

MAAS Collection Development Policy

Draft policy for comment: 18.09.2018

Date Approved: 4.12.2018

Date for Review: 4.12.2020

Table of Contents

Policy Summary	3
1. Purpose	4
2. Policy Statement	4
3. Scope	4
4. Guidelines for collecting	4
4.1 Rationale.....	4
4.2 Collecting practices	5
4.3 Collecting criteria	5
4.4 The significance statement.....	6
4.5 The significance category	6
5. Collecting priorities	6
5.1 General themes	6
5.2 Focus disciplines	7
6. Related collections - Archives	9
7. Deaccessioning	9
8. Role and Responsibilities	9
9. Related MAAS policies, plans and/or procedures	10
10. Relevant legislation and external context	10
11. Acknowledgement.....	10
12. Responsible officer.....	10
13. Responsible Department and Team/Unit.....	10
14. File No.	10
15. Amendment history	11

POLICY SUMMARY	
POLICY DETAILS	Title: <i>MAAS Collection Development Policy</i> Date: October 2018 Review Date: October 2020
KEY MESSAGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents how MAAS develops and enriches its unique and diverse collection of more than 500,000 objects. • Sets out a strategic framework for collection development across the Museum's eight disciplines: architecture and the built environment, contemporary culture, design and decorative arts, engineering, fashion, health and medicine, physical sciences and technologies. • Outlines collecting practices and assessment criteria consistent with other significant collecting institutions. • Provides relevant information and links to related MAAS policies, procedures and processes that underpin the development of the collection. • Collecting priorities include significant and innovative objects that transform the collection.
SCOPE	Applies to all MAAS employees (on-going, temporary, casual), volunteers and contractors.
USE	This policy provides the framework and strategic approach for developing the collection within MAAS.
COMPLIANCE	<p>This policy is associated with the following legislation, guidelines and conventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material</i> 2014 • <i>Code of ethics for art, history and science museums</i>, Museums Australia 1999 • <i>Continuous Cultures Ongoing Responsibilities: A Comprehensive Policy Document and Guidelines for Australian Museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage</i>, Museums Australia 2005 • <i>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Amendment)</i> 1979 • <i>Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework</i> 2015 • <i>International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums</i> 2017 • <i>Movable Heritage Principles</i>, NSW Heritage Office 2000 • <i>Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act</i> 1945 • <i>Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Regulation</i> 2017 • <i>NSW 2021 Plan</i> 2011 • <i>Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act</i> 1986 • <i>Significance 2.0</i> https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/significance-2.0.pdf • <i>UNESCO Convention</i> 1970 <p>The Collection Development Policy will encompass additional strategies including, amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MAAS Collection Development Strategy</i> 2018
POLICY OWNER	Curatorial, Collections & Exhibitions This is a public policy for publication on the MAAS website

1. Purpose

The *MAAS Collection Development Policy* supports the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) to develop and enhance its unique and exceptional collection of more than 500,000 objects. MAAS is committed to developing its interdisciplinary collection incorporating technologies, design, science, engineering, fashion and contemporary culture ensuring that the collection remains relevant and representative of human creativity and ingenuity. This policy sets out the rationale and strategic framework for enriching the collection to ensure that the development of the collection remains vibrant, sustainable and responsive to current practices and issues across the applied arts and sciences and provides a legacy for future generations.

2. Policy Statement

Founded in 1880, MAAS is a publicly funded institution governed by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945 (NSW) (the MAAS Act). By virtue of the MAAS Act, the power to develop the collection is vested in the Board of Trustees. MAAS is an executive agency related to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, responsible to the Minister for the Arts.

The MAAS Act identifies two main areas that inform collecting practices: objects demonstrating the 'industrial advance of civilisation and the development of inventions and manufactures' and those promoting 'craftsmanship and artistic taste by illustrating the history and development of the applied arts' (MAAS Act 14(1)(b)(i-ii)). In 2015, MAAS established a new direction for developing the collection guided by eight strategic disciplines: architecture and the built environment, contemporary culture, design and decorative arts, engineering, fashion, health and medicine, physical sciences and technologies. MAAS continues this focus as outlined in the *MAAS Strategic Plan 2017-2022* while maintaining its existing vast and diverse collection. Collecting priorities include significant and innovative objects that demonstrate how technology, engineering, science and design impact Australia and the world. Collection development is outward focused, representative of national and global developments as well as representing our place in New South Wales.

3. Scope

This policy is the authoritative MAAS source for collection development and is a public facing document published on the MAAS website. This policy is applicable to all MAAS employees, casual employees, contractors and volunteers. All references to 'employees' within this policy should therefore be read to include volunteers and contractors as well as paid employees. The policy is essential for employees with collection development responsibilities aligned to their role statements.

4. Guidelines for Collecting

4.1 Rationale

MAAS is a unique institution that embodies the best of human ingenuity, design and innovation and reflects the growth, changing shape and our aspirations for the future of our city and region. As custodian of an exceptional State collection, MAAS is a highly successful interdisciplinary institution that sits at the intersection of the arts, design, science and technology.

Collecting priorities are framed by the *MAAS Strategic Plan 2017-2022* and determined by curatorial collecting plans aligned with MAAS exhibition, program and research commitments.

Collecting plans recognise general themes and focus disciplines as listed in this Policy (5.1 & 5.2) and are mediated by collecting criteria (4.3) and a continued focus on forward looking collecting that increases our ability to respond to present and future challenges. Collecting plans are reviewed regularly, ensuring that the

collection remains manageable, sustainable and relevant. MAAS adheres to Australian and international best practice in relation to developing its collection to the highest ethical standards and does not support the illicit trade of cultural objects.

4.2 Collecting practices

MAAS curators rigorously research objects including provenance which is guided by the [Provenance Research Project](#). Consistent with the practice of other institutions, the Museum's provenance research results are published on our website to ensure accessibility by the public and other researchers including those who may be able to add to the provenance information. This information can assist the Museum complete its documentation and, in the event that it identifies an illicitly traded object, to reconstitute that object to its rightful owner. Acquisition proposals are prepared according to the [MAAS Acquisition and Accession Policy](#) which also details the acquisition approval and processing policy for MAAS.

A significant shift in MAAS's collecting practice is in the growth in Australia and globally of born digital materials and, consequently, their acquisition in their own right as well as for reasons of contextualisation. Digital objects are assessed for acquisition according to the collecting criteria (4.3) with reference to current museum practices for managing and preserving born digital material.

Objects are acquired by MAAS with the intention of ensuring their long-term care and preservation. From time to time however, for reasons summarised below (7.0), material is recommended for deaccessioning which is undertaken in accordance with the [MAAS Deaccession Policy](#).

4.3 Collecting criteria

MAAS curators assess the significance of all proposed objects and material with reference to the existing collection. Significance is assessed against consistent criteria:

4.3.1 Each object collected will have significance to past or present Australian society within a global context, reflecting important innovations, changes, themes and processes in material culture with regard to *one or more of the following criteria*:

- *design*: the object's innovative, effective and/or highly creative design and production and/or its inherent ability to reflect a design trend, theme or movement, and/or the influence and reputation of the designer/maker;
- *scientific and research significance*: the object illustrates significant innovations in science, technology and industry, and/or has, alone or in association with other objects, significant research potential;
- *historic significance*: the object's association with people, events, places and themes; its history of use; how it operates and/or functions, and its implications for the future;
- *cultural and social significance*: the object has symbolic status that links it to cultural traditions or social/spiritual contexts, and/or reflects beliefs, customs and lifestyles in Australia or globally.
- *aesthetic significance*: the object may be aesthetically significant for its artistic merit, craftsmanship, style, technical excellence, beauty, demonstration of skill and quality of design and execution.

4.3.2 The main criteria for assessing significance are modified by considerations of:

- *provenance*: preference will be given to objects with established provenance and detailed documentation in accordance with the [MAAS Acquisition and Accession Policy](#);
- *rarity*: preference will be given to unique and rare objects documenting important developments, themes and processes;
- *representativeness*: in some cases, the fact that an object is typical of its kind will add to its significance;
- *condition, material stability and completeness*: sufficiently robust to render the object suitable for storage, management, preservation, access and use in MAAS programs;

- *interpretative potential*: having the capacity to demonstrate achievements, themes and changes in technology and design practice, and /or to communicate social and cultural practices and meanings for our diverse audiences.

The criteria above are a modified version of guidelines published in the Collection Council of Australia's [Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections \(2009\)](#). The criteria reflect the nature and breadth of the MAAS collection and the MAAS mission and vision.

4.4 The significance statement

The significance statement is a key component of an object's documentation and can be accessed by the public through the MAAS website. It is guided by the same criteria that determine the selection and acceptance of objects for the MAAS collection (see 4.3). Prepared by curators during the acquisition process (and also retrospectively for objects acquired prior to the introduction of this requirement), the significance statement is essentially a concise summary of the values, meaning and importance of an object or collection of objects. Recognising that statements of significance reflect the expertise, knowledge and judgement of a curator at a particular point in time, they are signed and dated and details of any references used are included.

4.5 The significance category

Essential to the acquisition process is the identification of the significance category for each object or collection of objects. Significance categories assist MAAS to appropriately manage the collection under risk management principles identified in the Strategic Collections policy framework. They are as follows:

A: objects that are irreplaceable and deemed by their intrinsic value, historic association or cultural significance to be national or international treasures. A collection of objects can be identified as 'A' even when individual objects within that collection are not of great national or international significance.

B: objects that are likely to be very difficult or expensive to replace and deemed by their intrinsic value, historic association, cultural significance or rarity to be of importance in a state, national or international context. A collection of objects can be identified as 'B' even when individual objects are not of great cultural significance.

C: objects have considerable cultural or social significance. They may be replaceable but are still deemed to be of importance because of their intrinsic value, historic association, scientific, artistic and cultural significance or rarity. Most acquisitions will fall within this category.

S: objects of particular significance to the state of NSW. These are objects that are deemed excellent examples of the movable heritage of the state because of their association with historic or contemporary events, people, regions or sites. These can also be A or B objects.

In accordance with the *MAAS Collection Management of High Significance Objects Policy*, the classification of objects within these categories is periodically reviewed and may be subject to change.

5. Collecting Priorities

5.1 General themes

Consistent with the *MAAS Strategic Plan 2017-2022*, current collection development activities focus on four general themes pertinent to all active collection areas:

- Discovering our place in time – our past, present and future

- Promoting relevance of our state and region
- Fostering creativity and innovation in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics
- Building economic and environmental sustainability

These general themes are underpinned by our commitment to recording and fostering creative industries and traditional and contemporary craft skills and to documenting changes in science and technology in the 21st century. An increased focus for MAAS will be developing the collection of Indigenous material across all disciplines with a view to increasing knowledge and awareness of the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Collecting Indigenous material will be guided by the MAAS Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection Management Reference Group and the [MAAS Australian Indigenous Intellectual Cultural Property Protocol](#).

5.2 Focus disciplines

The core collecting areas of MAAS span broadly across the applied arts and sciences. They are described below according to the focus disciplines in the *MAAS Strategic Plan 2017-2022*. There is considerable overlap across disciplines which share interests in a range of contexts which might include social, cultural, creative and technological factors that mediate the individual and collective experiences of our past and present. These inter-disciplinary links and multi-layered histories are actively explored through a broad understanding of design practice, materials, processes and production technologies. They are based on the belief that shared perspectives enrich our understanding and appreciation of material culture and enable MAAS to construct more encompassing and meaningful stories about our heritage and living in a contemporary world.

MAAS collects historical and contemporary objects designed, made and used in Australia but also representative of production or use in a range of countries, regions and cultures. Whenever possible, objects are collected with contextual and narrative information such as associated documents, stories, images, drawings, devices, systems, models, prototypes and displays, advertising material, audiovisual recordings, digital files, oral histories and socio-cultural meaning, to fully document the object and its many dimensions.

5.2.1 Architecture and the built environment

This discipline includes the art, science, design, construction, management, and use of buildings and structures and spaces that provide the setting for human activity, from large scale civic places to personal domains. It also includes the supporting infrastructure.

Collecting in this area includes historical and contemporary architecture and urban planning projects including the design, construction, management and use of buildings and structures and spaces that provide the setting for human activity. It includes architectural drawings and research, documentation and models, agricultural and urban vehicles, mass transit systems; roads, railways, ports and airports and their control systems; and urban infrastructure and systems (gas, electricity, power, communication, water, sewerage and waste systems).

5.2.2 Contemporary culture

Refers to the catalysts and contexts for change in our society. This discipline is forward looking, but also provides a lens through which the past can be better understood. It also attempts to reflect changing museological and curatorial practices, making more vivid the contemporary circumstances surrounding the development of objects and ideas and allowing for experimentation and innovation across the arts and sciences in what and how we collect.

5.2.3 Design and decorative arts

Design and decorative arts are diverse and broad disciplines covering tangible material culture and intangible cultural heritage, with a focus on aesthetics, function and process.

Collecting in this discipline includes historical and contemporary objects from the extraordinary to the everyday. Created through one-off, studio, multiple and digital production, objects encompass all media such as ceramics, glass, plastics and metalwork, jewellery, textiles, dress and costume, furniture and woodwork, visual communication, graphic design and photography, toys, musical instruments, numismatics, industrial, product and interior design. Collecting will include the contexts of production, use and significance with an emphasis on creative development, studio practice, manufacturing and consumption.

5.2.4 Engineering

Engineering refers to the practical application of science and technology to commerce or industry and the built environment for the benefit of the community. This includes the design, manufacture, operation and maintenance of efficient and economical structures, machines, processes, and systems. It also includes the social, cultural and historical contexts in which engineering practice occurs.

Collecting in this discipline includes civil, construction, mechanical, electrical, mining and materials engineering; transport technologies; energy and power technologies; design for mass production; trade tools and traditional crafts and skills; machine tools and production; engineering practices such as drawing, testing, modelling and prototyping.

5.2.5 Fashion

Fashion encompasses the breadth of work generated in the production and consumption of fashionable clothing and textiles and the contexts surrounding these enterprises including issues of identity, sociability and sustainability. Themes include the work of designers, makers and merchants responding to fashion trends and the diversity of Australian and international fashion culture such as alternative, subcultural and regional styles.

Collecting in this discipline includes clothing and related media such as textiles and accessories as well as illustration, drawing, photography, swatch books, design processes and development, designer and company archives, technologies, marketing and digital media.

5.2.6 Health and medicine

Health is understood as the state of being free from illness and injury, but more than that to be a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being. Medicine is the science and practice of the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of human disease. In the MAAS context, this discipline also includes surgery, fitness, longevity, public health, community health and traditional remedies. The history of and changing community and social attitudes towards health and medicine are also included.

Collecting in this discipline includes Australian innovations in drugs, vaccines, and surgery; medical devices and imaging technology; biotechnologies including genetic engineering; public health and safety; health education; diseases with increasing impact on the community; issues such as vaccination, euthanasia and birth control.

5.2.7 Physical Sciences

Science is defined broadly as a set of approaches, primarily based on observation, measurement and experimentation, referred to as scientific methods, through which we gain insight into our world. It includes the body of knowledge already accumulated using such methods. Physical sciences is used here to be distinct from the life sciences.

Collecting in this discipline includes physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, climate science, meteorology, material science, computational science, space science and agricultural science. It also includes the history and development of those sciences as well as contemporary research, especially in Australia. Collecting will illustrate the understanding

of those sciences in our society and their potential for our future economic, social and environmental well-being and success.

5.2.8 Technologies

Technology refers to the practical application of knowledge to better and more effectively accomplish tasks across the spectrum of human activity. It refers to individual machines and tools as well as systems. Technology is also understood to include the know-how, practices, processes and skills that mediate all aspects of society.

Collecting in this discipline includes information, communications, media and imaging technologies, robotics, small scale digital manufacturing, transport and space technologies, biotechnologies, military innovation with implications for the broader community, nanotechnologies and other emerging technologies, especially digital technologies which explore the intersection between the arts and sciences. It includes hardware and machinery related to domestic and manufacturing technologies, office technology as well as other industrial and professional tools.

6. Related Collections - Archives

Archives represent the papers of individuals and the records of organisations and businesses. Development of the archives will support the general themes (5.1) and focus disciplines (5.2) and primarily document design and production processes rather than business records.

7. Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning is the process of de-registering an object from the collection. The policy for considering and approving the deaccession of items from the MAAS Collection are detailed in the [MAAS Deaccession Policy](#).

Deaccessioning is an essential aspect of intentional and sustainable collection development and management to ensure that the whole collection is maintained to an optimum level. Deaccession occurs within an accepted framework to ensure compliance with legal, ethical and cultural considerations.

The maintenance of a thoughtful deaccessioning program has a positive impact as it enables the refining and therefore strengthening of museum collections in addition to reducing storage and conservation costs.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

MAAS Board of Trustees

By virtue of the MAAS Act, the power to develop the collection is vested in the Board of Trustees.

MAAS Director

Approves acquisitions.

Director of Curatorial, Collections and Exhibitions

Chairs the Collection Development Review Committee

Head of Curatorial

Responsible for the review and implementation of this policy and recommending acquisitions to the Collection Development Review Committee in consultation with the curatorial team.

Curatorial, Collections and Exhibitions employees

Responsible for using this policy in undertaking core business. This policy is essential for Curatorial and Strategic Collections employees.

9. Related Museum plans, policies and/or procedures

This policy complements:

- *MAAS Development Policy 2018*
- *MAAS Donor Recognition Policy 2018*
- *MAAS Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol 2016*
- *MAAS Reconciliation Action Plan 2017*
- *MAAS Strategic Collections policy framework*
- *MAAS Strategic Plan 2017-2022*

10. Relevant legislation and external context

This policy recognises:

- *Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material 2014*
- *Code of ethics for art, history and science museums*, Museums Australia 1999
- *Continuous Cultures Ongoing Responsibilities: A Comprehensive Policy Document and Guidelines for Australian Museums working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage*, Museums Australia 2005
- *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Amendment) 1979*
- *Create in NSW: NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework 2015*
- *International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums 2017*
- *Movable Heritage Principles*, NSW Heritage Office 2000
- *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Act 1945*
- *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Regulation 2017*
- *NSW 2021 Plan 2011*, particularly goals 15 and 27 to 'improve education and learning outcomes for all students' and 'enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities'
- *Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986*
- *Significance 2.0* (<https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/significance-2.0.pdf>)
- *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970*
- *UNIDROIT – Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects 1995*
- *United Nations – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007*

11. Acknowledgement

N/A

12. Responsible Officer

Head of Curatorial

13. Responsible Department & Unit

Curatorial Department

14. File No

N/A

15. Amendment history

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
1	18/9/2018	Updated from 2015 version	Head of Curatorial, Governance
2	24/10/18	Reviewed by curatorial team, managers in Strategic Collections, Head of Development and Head of Indigenous Engagement and Strategy	Head of Curatorial