ questionnaire) at <[http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Portals/0/ISLIS\\_Public\\_Libraries\\_Archives\\_2003-04.pdf](http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Portals/0/ISLIS_Public_Libraries_Archives_2003-04.pdf)> accessed 15 April 2009. The results are also available in *Public Libraries* (cat. no. 8561.0) cited in endnote 4 above.

<sup>21</sup> In such a scenario, it would have been interesting to gather the information again from the eight large non-collecting archives and analyse it according to this survey’s protocols as a check of internal survey method, as well as a check against ABS results.

<sup>22</sup> For example see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Information Paper – Regional Policy and Research in Australia – the Statistical Dimension. Information Development Plan for Rural and Regional Statistics*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005 (cat. no. 1362.0), see especially pp. 87, 89, 90 and 98, at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1362.0>> accessed 15 April 2009. The following excerpt appears on pp. 90–91: ‘The National Statistical Service (NSS) is a coalition of Australian Government agencies that aims to improve the availability and quality of statistics. It is founded on the understanding that in Australia useful statistical information is collected by a wide range of agencies, but that to date this has occurred in a largely uncoordinated manner. By promoting formal cooperation between agencies, the NSS will facilitate the development and application of standards and frameworks for the collection, classification and dissemination of information. The key quality benefits will be the availability of a larger range of relevant, consistent, high-quality statistics to support research and informed decision-making. In particular, NSS-led improvements to the accessibility, interpretability and coherence of administrative by-product data will enable the broader application of these data in regional analysis and the combination of administrative data from a range of different sources.’ For further information see the NSS website at <<http://www.nss.gov.au>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>23</sup> The 2008–09 Public Libraries Service Industry Survey (with archives component) was cancelled due to insufficient ABS resources, however, the 2008–09 Museums Survey did go ahead, and it is likely that the population frame for this survey includes some small archive based organisations (for example, those that identify as ‘historical societies’). For details see <<http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Default.aspx?tabid=549>>.

<sup>24</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Information Paper: Towards Comparable Statistics for Cultural Heritage Organisations*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008 (cat. no. 4916.0), at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4916.0>> accessed 15 April 2009. Key measures break down into five categories: attendance (3 key measures); visitor characteristics (5 key measures); financial resources (2 key measures); human resources (4 key measures); and the collection (4 key measures).

<sup>25</sup> See for example the following or more recent iterations of these Australian Bureau of Statistics publications: *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events 2005–06*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007 (cat. no. 4114.0), at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4114.0>> accessed 15 April 2009; *Cultural Funding by Government 2006–07*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, (cat. no. 4183.0), at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4183.0>> accessed 15 April 2009; *Voluntary Work*, Australia, 2000, 2001 (cat. no. 4441.0) at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/allprimarymainfeatures/269E4052D769BEECCA25731000196F94?opendocument>> accessed 15 April 2009; *Patterns of Internet access, Australia*, 2006, 2007 (cat. no. 8146.0.55.001) at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/8146.0.55.001>> accessed 15 April 2009; *General Social Survey, Summary Results*, 2006, 2007 (cat. no. 4159.0) at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4159.0>> accessed 15 April 2009; and keep a watching brief on workforce planning work within the Service Industry Surveys unit at the ABS.

<sup>26</sup> Interesting aspects of the CAMD Annual Survey include: evidence of fostering learning (including educational partnerships and the presentation of workshops, talks, conference papers, and so on); publication and research projects using the collections (and whether they attracted funding to the organisation); collection items loaned to other collecting organisations; Indigenous focus; and visitation by overseas tourists. At the time of writing this article CAMD did not have a website. However, as CAMD is represented on the Collections Council Board, a long-term contact point is via email on <[info@collectionscouncil.com.au](mailto:info@collectionscouncil.com.au)>.

<sup>27</sup> National Council on Archives (UK) Public Services Quality Group, NCA (PSQG) *Performance Indicators Working Party report: Towards generic and universal PIs for archives: Phase 1 Performance Indicators for Access and Usage*, 2007, at <[http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/research\\_and\\_development/psqg\\_performance/](http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/research_and_development/psqg_performance/)> accessed 15 April 2009. Heritage Preservation, Inc., *A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report on the State of America's Collection*, Washington, DC, Heritage Preservation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2005, at <<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/HHI/HHIsummary.pdf>> accessed 15 April 2009. This survey is due to be repeated in 2009.

<sup>28</sup> It would be good to avoid such findings as: 'there is a substantial quantity of archival holding, particularly photographs (total quantity not able to be

determined due to lack of standard measurement)', *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, p. 27, and 'The survey did not aim to determine the quantity or proportion of digital archives held due to anticipated problems with respondents measuring this', *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>29</sup> It is worthwhile to gather information about external user type, and to distinguish between internal and external visitors, *ibid.*, p. 48, and research enquiries, *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup> Collections Council of Australia Ltd, Digital Heritage Collections project at <<http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/digital+heritage+collections.aspx>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>31</sup> *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, p. 32.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> A standard in workforce planning has recently been released by Standards Australia, *Workforce Planning HB 299-2008*, Sydney, Standards Australia, 2008, at <<http://www.saiglobal.com/PDFTemp/Previews/OSH/as/misc/handbook/HB2992008.pdf>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>36</sup> *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, p. 69.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> Australian Information and Library Association, Education Summit, 2008 at <<http://www.alia.org.au/education/summit08/education.workforce.summit.2008.pdf>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Information Paper – Arts and Cultural Heritage: an Information Development Plan*, Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008 (cat. no. 4915.0.55.002), at <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4915.0.55.002>> accessed 15 April 2009.

<sup>40</sup> *Report on Archives Survey 2007*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> It was a bold and commendable step to include a question on significant collection items at question 12: 'Please list any archival items or collections held by your organisation that are considered of particular significance or are your treasures', *ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82.