**RMIT UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 – 2022**

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# Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan is a foundational and aspirational document which sets the direction for RMIT University Archives for the next two years and guides our efforts to implement a transformative work program. It provides staff with a ready guide to our purpose, vision, values, goals, and priorities, and promotes the Archives and its two-year plan to the public and RMIT University stakeholders. Throughout this document we use RMIT to refer to RMIT University, and RMIT Archives or Archives to refer to RMIT University Archives.

The Plan draws on RMIT's organisational goals and the University Library vision, purpose, and principles to identify the highest priority projects and activities under three main goals:

* Collection Management and Preservation
* Outreach, Engagement and Access
* Capability, Skills and Culture.

The RMIT Archives Strategic Plan 2021-2022 builds on the strong foundations and legacy of its current and former staff. This plan is an aspirational document, and parts of it, such as activities designed to meet the increasing volume and technical demands of digital archiving are dependent on additional resources allocation for Archives.

The Plan was developed by the Archives Team - Rachel Tropea (Senior Coordinator), Andrea Barnes (Assistant Archivist) and Catrina Sgro (Archives Officer) with Alison Bates (Associate Director, Collections) in August 2021.

Our sincere thanks go to the following people for sharing their documents and advice: Liz Marsden (Manager Collections and Archives, Public Engagement Group RMIT), Bec Taube (Deputy General Counsel, Legal Services RMIT), Lucy Davies (Archives Manager, Monash University), Matthew Burgess (Lead Digital Archivist, State Library NSW), Jaye Weatherburn (Program Manager Digital Preservation, University of Melbourne), Chris Stueven (Senior Analyst Records & Information, University of Melbourne), Valerie Love (Senior Digital Archivist, National Library NZ), Jessica Moran (Associate Chief Librarian, National Library NZ), Samip Mallick (Executive Director, South Asian American Digital Archive), and others who have shared information by making it publicly available online.

Rachel Tropea
Senior Coordinator and Archivist, RMIT University Archives

**RMIT UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES STRATEGIC PLAN 2021 – 2022**

# Purpose

* Collect and preserve a record of RMIT's history grounded in our statutory obligations, and with a deep commitment to [RMIT’s Bundjil Statement](https://next.rmit.edu.au/inspiration/bundjils-statement-living-and-working-lawfully-on-place/).
* Enhance the visibility and impact of RMIT Archives’ extraordinary collections.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Create a welcoming space for people to connect, create and share stories that reflect a myriad of people and experiences about RMIT.
* Realise the value of the archives as a site for the activation of justice, reparation, and healing.
* Promote greater understanding of the labour that goes into creating and maintaining the archives.
* Ensure that RMIT Archives thrives in a digital world.

# Vision

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| **RMIT University Archives** is central to shaping the way that RMIT sees itself and its future. We engage in liberatory practices to support memory keeping, truth telling, justice, reparation, and healing. We connect and inspire people across RMIT and the broader community to create, grow and innovate. |  **RMIT Library** Core Purpose |
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# Values

RMIT Values: Inclusion – Imagination – Agility – Courage – Passion - Impact

* We centre people in our practice and strive to create a culturally safe space for all, and where possible prevent potential harm.
* We recognise the privilege, power, and responsibility of our role as memory workers in deciding how people and history are represented, and we strive to enact and embody an ethical, reflexive, and participatory approach to archiving.
* We are always learning and seeking opportunities to improve and innovate.
* We believe that strong archives are vital to community wellbeing, can be dynamic spaces for dialogue and debate[[2]](#footnote-2), and archivists can be agents of social change.

# People

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| Our Structure | Our Stakeholders[[3]](#footnote-3) |

Staff Roles

The day-to-day activities of the RMIT Archives team include:

1. Managing the RMIT Archives Collection - a comprehensive archival collection of digital and hardcopy/analogue records and artefacts pertaining to RMIT's core functions and history, held onsite in a purpose-built archival repository at Bundoora,
* appraise and provide advice on the retention and preservation of university records and artefacts of enduring value,
* develop guidelines, procedures and processes for the capture and preservation of permanent University records and artefacts,
* manage the acquisition of permanent historical records and artefacts to the Archives Collection,
* manage access to the Archives Collection,
* transfer records to Public Records Office Victoria as appropriate.
1. Overseeing the management of the University’s hardcopy, inactive, temporary records,
* provide advice on the retention and offsite storage of hardcopy, inactive (temporary) University records,
* manage the contract with the University's secondary storage provider,
* liaise with university business units, colleges and schools to facilitate physical transfer of inactive records to offsite storage,
* provide retrieval services for records held in secondary storage,
* co-ordinate the annual disposal program for retention expired temporary records,
* develop and maintain procedures for the disposal of temporary value University records.

# Goals and Objectives - Implementation Plan

**Goal 1: Collection Management and Preservation**

1.1 Build and manage a comprehensive collection documenting the past and ongoing functions and history of RMIT according to recognised archival principles and standards, and with an eye to innovation, continual improvement, context, and people.

1.2 Maintain the systems, processes, and facilities which support the integrity, security, discoverability, usability, and accessibility of records across time and place.

1.3 Facilitate continual improvement in RMIT’s archival practices through the development and promulgation of policy, procedures, tools, and the provision of expert advice and services.

**What we will do**

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| **Priority** | **Objectives** |
| 1 | Create facility maintenance schedule and collate ongoing, regular & appropriate logs and assessment reports from Property Services Group (PSG)/contractors covering security, pest control, and environmental conditions by end 2021. Refer to [National Standard](https://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-09/Nationa-Archives-of-Australia-Standard-for-the-Storage-of-Non-Digital-Archival-Records.pdf) & [PROS 11/01 G5 Records Storage (Appendix 4).](https://prov.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-05/1101G5.pdf) |
| 2 | Conduct a high-level audit of the archival collection to identify un-accessioned material by end 2021. |
| 3 | Develop a conservation plan (built on the register), identify material at high risk by end 2021, and an action plan by end June 2022. |
| 4 | Improve spaces for records processing, preparation, and storage. E.g., reconfiguration of records processing areas, labelling of underutilised shelving space and registration of new locations in TRIM to assist with location tracking of unprocessed collections, central storage location for archival supplies in Archives by end 2022.  |
| 5 | Identify and define gaps in policy and procedures which prevent Archives from fulfilling our mandate by end 2021, especially regarding the collection and preservation of born digital records of enduring value. |
| 6 | Create pathways (develop and implement workflows, tools, processes) for the long-term preservation of and access to permanent records, including ingest into the Library’s digital preservation system *Rosetta*. |

**What will success look like?**

* Disaster response plan and testing schedule in place by end 2021.
* Areas of Archives collection at substantial risk of a) containing inadequate metadata b) high conservation risk have been identified by end 2021.
* Facility checklist in place and monthly checks conducted in 2022.
* A schedule for addressing high risk digital preservation and conservation issues in the Archives collection is established and fully resourced (staff and operating costs) for remediation to commence by end June 2022.
* Un-accessioned material identified, and staff resources required to address backlog quantified by March 2022. Accessions documented in Content Manager for 2021-2 transfers including title, dates (of collection), provenance, and brief description. Phase 1: Complete Processing Room by end 2021. Phase 2: Complete all other areas by June 2022.
* Elimination of back log of transfers to secondary storage by end 2022 (dependent on budget approval for staff resources and budget approval for disposal).
* Problem statement co-created with Data & Analytics team regarding gap in digital preservation policy and processes at RMIT by end 2021.
* Additional (registered) shelving space generated in Archives by end 2022.
* Improved facility for storage and tracking of new/unprocessed accessions to Archives by end 2022.
* Central storage location for archival supplies established in Archives by end 2022.

**Goal 2: Outreach, Engagement and Access**

Ensure Archives play an active, vital, and visible role at RMIT:

3.1 Advocate for and promote the archival collection as a unique asset, its benefit to the community and in enhancing RMIT’s reputation as a world-class University

3.2 Promote and increase the use of the Archives collection to students, researchers, alumni, and members of the wider community and encourage new audiences through the provision of user friendly, accessible, and engaging reference and discovery services (especially digital)

3.3 Surface the voices and stories in the records. Enable people to share stories, transmit memory, and build meaningful and ongoing relationships.

**What we will do**

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| **Priority** | **Objectives**  |
| 1 | Develop and publish digital finding aids (phase 1 – Series list) and enable discovery through LibrarySearch to enhance accessibility to the RMIT Archives collection and resources by end 2021.  |
| 2 | Prepare budget estimate for digitisation of priority records identified in digitisation plan by end August 2021 for funding in 2022. Continue to maintain prioritisation plan for ongoing digitisation in 2023.  |
| 3 | Discover and develop a relevant value proposition to guide outreach, engagement, and access interactions. |
| 4 | Develop a community engagement plan to socialise what we do and create more understanding and transparency by June 2022. |
| 5 | Create Terms of Reference for a Stakeholder Reference Group by end 2022 (potentially with representatives from RMIT University Student Union, academics, [Ngarara Willim](https://www.rmit.edu.au/staff/our-rmit/indigenous-engagement/indigenous-staff-network), Alumni, Library Exec, outside expertise as needed).  |
| 6 | Drive efficiencies in processes and procedures (starting with requests, donations, transfers, and retrievals to and from secondary storage) in 2021 and 2022. |

**What will success look like?**

* Process established for identifying and prioritising urgent requests to manage expectations of our clients going forward by end 2021.
* In 2021 we will respond to all requests within 7-10 days. Note: this refers to the initial response. Chart the improvement against 2015-2019 metrics in %.
* Established method to measure positive client (staff, students, alumni, researchers, and external donor) feedback by end-2022.
* Increased usage of Archives. Measure: maintain/a return to 2019 levels in 2022, and then a 10% increase by end 2022. This will be recorded through request statistics and increase in website hits (Covid allowing).
* Invitations to participate / speak at key events. Measure: maintain/a return to 2019 levels in 2022 (Covid allowing).

**Goal 3: Capability, Skills and Culture**

Develop our capability, skills, and culture to support a 21st-century archive:

4.1 Develop and retain a professional, innovative, responsive, and inclusive collections team

4.2 Create an environment that promotes exploration and experimentation

4.3 Prioritise the wellbeing of all who encounter the Archives, including staff.

**What we will do**

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| **Priority** | **Objectives**  |
| 1 | Ensure Position Descriptions are relevant by end 2021.  |
| 2 | Establish staff well-being days twice a year (negotiate with staff) in 2021 and 2022.  |
| 3 | Create 4 projects in 2021 for casual, volunteer, practicum placement, secondments of various skills and abilities, bearing in mind the critical needs of the unit. |
| 4 | Archives Team - Identify and where appropriate participate in relevant professional training and events and document these in 2021 work plans.  |
| 5 | Workforce planning - Conduct a skills analysis and develop a list of prioritized positions and preliminary job descriptions in case an opportunity arises for a new position/s in 2022.  |

**What will success look like?**

* Archives staff possess an understanding of the main functions of Rosetta (the Library’s digital preservation system) including how to create workflows, prepare and ingest digital material into Rosetta.
* Staff have a clear understanding of their role now and into the future, and feel they are important contributors to the direction of the Archives. Evident through feedback to and from Supervisor charting an improvement from end 2021 to end 2022.
* Staff feel valued, safe, proud of their work, and optimistic about the future, evident through feedback to and from Supervisor charting an improvement from end 2021 to end 2022.
* Users/Visitors see us as knowledgeable, professional, trustworthy, seek our expertise, and enjoy their interactions with Archives. Evident through feedback to Archives charting an improvement from end 2021 to end 2022.
1. This line was sourced from the *RMIT Cultural Collections Strategic Plan 2020-2025* – many thanks Liz Marsden for sharing. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.saada.org/mission> (accessed May 2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This diagram was sourced from the *RMIT Cultural Collections Strategic Plan 2020-2025*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)