The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual

A guide to cataloguing object and image collections




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4th EDITION

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Margaret Fullwood, Evelyn Wright and Val Lawrence look over Captain John Hepburn's flag, Creswick Museum. Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

Acknowledgements

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The manual is based on work undertaken for previous editions. For this edition we would like to acknowledge the contributions of Caroline Carter, Euan McGillivray, Janet Pathé and Roger Trudgeon.

Trophies and team photographs from Huntley Football Club, Huntley and District Historical Society.
Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

Introduction

This publication is the fourth edition of *The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual*, a guide to the hands-on process of documenting objects and visual material in heritage collections. Its genesis stretches back more than two decades to work undertaken by Arts Victoria.

Trench art at Bendigo RSL Soldiers Memorial Museum.
Photograph: Julie Millowick
Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

In 1983, Arts Victoria's Museum Resource Service developed a standardised cataloguing system for regional and community museums, initiated to help educate small-museum staff and volunteers about the importance of documenting collections. The objective was to develop a standardised methodology that was flexible enough to recognise that no two collections are ever the same. They are of differing content and specialisation; objects are of differing size, material and shape; and museums access and use their collections in different ways, with different resources available to them.

The need for standardising cataloguing procedures and techniques was also recognised. This would reflect the national standard of an effective system for recording and retrieving information about collection items. It would also enable computerisation of the catalogue, as the technology became the norm in small museums. *The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual* stems from this desire for a set of common practices, and it has been used in training staff and volunteers and for reference ever since.

Some 25 years on from the first edition, *The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual* continues to provide industry-standard knowledge of this important documentation process. Due to object acquisition and movement, and to address the inevitable backlog of undocumented collection items, cataloguing is an ongoing process in any museum.

Today, computers are an indispensible tool for such work, and are commonplace even in small museums focused on local heritage or devoted to specialist material. Although cataloguing has become computerised rather than paper-based, Museums Australia (Victoria) still urges community museums to use paper worksheets as a step in cataloguing their collections on computer. The benefits include reasonably fast documentation and quality object records.

The most fundamental reorientation of this revised edition of the manual is its assumption that community and regional museums, as well as individual collectors, will build or will already have built their catalogue electronically – that is, on a computer. This reorientation has meant some changes in information from previous editions, and some omissions. For example, an electronic catalogue renders the card index obsolete, as database searches quickly call up all relevant records. Consequently, we've omitted information relating to card indexes.

Similarly, the manual no longer includes a chapter on cataloguing archives. This is not so much because of computerisation, but because the Public Records Office Victoria has developed a Places of Deposit (POD) program, which makes it unlikely that community museums will acquire archives. At the time of writing more than 120 facilities across Victoria were operating as PODs. These provide a network of sites that meet standards for the safekeeping of document archives. A full list of PODs can be found at www.prov.vic.gov/about/collection/deposit.asp. The National Archives of Australia also publishes a very useful guide to archives, titled *Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives*, which we recommend to organisations acquiring an archive.

As the manual's name suggests, it focuses on cataloguing rather than on collection preservation, storage and handling, which were covered to some extent in previous editions. However, attention is necessarily given to the context and activities related to cataloguing. So in the first three chapters we discuss the rationale for cataloguing, relevant policy documents, the tools required for cataloguing, managing digital files, handling objects during cataloguing and object registration and numbering.

Previous editions of the manual included two worksheets, for photographic and non-photographic material. This edition has a single worksheet that can be used for all collection items. The concept of the worksheet is introduced in 'Essentials', while the core chapter, 'The Catalogue', works through each field in a catalogue record, discussing the information required and its purpose, and providing several examples.

As well as containing blank and sample worksheets and a list of useful resources, the appendices include three glossaries to help cataloguers document collection items; they cover materials, production methods and descriptive terms. The glossaries are intended to help cataloguers create meaningful catalogue records for each object by using standard terminology, which will aid any future centralisation of the catalogue.

Museums Australia (Victoria) hopes that this revised edition of *The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual* will serve its members well in enhancing the cultural value and administration of their heritage collections.

Elwyn Blood displays a day dress worn by Eliza Perrin around 1860, Ballarat Gold Museum.
Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

Why Catalogue Collections

Documenting the collection is vital to a museum's active and responsible role in managing its key asset, no matter what the focus of the collection. The reasons for cataloguing are many and varied, but they roughly fall under enriching the collection's cultural value and enhancing its administration.

Child's carriage-style pram for two infants, c. 1900
Photograph: Predrag Cancar. Source: Museum Victoria

Enriching cultural value

Cataloguing underpins many important museum activities, including research, exhibition development, conservation, risk management, publication and outreach work, all of which are dependent on detailed and up-to-date collection information.

Documenting an object enriches its intrinsic value. The accumulation of information gives an object meaning and context, and results in a stronger understanding of its uniqueness, its contribution to the collection and its reason for being collected in the first place.

Meaningful information about objects enhances their intrinsic value and their value to the community. Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

The example below makes it clear how accurate information can increase the cultural value of an object, which can also have a bearing on its economic value. The second description underscores the christening robe's value to both the museum and the community it represents:

Christening robe

A hand-made christening robe: its age, history and donor unknown.

Christening robe

An ivory-coloured, silk christening robe, with smocked bodice and cuffs, and with embroidered spiral patterns and edging. It was hand-made by Mrs Maryanne Jones (nee Campbell) of Carrickbrooke during the 1880s.

The gown was made for the christening of Maryanne's first child, Michael. It was also used for the christening of her six other children and for successive generations of the Jones family until the 1950s. Miss Lily Jones, the daughter of Michael Jones, donated it in 1972. Michael was the headmaster of the Carrickbrooke primary school from 1925 to 1940.

Research into the collection becomes more fruitful when the catalogue is accessible and the objects are accurately documented. While it is fundamental to researching individual items, the catalogue is also important in creating exhibitions – aiding in planning, determining content, label writing, conservation issues and installation.

Once a collection is properly catalogued it becomes easier to see its strengths and weaknesses. The catalogue therefore helps the museum direct its collecting policy and activity, to develop an informed and responsible collection. Well-documented collections also enable museums to compare holdings and develop joint collecting strategies that benefit both organisations, as well as the communities they represent. Such information sharing strengthens ties between collecting groups and can lead to collaborative exhibitions and research programs.

The catalogue also helps staff and volunteers with outreach work and public inquiries. Responses to inquiries can be carried out with greater efficiency, authority and precision, enhancing the museum's public profile and reputation.

Enhancing administration

Cataloguing delivers great benefits to collection and asset administration. Crucially, the catalogue helps determine the legal ownership of an object. At the point of acquisition, the donor – or the donor's representative – will sign a document transferring legal title to the museum; this transferral of ownership is recorded in the museum register and then in the catalogue. Ownership gives the museum the right to conserve, display, store and, if necessary, dispose of the object. The 'record of acquisition' also makes it easy for the museum to distinguish between items in its permanent collection and those on loan.

By recording the location of objects, the catalogue aids in their security and retrieval. But the system is only as good as the information recorded, so it must be current. The catalogue's 'location' field functions as a tracking device, mapping the movement of an item during its life in the collection. Objects' physical integrity is more likely to be protected if they are well documented than if they are not, as there is less need to access them. This is especially true for photographs, as the originals can be catalogued and kept in storage, with access copies available for research and other purposes. Any deterioration of items can also be noted in the catalogue, so that preservation or conservation work can be undertaken as necessary.

Finally, in the event of theft, vandalism, fire or any other natural disaster, the worth of having the collection comprehensively documented (including photographed) is immense. In the case of theft, a precise list of objects can be presented to insurers and the police. Detailed collection information helps insurers value the museum's loss and it aids police in investigating the theft and, with luck, in identifying and returning stolen items. If an object were damaged, a thorough description may allow its restoration and conservation. If it were lost, the catalogue would at least provide a record of its existence.

The catalogue tells Alleyne Hockley exactly where to locate the object she is after at Castlemaine Historical Society. Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

Peter Cuffley and Rodger Palmer with the Captain Robert Page Collection, Maldon Museum and Archives Inc.
Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

Essentials

The catalogue is a repository for knowledge about the museum's most culturally valuable asset – its collection – as well as a tool for managing object information and for helping administer the collection.

Cataloguing comprises the very specific task of object documentation, but it exists within a broader museum context. This chapter first looks at documents that inform how a collection is shaped and managed, and then discusses cataloguing 'worksheets', cataloguing tools, safe handling of objects during cataloguing and the management of digital files. Registration and object numbering form part of the broader context of cataloguing, but these aspects are covered in the dedicated chapter that follows.

Magpie eggs from the H.L. White Collection of Australian Birds' Eggs. Photograph: Michelle McFarlane. Source: Museum Victoria

Policy documents

The 'statement of purpose' and the 'collection policy' are two of the most important documents the museum will produce. Together they describe its role, responsibilities and objectives, and they guide and inform the work of staff and volunteers. They are fundamental to how the museum operates and they better position the museum to determine how its collections will be used.

Statement of purpose

The statement of purpose clearly and succinctly outlines the museum's intention, expressing its philosophy and vision. It is a short written statement that includes:

- the primary reason for the museum
- the functions of the museum
- the subject area, time period and geographical location covered by the collection, and
- a clause for reviewing the statement.

Clearly articulated objectives enhance museum management, providing a touchstone for managers when devising short- and long-term plans. For staff and volunteers they create a focused and collaborative working environment, with individuals working towards clear common goals. Once endorsed by museum management, the statement of purpose can be made publicly available, and included in the museum's policy documents and public relations material.

Collection policy

The collection policy is a management tool that describes what sort of material the museum will collect and how it will care for its collection. It is essential to the work of the cataloguer, as it helps determine the material that will take priority and be comprehensively documented.

This detailed policy document sets out the criteria against which proposed acquisitions are assessed, so that the museum retains the clear vision expressed in its statement of purpose. It explains how the museum cares for its collection, outlining documentation, conservation, loans and deaccessioning procedures. The collection policy should include:

- the museum's statement of purpose
- what it will collect and how
- criteria guiding object acquisition
- procedures for collection care, documentation and recordkeeping, conservation and storage, and loans, and
- a clause for reviewing the statement.

The result of a good collection policy is that the museum builds a strong and focused collection that is suited for display and research. The procedure guidelines included in the policy not only ensure the care of the collection, but they also increase staff and volunteers' understanding of the functions and responsibilities of the collecting organisation.

Introducing worksheets

A worksheet represents a single catalogue, or object, record – a unique record of information about an object. Together a group of records comprise the catalogue.

The worksheet has been created as the first stage of building or adding to a catalogue, as the object information recorded is then transferred to the computerised catalogue. The reasons for not entering information directly into the catalogue are discussed on p. 44. A blank worksheet is at appendix 1 of this manual for you to copy and use during cataloguing.

The worksheet has been devised with fields in which information about an object is recorded. These reflect the fields commonly used in museum cataloguing softwares. No matter what object is being catalogued – a lantern, a photograph or a plough, for example – the same *type* of information is recorded in the same field. This point cannot be overstated, for if a museum catalogue is centralised with similar catalogues and accessed broadly by museum professionals and others, it is crucial that the user interprets the data in the same way. Authority lists and thesauri are particularly useful in creating consistency in terminology and spelling across catalogue records, and are discussed later in this chapter, on pp. 22–23.

Some catalogue fields are mandatory and must be completed for all objects; these have been indicated with an asterisk (*) on both the worksheet and in the explanations of relevant fields in the chapter 'The Catalogue'. The completion of other fields (discretionary fields) depends on the object being catalogued or on the level information available.

The worksheet has been developed to record all relevant information about an object so that a comprehensive and meaningful catalogue can be created. But it cannot be the repository for all information about collection objects. Supplementary files support the catalogue; these are both hardcopy and digital files (the former usually stored in a filing cabinet) that contain further information about an object, such as its history, receipt of purchase and reference material. The supplementary files help keep the catalogue to a manageable size. They are further explained on pp. 26–27 and p. 62.

Cataloguing tools

To create a catalogue you'll require both 'manual' and electronic tools. Because we suggest recording object information on worksheets before entering it into the electronic catalogue, this section is organised to reflect that process.

Workspace and manual tools

Space is important when documenting objects, as the risk of damaging items is increased in a small, cluttered or badly lit area. A designated cataloguing space is ideal, with a table large enough to hold both your cataloguing tools and the objects. It should be well lit and secure, as there will be times when collection material is left unsupervised. It is the cataloguer's responsibility to ensure objects' security during cataloguing and their return to storage on completion.

All cataloguing tools and materials should be on hand when you begin, and they should be of good quality. To complete the cataloguing worksheets you will need:

- blank worksheets
- HB pencils, preferably with retractable leads
- a quality eraser
- A4 plastic sleeves for housing each worksheet, and
- an A4 lever-arch binder in which to store the worksheets.

You will also need the following items for examining objects:

- a retractable metric measuring tape
- a metric ruler
- white cotton gloves, and
- latex or powder-free nitrile gloves.

Apart from the worksheets and nitrile gloves, these materials are available at newsagencies or art supply shops. A blank worksheet is included in the appendices to this manual, which you can print or photocopy as many times as you need to.

Gloves are used to protect objects from the oils and salts of your skin while they are being handled. Cotton gloves are mainly used, but for objects with smooth surfaces such as glass they pose a risk. These objects are easier to grip with latex or nitrile gloves. Latex gloves are more readily available and affordable than nitrile gloves, which can be ordered from Mediflex Industries.

Computer

The computer and the cataloguing software – the database used to build a catalogue – are essential. In an ideal world, a central server will host the catalogue, so that it can be accessed from more than one computer. But a small regional or community museum is unlikely to have such resources, so the catalogue will live on a single computer.

If a new computer is needed, ensure it is compatible with the museum's existing computer system. It will require sufficient memory to run the cataloguing software and extras, and to build the catalogue. Discuss your hardware and software needs with an IT expert, and if possible talk with others who have established and used a computerised catalogue.

When deciding on the museum's computer requirements, it is worth considering how many catalogue users there will be and their computer experience, and the future requirements the catalogue: will the museum link to other catalogues via CAN (Collections Australia Network) or Picture Australia? Will it be a large catalogue of thousands of records? Will the catalogue be required to store digital image files? What reports might you want to run? What sort of extras, such as authority lists and thesauri, might be used? It's worth resolving such issues before purchasing a computer and software, as this can save time, money and heartache, and will satisfy the museum's immediate and long-term cataloguing needs.

Cataloguing software

There is a range of cataloguing software available. Websites for museum-based software such as Adlib, Maxus, Mosaic and Vernon will be useful in your research. Different softwares offer varying levels of sophistication, and they are priced to match. An off-the-shelf package for museums is the Inmagic TextWorks package 'Maxus Collections', which is based on our worksheet; Inmagic also produces 'Maxus Artworks' for galleries and artists cataloguing artworks.

If you choose a software used extensively by museums throughout Victoria this will allow you to share tips and discuss catalogue issues with fellow users. Some softwares provide features such as efficient searching and reporting, image management and simple image-linking to records. When purchasing a software check whether a back-up service is available to provide assistance and upgrades, and whether this is free.

Authority lists and thesauri

Authority lists and thesauri are useful software add-ons that make cataloguing faster – and they make both cataloguing and information retrieval easier. They provide consistent terms and spelling by imposing standardised terminology.

Authority lists, also called 'look-up lists', are pop-up word lists that can be loaded into the catalogue database to control the terms used in specific fields. They are used in fields in which similar data recurs, such as those requiring the maker's role, town and country names, and information on how an object was acquired.

Existing authority lists can be loaded or else lists can be self-generated. Both approaches have benefits and disadvantages. An existing list requires very little maintenance but it may not cover the museum's needs as its collection grows, necessitating a large 'other' category to which new terms can be added. A self-generated list, on the other hand, requires greater maintenance and is the responsibility of the lead cataloguer. Once a new term has been typed into the field, it can then be added to the list for future use. But the cataloguer needs to be mindful that words are spelt correctly and the list doesn't become unwieldy. A large authority list can create ambiguity and confusion over preferred terms, especially if there are several co-cataloguers or if communication is poor.

A thesaurus is a more complex authority list, controlling subject terminology. Essentially it is a classification system, and it is used to control the preferred term(s) to describe an object. For example, an aeroplane could be described as a plane, an aircraft or an aeroplane by different cataloguers. All are correct, but what would a researcher use when searching the object records of the database. The thesaurus avoids such confusion by classifying according to a preferred term, and hierarchically grouping any related terms. The cataloguer can then select a general or specific term simply by scrolling through the given hierarchy.

A thesaurus is also used to place an object within a grouping of similar collection objects, but this is done through the Australia Picture Thesaurus (see the following paragraph). For example, you may wish to group all objects relating to food and drink containers under that name, so that 'food and drink containers' becomes the term for all similar items associated with the kitchen. But you may also want to include narrower or broader terms, such as 'ceramic cup' or 'domestic technology' respectively. (More descriptive details, such as 'floral pattern', can be entered into the 'description' field so do not need to be part of a thesaurus.) A good thesaurus will provide such a hierarchy of terms, which enable broad and narrow searches to be made with relative ease.

You can use an off-the-shelf thesaurus, or more than one if you have a large and complex collection. If you're considering using multiple thesauri, we strongly advise that you consider your resources and the nature of the collection first. Thesaurus building can be a long and tedious task requiring expertise, so we don't recommend this. But it's possible to customise existing lists. Australian Picture Thesaurus (APT) in effect encourages this by welcoming cataloguers to submit terms to the central managing body, which updates the main thesaurus every three months.

There are many thesauri available. The National Library of Australia provides a list of Australian-specific thesauri, including for Indigenous terms, images, photographs and manuscripts. A comprehensive thesaurus such as the APT is good, as it provides Australian terms and is broad ranging. It is hosted by the State Library of New South Wales and is free to download. It is continually modified, so you need to download it regularly. Alternatively, the APT can be used online, which means you will always have the latest terms. You can check the website at www.picturethesaurus.gov.au to see if the preferred terms are relevant for your museum's collection.

Handling objects

During cataloguing you will need to handle collection objects to some degree. A guiding principle is that objects should be handled as infrequently as possible, as this reduces the risk of damage and deterioration.

Even when an object is small and light it should be handled with both hands and with great care. In most cases gloves should be worn, so that objects are protected from the oils of your skin and remain in as pristine a condition as possible. There will be occasions on which you should exercise your discretion about the sense of using cotton gloves. These would be simply too slippery when handling, for example, objects made of crystal, glass or some ceramics. You can wear latex or nitrile gloves, or if gloves are not worn, make sure your hands are clean and dry before handling objects. To reduce the risk of damage, you can examine objects over a padded or covered bench top.

An object as fragile as this jet-beaded collar is best handled by two people, so it is kept flat and the stress on the fabric minimised.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Before moving an object check for points of weakness and/or damage that could be exacerbated through handling or lead to it being dropped. These will determine how it should be handled and carried. Handles or rims may have been weakened by age or general deterioration, so avoid carrying objects by these components; always support objects by their base. If you are moving two or more small items it's advisable to place them in a padded box or padded plastic tub before moving them. Otherwise, make sure the objects are moved one at a time.

When furniture is being moved it should be carried and not dragged. Often it will require more than one person, so ask for help and have an agreed game plan and cleared pathway before you begin. If a small team is required, it's best that one person directs and supervises activities. And remember to check doorway clearances before you begin.

Nitrile or latex gloves are recommended for handling objects difficult to grip with cotton gloves.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley
Source: Museum Victoria

Weighty objects can be held close to the body with both hands to ensure their safe handling.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley
Source: Museum Victoria

This ceramic vase is correctly supported at its base and its neck. Clean bare hands can be used on objects whose surface won't be affected by oils from the skin.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Managing digital files

The storage capacity of your computer system is important, as it will determine the amount of digital information you can store for the long term. We don't recommend indefinite storage of files on CDs or DVDs; an external hard drive is a good option.

You may find that you are collecting a large number of digital documents relating to your collection. These can be emails, Word documents, requests for information or additions to object data, or requests to publish collection images. These files must be stored in an organised fashion, just as 'hard' documents are filed systematically for easy retrieval. A good system is to create folders by registration number, seeing as this is the unique identifier for each collection object. If an object has a large digital supplementary file, you might want to use subfolders such as 'Research material', 'Images', 'Correspondence', with files named in a manner that indicates their content.

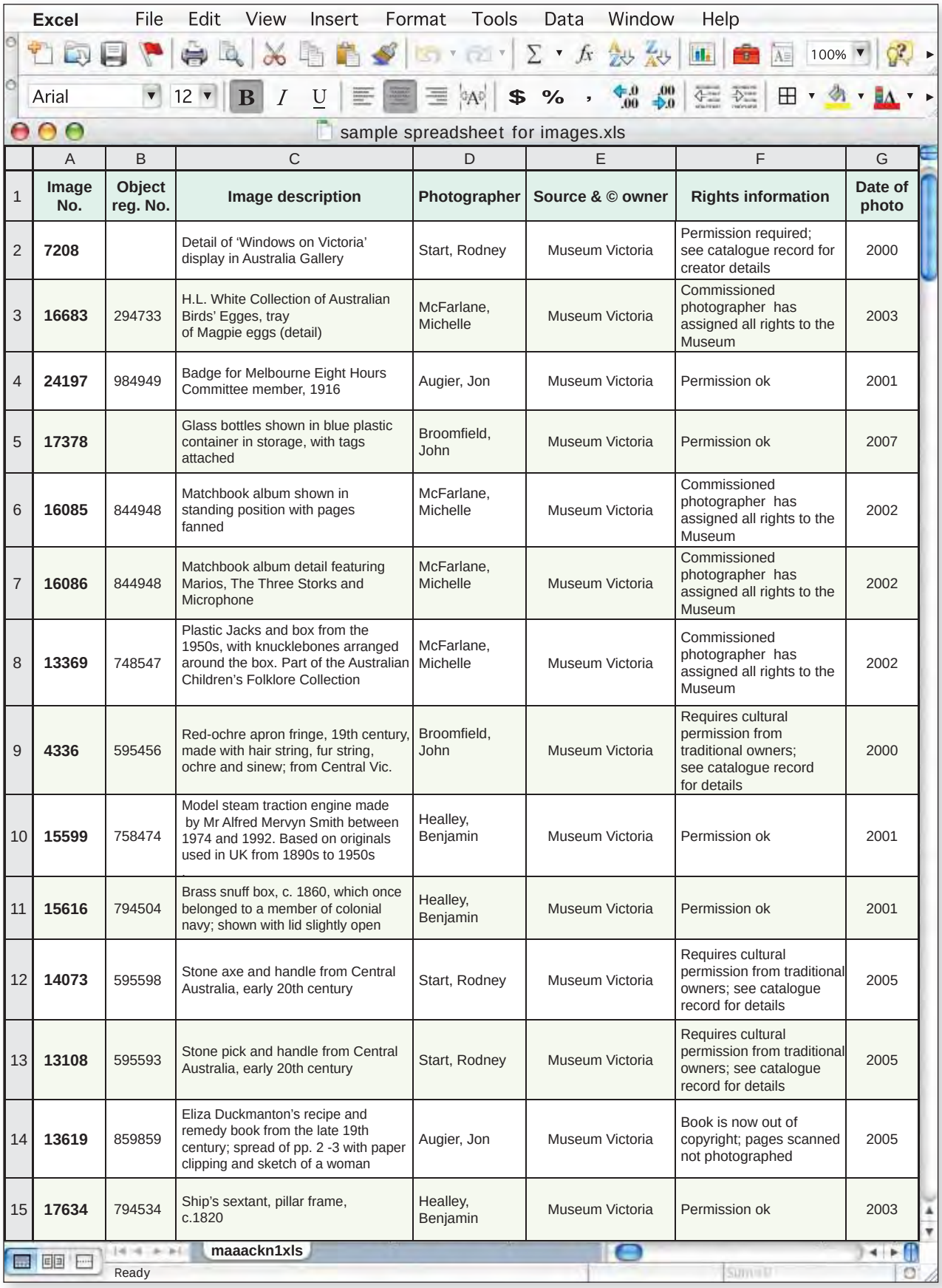
High-resolution digital photographs – for reproduction in publications, exhibition catalogues, newsletters and the like – can also be stored. Because of their large size, it's best to store them on a different server or hard drive from that which hosts the catalogue. As noted above, they can be stored in folders named by registration number.

Naming image files can be complex. If you name each by the object's registration number, how do you cope with multiple views of one object? One system is to give each an *image number*, which is added to a spreadsheet recording all images. The spreadsheet should have columns for the following information:

- image number
- object's registration number
- image description
- photographer
- source and copyright owner
- rights information (e.g., copyright, or cultural rights in the case of Indigenous material), and
- date taken.

This spreadsheet is a map of sorts, which allows for both the quick location of the image you're after and an overview of all digital photographic material of collection objects. To work as it is intended, the spreadsheet must be updated as new photographs are taken. It can be stored in the digital 'supplementary file' folder.

Low-resolution digital photographs can be linked to catalogue records as reference images, so these will need to sit on the same hard drive as the catalogue unless the computer is linked to a server.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	**Image No.**	**Object reg. No.**	**Image description**	**Photographer**	**Source & © owner**	**Rights information**	**Date of photo**
2	**7208**		Detail of 'Windows on Victoria' display in Australia Gallery	Start, Rodney	Museum Victoria	Permission required; see catalogue record for creator details	2000
3	**16683**	294733	H.L. White Collection of Australian Birds' Egges, tray of Magpie eggs (detail)	McFarlane, Michelle	Museum Victoria	Commissioned photographer has assigned all rights to the Museum	2003
4	**24197**	984949	Badge for Melbourne Eight Hours Committee member, 1916	Augier, Jon	Museum Victoria	Permission ok	2001
5	**17378**		Glass bottles shown in blue plastic container in storage, with tags attached	Broomfield, John	Museum Victoria	Permission ok	2007
6	**16085**	844948	Matchbook album shown in standing position with pages fanned	McFarlane, Michelle	Museum Victoria	Commissioned photographer has assigned all rights to the Museum	2002
7	**16086**	844948	Matchbook album detail featuring Marios, The Three Storks and Microphone	McFarlane, Michelle	Museum Victoria	Commissioned photographer has assigned all rights to the Museum	2002
8	**13369**	748547	Plastic Jacks and box from the 1950s, with knucklebones arranged around the box. Part of the Australian Children's Folklore Collection	McFarlane, Michelle	Museum Victoria	Commissioned photographer has assigned all rights to the Museum	2002
9	**4336**	595456	Red-ochre apron fringe, 19th century, made with hair string, fur string, ochre and sinew; from Central Vic.	Broomfield, John	Museum Victoria	Requires cultural permission from traditional owners; see catalogue record for details	2000
10	**15599**	758474	Model steam traction engine made by Mr Alfred Mervyn Smith between 1974 and 1992. Based on originals used in UK from 1890s to 1950s	Healley, Benjamin	Museum Victoria	Permission ok	2001
11	**15616**	794504	Brass snuff box, c. 1860, which once belonged to a member of colonial navy; shown with lid slightly open	Healley, Benjamin	Museum Victoria	Permission ok	2001
12	**14073**	595598	Stone axe and handle from Central Australia, early 20th century	Start, Rodney	Museum Victoria	Requires cultural permission from traditional owners; see catalogue record for details	2005
13	**13108**	595593	Stone pick and handle from Central Australia, early 20th century	Start, Rodney	Museum Victoria	Requires cultural permission from traditional owners; see catalogue record for details	2005
14	**13619**	859859	Eliza Duckmanton's recipe and remedy book from the late 19th century; spread of pp. 2 -3 with paper clipping and sketch of a woman	Augier, Jon	Museum Victoria	Book is now out of copyright; pages scanned not photographed	2005
15	**17634**	794534	Ship's sextant, pillar frame, c.1820	Healley, Benjamin	Museum Victoria	Permission ok	2003

A spreadsheet recording photographs taken of collection objects gives quick access to all relevant details, including copyright status. The digital photographs are named and filed according to their image number, given here in the left-hand column.

Jan Dods works in the local history room at St Arnaud Regional Library.
Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

The Register

Registering objects has a natural relationship with cataloguing them, as an object must be formally registered before it is documented. During registration an object is assigned a unique and permanent identification number, which distinguishes it from all other items held in the collection. This chapter explains the procedures for registering and numbering objects.

Alan Lubke, Maureen Mannion and Tim Mannion from Nathalia Historical Society keep an up-to-date register as part of their collection management procedure.
Photograph: Euan McGillivray. Source: Museums Australia (Victoria)

Registering objects

Each collection object acquired by a museum must be entered into its registration book, also known as the 'acquisitions register'. It is used only for objects entering the permanent collection, as a separate book is used to record items arriving on temporary loan. Ideally, one person will be responsible for the register and access to it will be limited.

The book should be permanently bound, with stitched binding and a heavy-duty cover, and have ruled and numbered pages of quality paper. This may appear old fashioned in the digital age, but the register is the museum's most important primary reference of the collection, and a back up if the catalogue cannot be accessed and worksheets are misplaced. The book should be kept in a safe cabinet to guarantee its security.

Entries are made to the book using a calligraphy, Rotring or fountain pen, and with black fade- and waterproof ink, such as Indian ink. The registrar's handwriting should be clear and neat, and all information should be double-checked for accuracy as it is entered. Minor errors can be deleted using correcting fluid, but resist writing over this as the dried fluid can flake off, taking the information with it. Alternatively, rule a line through an incorrect entry; the correct information can then be written just above it – signed and dated, just as you would a wrongly scribed cheque.

Ideally, each double-page spread of the register should be ruled into seven columns titled:

- registration date
- registration number
- object name and description
- acquisition method
- acquisition date
- source's name and address
- comments.

The width of the columns for 'object name and description' and 'source's details' will need to be wider than the other five columns. The following sections explain the information required for each column.

Registration date

The date the object is entered into the book is often different from the date it was acquired; it may have been acquired in 1985 but not registered for another five years or more. This is often the case when a museum has a large documentation backlog, or when a collection is acquired. The registration date indicates the pace at which registration is progressing and makes the acquisition date more meaningful.

Registration number

This is a unique identifying number that distinguishes one object from another. The entry of numbers is usually sequential, according to when the object was acquired. The simplest method is to begin at 1, but this is not imperative. Some museums use a compound numbering system, beginning with the year of acquisition followed by a sequential number. (If required, a third component could indicate what part of the collection the object belongs to, although this is unnecessary for most small museums.) The compound numbering system can quickly indicate when the object was received and may avoid very large numbers. If a museum has a backlog of objects to register, the simple sequential system is probably best.

In cases where objects are closely related – such as a cup and saucer, a pair of boots, or handcuffs and a key – a point numbering system can be used. This indicates an object has distinct but related parts, and it is more practical and intuitive than recording individual registration numbers for each component. A decimal point separates the registration number and the 'part number'. If a pair of babies' booties were registered, for example, the second part of the number would be '2', indicating two components make up the item and fall under the single registration number, as shown here:

Reg. no.	**Object name**
1	Chair
2	Book
3.8	Coffee cup and saucer set
4	Money box
5	Map
6.2	Babies' booties, pair
7	Painting

The label on these booties notes that two parts comprise the single object.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

While the register shows a single number (the reg. no. together with the highest part number; i.e., 6.2), each bootie is marked with the registration number plus the 'part number' – in the case of the booties, 6.1 and 6.2.

One drawback of this system is that additional pieces of a set may come into the collection. This is not an issue where you know you have the complete item, such as with the booties, but two additional coffee cups and saucers matching an existing set of four could be acquired. If this were the case, the registration number in the example above would need to change from 3.8 to 3.12. An alternative system is to have a registration number with no part number, but to note the parts on the labels attached to objects, as shown in the photograph of the booties – part 1 of 2 and part 2 of 2.

Where it is difficult to tell if objects are part of a set and you're in doubt as to whether to assign a part number or a separate registration number, create a separate number. You can then link the objects by recording the number(s) of any other parts in the 'comments' column of the register and the 'notes' field of the worksheet and catalogue.

This Minton coffee cup and saucer set has several parts, and like the booties each part of the whole is indicated on the label. Note also its storage in a padded heavy-plastic container. Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Remember, that no matter what numbering system is used, it is imperative that each number is unique to an object. A number should *never* be assigned to more than one item, or reallocated if an object is deaccessioned. It is also important that an object only be registered once. If it is registered a second time, cancel one of the entries by ruling a line through the entry in the register and adding a note to 'comments'.

If an archive is acquired, it can be allocated a single registration number. For information on managing an archive, we recommend you consult the National Archives of Australia's *Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives*.

Once the registration number is generated, the object must carry that number. See pp. 35–41.

Object name and description

Specify the object in a word or two (e.g., badge) and briefly describe it (e.g., silver-coloured metal, with two-tone blue enamel inset). A more comprehensive description will be given in the catalogue.

Acquisition method

It is useful to know whether the object was acquired by the museum through donation, purchase or by other means. The method of acquisition should be specified in this column.

Acquisition date

This indicates the object's arrival at the museum, not the date it is registered. Dates should always be written in full and in the same day-month-year form; for example, 16-04-1994.

Source's name and address

Whether the object was donated, purchased or collected by other means, the source's name (personal or company) and contact details must be recorded.

Comments

Important additional information is given in this column. It may highlight the object's significance or relate it to another object in the collection. Subsequent information about the object can also be recorded here, such as if it is missing or stolen, or has been deaccessioned or transferred, as shown below:

Comments
See reg. no. 35 and reg. no. 36
Part of the Bennett Collection
Stolen 17-03-2002

Or:

Comments
Reg. no. cancelled; object registered twice in error, see reg. no. 212

Badge for Melbourne Eight Hours Committee member, 1916.
Photograph: Jon Augier. Source: Museum Victoria

Numbering objects

Each object in the collection must physically carry the number assigned to it during registration, even when it is on display. This ensures the link between the object and its documentation is retained. Once a number is assigned during registration, the object itself can be numbered.

Traditionally, three-dimensional objects are numbered directly on their surface, but an easier method is to secure a small, acid-free card label with cotton tape or string. We recommend this method for community museums, as it is quick and straightforward and avoids issues such as what varnishes can be used on what materials, as well as mixing varnishes and cleaning brushes. Depending on the size of the label, other information can be given, such as the object name and source. The risk of this labelling method is that the number may become detached, so great care must be taken in how and where you attach it.

The label strings on the clear-glass bottles are too long and risk getting tangled. The label on bottle to the right is the ideal length.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Paper items are numbered using a 2B to 6B pencil, and textiles by stitching on a piece of numbered white cotton tape. All methods are reversible, in the event a number must later be removed. Numbering methods that should at all costs be avoided are sticky labels, as the adhesives can damage object surfaces, and ballpoint and texta pens, which can also permanently damage objects.

Your kit should include the following items:

- acid-free card or Tyvek labels
- black Pigma pen (size .1)
- 2B–6B pencils
- quality eraser
- scissors
- 6mm and 12mm white cotton tape
- white cotton string, and
- sewing needles and white cotton thread.

To begin numbering, place the object on a clean empty bench top. You may want to cushion it or protect it with a layer of acid-free paper. The surface of the object should be clean before you begin. Dust can be removed with a sable brush.

Three-dimensional objects

If you are numbering objects using the tag method, acid-free card with reinforced tie holes can be used, or else Tyvek labels – a paper-like material that's near impossible to rip, so does not need reinforcing. (Tyvek labels are more expensive and harder to find than acid-free card, but are available from Archival Survival and Zetta Florence.) Most objects can be tied with a 6mm-wide cotton-tape tie or a cotton string; large objects may require a 12mm-wide cotton tape tie. The registration number should be written on the tag in Pigma pen, which is archival, acid-free and fade- and waterproof.

When attaching the numbered label, loop the string through the label and tie a knot before attaching to the object. This stops the edge of the label rubbing the object's surface. The label should always be tied fairly close to the object, so it does not get knotted with the labels of other objects or caught around protruding components. Consider carefully how to attach the label so it won't damage the object or become detached. It can be safely tied around a handle or though a hole in an object, or if the object is round – with no obvious and safe point for attachment – it can be cross-tied much like a parcel.

Equipment for numbering and/or cataloguing is best kept together in a kit.

If there is no obvious place to fasten an object label, cross-tie it much like you would a parcel.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Pass the label tie back through itself before fastening it to the object.
The buckle on this ferret box is a safe and convenient place for attaching the label.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Numbering a large piece of agricultural or industrial machinery or a transport vehicle can be difficult, especially if the item is stored in a shed or used for demonstrations. A large Tyvek label with the number written in black Pigma pen can be attached using galvanised wire. Alternatively, attach an anodised aluminium tag, on which the registration number is embossed or engraved.

While we no longer recommend community museums number items directly, if you do choose this method paint a small rectangle of basecoat and allow this to dry completely. Write the number on the basecoat with a Rotring or fountain pen, using black Indian ink or white Rotring ink. The colour of ink will depend on the colour of the object; contrast increases legibility so will guide your decision. Allow the written number to dry before applying a topcoat of varnish. The following guidelines are useful to remember:

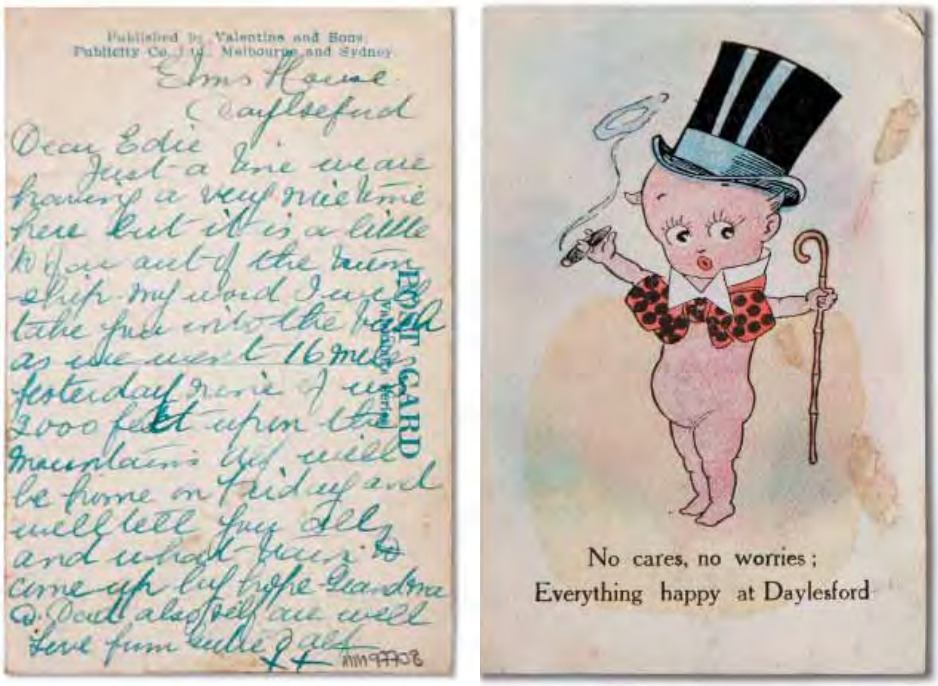
- Choose a place on the object where the number will be unobtrusive and yet easy to locate without excessive handling of the object. The number should not be visible when the object is on display.
- Be systematic, placing the number in a similar position on similar objects. This will make it quicker and easier for colleagues to locate the number, and will save unnecessary handling.
- The number should not deface or damage an object, and must not interfere with its finish, design or other markings.
- Avoid numbering an object on its flat base, as the number will become scratched or wear off.
- The number should measure around 2–5mm in height.
- If an object is very small or there is no surface on which to place a number, attach a numbered label.

If you use this method, your kit should contain the following materials, on top of those listed on p. 37:

- clear varnish, basecoat (30% paraloid B72 in acetone) and topcoat (30% paraloid B67 in petroleum spirit)
- varnish remover (acetone for basecoat and petroleum spirit for topcoat)
- 2mm, flattened, soft-bristled paintbrush
- fountain pen or Rotring pen (size .35) and black Indian ink, and
- fountain pen or Rotring pen (size .05) and white Rotring ink.

Paper objects

Paper objects such as photographs, books and documents should be numbered using a soft-leaded pencil. A 2B to 6B pencil will not damage the paper and can be easily removed with a quality art eraser if necessary. Flat paper objects should be discretely numbered on the lower right-hand corner of the reverse side.



Number paper objects such as this postcard with a soft-leaded pencil on the lower right-hand corner. Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Stored items such as these photographs can also be numbered on their housing, so they don't need to be removed to be identified. Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Textile objects

Numbers should never be written directly onto textiles, such as costumes, flags, manchester and needlework. They should be written onto a piece of 6mm white cotton tape (20–25mm in length) with a black Pigma pen, and then hand sewn onto the item using a single thread of white cotton. Small stitches should be made along the short sides of the tag only, and not be visible from the other side of the item.

We recommend sewing the tag to the inside back waistband of skirts and trousers, to the underside of the left-hand shoulder seam of shirts and coats, and to the lower right-hand reverse side of flat items.

Take care with where you stitch the registration number. The number on this christening gown will likely be visible when the object is on display.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Writing box presented to Elizabeth Ann Bennett, Linton Historical Society.
Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

The Catalogue

The catalogue is a powerful tool for centralising knowledge about a collection. Where once it was a paper-based archive, it is now a computer database, with a separate record for every object catalogued. When it is created, managed and used correctly, it assists all staff and volunteers in their work – from collection managers to curators, conservators to administrators.

Minton coffee cup and saucer.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

The objective of cataloguing is not to document every object in the collection at the expense of meaningful records, but to create a useful resource for knowing, accessing and managing the collection. Some forethought is therefore required before building a catalogue, or before adding new object records. You need to consider the strengths of the collection and where the museum will gain most value from having particular objects or parts of the collection catalogued. Many collections have component parts, and this will make it easier to determine priority areas; in other cases, you may need to consider the most important or used objects in the collection and prioritise these. And remember, the life of a catalogue record does not end with its initial completion. New information about an object may come to light, and this should be added. Similarly, if an object's location changes, the catalogue should reflect this movement.

It is ideal if one person is assigned responsibility of the catalogue. If others contribute to cataloguing, the lead cataloguer can direct the energies of co-cataloguers, so that confusion, error or repetition is avoided, and to see that priority areas are undertaken first and are adequately addressed.

Dependent on museum resources, a recommended approach is that one or more cataloguers complete worksheets and that these are then entered into the catalogue by the lead cataloguer. The worksheet reflects a catalogue record, so this approach enables comparatively fast documentation and allows the lead cataloguer to retain an overview of progress and to monitor the quality of object records. It is also a useful approach because the cataloguing workspace needs to be uncluttered, and the space required for a computer can make it difficult to work with the objects in a way that guarantees their safety.

Needless to say, a catalogue is intended to be valuable and practical for all users. To achieve this, all users must be aware of how it works and how to use it. Any system takes time to learn, but the key is to make the catalogue as straightforward as possible and to provide guidelines to help users access the information they are after. These guidelines would also include, for example, directions on how to interpret the storage locations as they are designated in the catalogue and museum, and would form part of the museum's general reference information for staff and volunteers.

Cataloguing objects

The rest of this chapter is devoted to cataloguing fields. It explains the information that belongs in each field and, where relevant, raises issues to consider when completing fields. In many instances we give examples for guidance, and in the appendices you'll find a set of completed sample worksheets covering a range of object types. The fields are organised according to the sequence of the worksheet, so that you can work methodically to create a catalogue record for each collection object. You will find a blank worksheet at Appendix 1, which you can copy and use as many times as necessary.

When completing worksheets, remember the importance of using standardised terminology wherever possible. You'll find the glossaries of descriptive terms, production methods and materials in the appendices of this manual helpful in this regard. When transferring worksheet information to the catalogue, authority lists and thesauri loaded into the cataloguing software will aid standardisation and make the job of data input easier. Where an asterisk accompanies a field heading, it indicates the information required is mandatory.

Marion Melen and Lila Curry catalogue collection objects at Maryborough Midlands Historical Society.
Photograph: Julie Millowick. Source: Department of Planning and Community Development

Registration number*

This is a unique and permanent number given to each object in the collection as a form of identification. It distinguishes one object from another, so it is carried by the object and by all documentation relating to it. Registration numbering systems are usually sequential. The previous chapter discusses numbering, with the physical numbering of objects described on pp. 35–41.

Where objects are closely related, such as a teacup and saucer or a game of Jacks, a point numbering system can be used to indicate an object has more than one part. A decimal point separates the registration number and 'part number', so that the Jacks would be registered, for example, as 2.6, indicating the object with the registration number '2' has six parts (see also p. 32).

Reg. no.	Object name
1	Table
2.6	Jacks, game
3.2	Teacup and saucer
4	Ferret box

If only one part of the teacup and saucer set were found during a collection inventory, the catalogue and the register would alert staff to the fact that two pieces had entered the collection, so one is missing.

This part numbering system is also useful in cataloguing visual material, where you have a group of closely related images. These can be given a common registration number, but be individually marked by the combination of their registration number and part number.

The original packaging forms the sixth part of this game of Jacks.
Photograph: Michelle McFarlane
Source: Museum Victoria

Object name*

This is a one- or two-word description of the object – an everyday description, so to speak. Object names vary considerably from area to area, but it is important to standardise names as far as possible within each museum, such as using 'spanner' rather than both 'spanner' and 'monkey wrench' to describe this item. This establishes a consistent classificatory approach to the collection and helps others find what they are after, and it will more likely capture all relevant objects when a catalogue search is performed in this field.

Where an object name has a qualifier, there is a good argument for having the qualifier follow the primary name, separated by a comma:

Saw, tenon
Chair, dining
Plough, stump jump

This is not imperative, but if Excel spreadsheets are used to move information between databases it streamlines the sorting process and enhances access and use.

When you are cataloguing visual material, be as accurate as possible about the medium. Is the item a photograph (original or copy), lantern slide, transparency, postcard, lithograph, watercolour or something else? If you are unable to identify the medium, it is best to simply use 'image'.

Objects are not always easy to identify, which makes cataloguing difficult. There are many excellent reference books available to help identify antiques, collectables and other items, and ideally museums will build a small reference library to aid cataloguers and researchers in their work.

An object such as this fibre apron from the Wimmera River will be difficult to identify without the help of references, and perhaps an expert.
Photograph: John Broomfield
Source: Museum Victoria

Title

This discretionary field is used for books, works of art, titled documents and photographs and the like. It is for recording the title given by the creator, rather than one attributed to the work later. Titles should be recorded exactly, including any punctuation; e.g., *Damaged: Handbook of Destructive Insects.*

A series of images can have a single title (a series title), which makes this field very useful for someone performing a search for *all* images comprising a series. For example, 'Caught' might be the photographer's title for a series of 10 photographs of locals fishing along the Murray River in 1964.

Description*

The purpose of this field is to provide a description of the item, but not a history or interpretation of it. Nor is it the place for a formal significance statement. However, if the object has some obvious significance – such as it being the Bible that belonged to the first settler of the local community – this detail should be included.

The aim of this field is for the reader to be able to visualise the object. The opening sentence should reiterate the object's name, which is given with a little more detail. The rest of the entry should clearly describe its physical attributes, including any damage or missing parts. Ideally, it will be no more than about five sentences.

It is useful to start describing the object from one point (top or bottom), focusing on the most prominent features and working systematically to a natural end point. The sorts of elements to note are shape, colour, materials, texture, ornamentation, method of production, relative size and moving parts. You may find the glossaries in the appendices helpful.

The following example describes a model showman's steam traction engine held in a history collection:

> This model of a showman's steam traction engine was hand-fashioned around 1980. About half a metre in length, it is made of found materials – bits of metal, cardboard, tin boxes, screws and small light globes. It is painted fire engine red, with yellow and black detailing. A narrow black cylinder is attached to its long, curved roof, with signage on the roof's two long edges reading 'CHARGERS', 'SMITHS ENTERPRISES SMITHS', 'CHARGERS'. Its four spoke-wheels rotate, the rear pair being larger than the front pair.

If you are cataloguing visual material that has a title, this should be included in the description. Photographs and other forms of imagery are described following the same principles used for objects, but remember to describe the frame and mounting if this is relevant, and state whether the image is in colour or black and white:

> A black-and-white studio portrait of Mrs Mary MacGregor of 'Blackshaw's Station'. The photograph is under glass in an oak frame, with a wide brown cardboard mounting.

On reading the description you should be able to identify the photograph.

If a set of images, such as lantern slides, is being catalogued, the description should include the number of slides and the subject(s). If appropriate, a short description of each slide can also be given and, as noted under 'title', the set can also carry a series title.

The description should allow the reader to easily visualise the object described.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Keywords*

This is an important search field when using the database for research purposes. When completing it, the cataloguer should think like an indexer; that is, they should consider carefully the sorts of terms that would be used by someone researching a topic for which the object has relevance. Subject areas as well as names pertinent to the object should be listed, including names of individuals, organisations, buildings, places and events. Include what is most relevant; the convention is four or five keywords.

Subject areas comprise broad themes and topics. When it comes to transferring this information from the worksheet to the catalogue, a thesaurus loaded into this catalogue field helps in both assigning meaningful classificatory terms and with the standardisation of terms and spelling. A museum can generate its own subject listing or else use a compiled thesaurus (see pp. 22–23 for more detail). Subject areas are especially important when cataloguing photographs, books and documents.

Personal, place and event names are by definition more specific than subject areas. When personal names are given, the surname should always be given first, separated from the first name by a comma; company names should take their usual form (e.g., Robertson, G.A. for the person, but G.A. Robertson & Co. for the company).

A report prepared by the chief civil engineer, Mr John Russell, about drainage problems in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy in 1888 could be given the following keywords:

Drainage
Fitzroy
Russell, John
Chief Civil Engineer
Gertrude Street

Although dates are often used in data searches, they are not included in the ‘keywords’ field. They will be noted under ‘when made’ and/or ‘when used’, which are also searchable fields.

Inscriptions and markings

Some objects have serial numbers, signatures, text or other inscriptions and markings. It is not mandatory to record these, but this discretionary field allows for their inclusion.

Markings need to be carefully transcribed, closed within inverted commas and given with the method and placement of the inscription. Where the inscription runs over more than one line, a spaced forward slash indicates the line break, and capital letters should be used in the transcription to reflect the original:

> Engraved on back of tray: 'THE / MELBOURNE MOOMBA FESTIVAL / 1968 PROCESSION / THE CHAIRMAN'S TROPHY / . Awarded to . / GAS & FUEL CORPORATION'

Or:

> Engraved on lid (initial unclear): 'J. Ovenden'

Or:

> Handwritten on title page: 'To dear Mary / Happy Christmas / Love Grandma'

Documents can include much written text. We recommend selecting only the main title or key phrase, making sure this gives a clear sense of the subject matter. Omitted text is indicated with an ellipsis:

> Handwritten on first page: 'Victorian Railways / Precautions Against / Fire ...'

With regards to photographs, it is essential to distinguish between textual elements that are part of the photographic content – such as billboards, placards and street signage – and inscriptions applied after photographic printing. Only the latter is an inscription.

Inscriptions should be carefully transcribed and any ambiguity noted, such as the initial on this brass snuffbox.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley
Source: Museum Victoria

Size*

There are many reasons for accurately recording the measurements of an object, including for shelving and storage, display, identification and location purposes.

The standard system is metric, as opposed to imperial, and measurements are presented in millimetres (mm). Weight is rarely required, but when it is given it is expressed in kilograms (kg). Presentation of measurements takes a standardised form. The height is recorded first, followed by the length and then the width/depth or diameter, depending on the object. Each measurement is prefixed with a letter clearly denoting the dimension:

Height (H) – This indicates is the greatest distance from the top to the bottom of an object that is usually in an upright position.

Length (L) – This is the greatest distance (other than height) along the object's front, back or side.

Width (W) – This is the greatest distance between the object's front and back, or its sides.

Diameter (O) – This is the greatest measurement across a circular or elliptical object, such as a hat, bowl or circular image.

Weight (WT) – This is rarely given, but note how it is distinguished from width.

For example, a book might be expressed H 70mm x L 280mm x W 210mm; a portrait-orientation painting as H 1025mm x W 570mm; a hat as H 100mm x O 300mm; and a vehicle as H 1550mm x L 9060mm x W 1600mm.

Some objects are more straightforward to measure than others. Sometimes it will be more logical to use length than width, and in some cases the opposite may be true. Complex objects such as costumes can be measured in sections; if there is not enough space in the 'size' field, continue under 'notes', but indicate the continuation of information in the two fields.

When measuring visual works, include the frame and/or mount if these components are part of the work. This way you are measuring the full collection object. If you also want to record the measurements of the image only, measure from the inside of the mount and record the measurements under 'notes' if there is not enough space under 'size'.

By holding a ruler flat across the crown of a hat you can easily determine its height with a second ruler or retractable tape.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Measure the greatest distances of an object to determine its dimensions.
The height of this Cyclops toy car is the distance between the ground and top of the steering wheel.
Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

Maker's details

Whether an object is an artwork, photograph, handmade item or manufactured product, the creator's name and other relevant details should be recorded. Depending on the nature of the object, it may have more than one maker, such as a designer who is different from the manufacturer.

The surname of an individual is always recorded before the first name or initials, and the title is given in brackets; e.g., Peterson, Tom (Mr). A company name appears as it is commonly used – Tom Peterson & Sons Pty Ltd. If the address of the maker and other associated facts are known – such as if the company changed name or if the rights of production were transferred – these facts too should be recorded in this field:

Name	Tom Peterson & Sons Pty Ltd
Role	Founders
Street	89 Napier Street
Town	Fitzroy, Melbourne
Country	Australia
Comments	Company sold in 1967 and renamed Fitzroy Foundry

Often the creator of an ethnographic object will not be known. In this case, the ethnicity or tribal affiliation of the creator should be documented if known, along with the region with which the group is traditionally associated. A possum-skin cloak by an unknown maker from the Gunditjmara community, for example, would be recorded as:

Gunditjmara community
Lake Condah area, Western District of Victoria

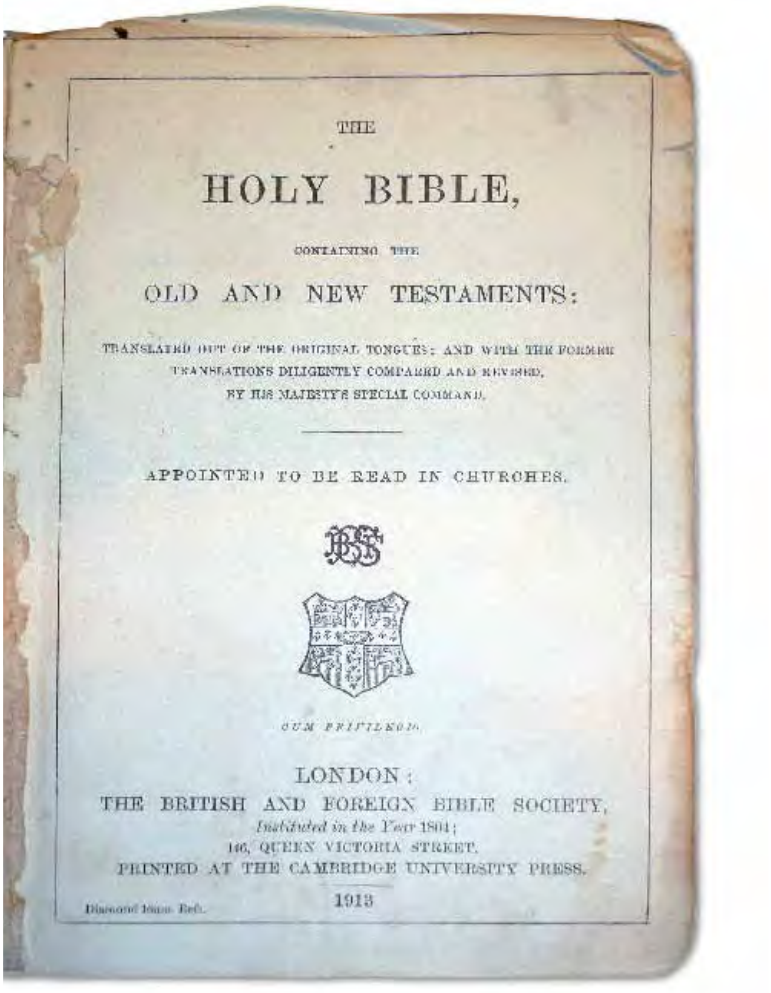
Where made*

Record the place of manufacture or creation if it is known. This information is significantly different from an object's place of use, and the two should not be confused.

As with other fields, standardisation and accuracy of terminology is essential. For example, use England and Scotland for the countries, not Britain, and USA rather than America or North America. 'Region' refers to a state, province or known geographical vicinity, such as the Wimmera. If a street address is given, include the building number if this is known.

Town/street	Daylesford, 16 Rose Street
Region	Victoria
Country	Australia

The more specific this information the better, as it can assist researchers in building a more comprehensive understanding of the object and the terms of its creation.


THE

HOLY BIBLE,

CONTAINING THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS:

TRANSLATED OUT OF THE ORIGINAL TONGUES: AND WITH THE FORMER TRANSLATIONS DILIGENTLY COMPARED AND REVISED, BY HIS MAJESTY'S SPECIAL COMMAND.

APPOINTED TO BE READ IN CHURCHES.

LONDON:
THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY,
Instituted in the Year 1804;
146, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET.
PRINTED AT THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

1913

Packaging or frontispieces can often indicate where an object is made.
Photograph: Hilary Ericksen

When made*

This field enables the museum to date an object. The date of creation is not always known, so this field allows for an exact date or an estimated date to be given. It is important that you clearly indicate whether a date is estimated or exact.

If the exact date of creation is known, use the date-month-year form when recording it, using the following format:

23-03-1954

If only an estimated date is known, note this clearly and use either a year range or a circa date form:

1950-1959
c. 1955

When giving a year range, make sure four digits are used in each component date, separated by a dash; do not use, for example, 1950–55. This is standard practice across collecting organisations. If a circa date is given, the 'c' should be followed by a full stop and a space before the date.

Packaging can often provide a key in determining dates for manufactured products. The design and typography of packaging can give clues, as can patent numbers and dates of importation when these are given.

The date on the Microphone matchbook indicates not only when the company was around, but it helps determine the era in which this album was put together.
Photograph: Michelle McFarlane
Source: Museum Victoria

Where used

Often an object will be used and/or found at a place distant from its manufacture, so it is important that a distinction is maintained between where an object is made and used. Ethnographic material can be found far from its place of origin due to exchange practices, so you shouldn't assume it was produced in or near the place it was collected.

If an object is associated with more than one place during its lifetime, the cataloguer may need to decide which place is of greatest importance. A more comprehensive history of its use can be added to the supplementary file (see p. 62), rather than documented in the catalogue.

This stone pick and stone axe were made in the Tenant Creek area, but could easily have been collected far from their place of origin.
Photograph: Rodney Start
Source: Museum Victoria

When used

Although subfields for exact and estimated dates are provided on the worksheet, usually objects will have been used over a number of years. In those cases a date range is most appropriate – to its last known use. If the date and month are known, this level of detail should be provided in the same date-month-year form used elsewhere in the catalogue (e.g., 10-09-1854).

Acquisition details*

All acquisition information is recorded in this field. These details are also given in the register, so this can be a useful source when documenting the object.

It is important to note the method of acquisition, whether the object came into the collection as a donation or was purchased or acquired through other means. The 'comments' subfield allows the cataloguer to state any non-standard form of acquisition, such as transfer from another museum collection or the object's discovery in a storage area.

Accurate contact details are crucial in establishing provenance, history and ownership of an object. As in other fields, a standard form is used for recording names; the surname name is given first, separated from the first name or initials by a comma, after which the title is given in brackets, e.g., Smith, Cecil A. (Prof.). A company name takes its usual form, whether or not it includes a personal name, e.g., Clive Jackson & Sons. Catalogues often have separate subfields for the name and address details, so that authority lists can be loaded and searches easily undertaken.

Where an object has been donated to the museum, it is important to confirm the acquisition by having the donor sign an appropriate document, a copy of which is given to them. Its existence should be noted in the catalogue, along with the date it was completed. Often known as a 'record of gift', this document should live in the object's supplementary file.

If the object were purchased by the museum, the price and date of purchase should be recorded. This information is useful not only for reconciling the museum's accounts, but for valuing the collection for insurance and risk-management purposes.

Condition

The general physical condition of the object should be recorded, along with the date of assessment. This information allows colleagues to anticipate which objects are likely to require conservation or preservation, and whether an object is a contender for display based on its condition. For someone not versed in conservation work, this can be a difficult and subjective call. The following points give a basis on which to make assessments:

> **Good** – The object is in a reasonable state of preservation. It is clean and generally in a stable condition. Any deterioration is minor and does not detract from display potential.
>
> **Fair** – The object is in need of some attention before it is displayed.
>
> **Poor** – The object is not structurally sound. It is subject to environmental conditions that cause deterioration and it will be lost if steps are not taken to preserve it.

If a conservation report has been prepared, its date of completion should be recorded. A conservation report can be an assessment of condition and/or a record of treatment by a professional conservator. These reports should be stored in the object's supplementary file.

Ideally, the condition of important or significant objects will be assessed on a regular basis – perhaps annually. The catalogue should reflect any changes to its status, and any written report filed in the supplementary file.

This fragile recipe and remedy book from the 19th century is a clear example of a significant object in poor condition.
Source: Museum Victoria

Storage location*

Locations are best expressed as numerical codes, generally comprising three pairs of digits separated by full stops:

04.05.03

The code system has been developed to avoid lengthy names and descriptions of storage spaces. It also acts as a security measure, as people outside the museum would rarely be able to decipher the code. The first pair of digits refers to the building or room, each room in a building having its own number; the second pair refers to the wall or piece of storage furniture, again each with its own number; and the third pair refers to the shelf or drawer where the object can be found, numbered sequentially from the top:

04 Building or room
05 Wall or storage furniture/display case
03 Shelf or drawer

Not all locations will require the third pair of digits, and a freestanding object such as a statue would use 00 as its second pair of digits. For example, a statue in building 4 would be expressed:

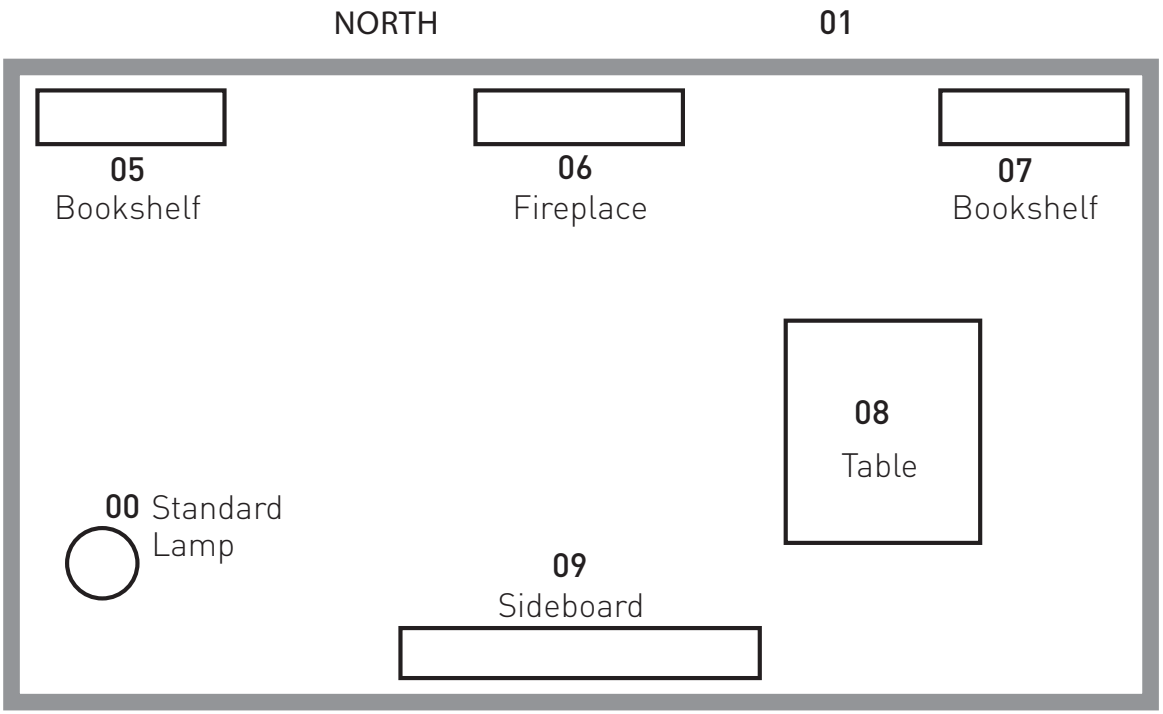
04.00

To create location codes, site and floor plans must first be drawn. The rooms within each museum building are given a sequential number, for which a list is drafted and stored in a secure place, including in the set of guidelines produced for cataloguing. This ensures all relevant individuals understand the system. Your list for a permanent display might look something like this:

01 Blacksmith's shop
02 Doctor's surgery
03 Doctor's dining room
04 Doctor's bedroom
05 Doctor's kitchen
06 Pioneer's hut kitchen
07 Pioneer's hut bedroom
08 Pioneer's hut living room
09 Schoolhouse classroom
10 Schoolhouse storeroom

Once the floor plan for each room is drawn and numbered clearly, each wall will be numbered, clockwise from the north wall. Then each piece of storage furniture is numbered. The floor plan following shows the code system for the doctor's dining room:

Plan of doctor's dining room, 03



The location of a knife on the tabletop would be indicated with the code 03.08.

A book on the third shelf of the bookcase to the right of the fireplace would be 03.07.03.

A painting hanging on the east wall would be 03.02.

While the above example is for a permanent display room, the same method works for storage areas. Cupboards, shelves and filing cabinets can all be numbered, and walls of a general storage area can be prefixed with N (north), E (east), S (south) and W (west).

Current location*

This field allows for tracking the movement of an object by recording its temporary location. It is not important to record this on the worksheet, but it is vital to keep this field up to date in the catalogue. If an item is on loan, being conserved or even missing it should be noted in this field:

On loan
Being conserved
Missing

Supplementary file*

As noted in the chapter 'Essentials', the catalogue is not the sole repository for information about collection objects. Supplementary files are an important companion, and they typically hold historical documents, research papers, reference material, donor forms and questionnaires, instruction manuals, personal communications, imagery and other associated material.

If an object has a supplementary file, it should be recorded in the catalogue. Subfields allow the cataloguer to indicate whether the supplementary file is digital (computer) or hardcopy, or both, and if necessary its location. For a supplementary file to be useful, it must be well-organised and easy to access: the hardcopy files in manila folders in a filing cabinet, for example, and the digital files in folders in a single location on a hard drive and named by registration number. Each digital file should be given a fairly obvious name, so that anyone accessing it will have a good idea what is in it without opening it. See pp. 26–27 for tips on managing digital files.

Importantly, the object's registration number should be noted on each supplementary file, hardcopy or soft, so that the link between the object and related material is maintained.

Restrictions*

Collection objects sometimes have restrictions placed on them, particularly with regards to display and to reproduction of images. The nature of any restrictions should be noted in the catalogue.

Some common forms of restriction are that the object can only be displayed if the donor is acknowledged; that the object cannot be made available for loan; and, particularly in the case of Indigenous collection material, that specific cultural codes must be observed in an object's care and display.

In the case of photographs, at the time of taking possession try to obtain the consent of anyone shown in the photograph to display or reproduce it. This gives the museum assurance that it can use the photograph without fear of offending the individuals featured.

Photographs and artworks, as well as written and other 'artistic works', are also subject to copyright restrictions, which have legal implications. Copyright is a complex law that pertains to *reproducing* images and 'artistic works', rather than to displaying them, and which has strong implications for digitised collections. The catalogue should note, where relevant, whether the copyright owner (in *most* but not all cases the creator) has given the museum permission to reproduce the work at its own discretion, or whether permission must be sought at every use of the work.

For many historical museums, their visual and other artistic works will likely be out of copyright, as in most instances this expires 70 years after the death of the creator. More information on copyright in Australia is available from CAL (Copyright Agency Limited, at www.copyright.com.au) and the Australian Copyright Council (www.copyright.org.au).
Both organisations publish information sheets on their websites.

The catalogue should also state the form any credit should take for the display of an object, and in the case of visual and artistic works their reproduction. The following example is typical of a completed 'restrictions' field for a photograph:

> Not to be reproduced without the permission of Hugo Higgins, donor and copyright holder. Can be displayed without permission.
>
> **Contact** Higgins, Hugo, 15 Acacia Street, Footscray, Vic. 3011. Tel. 9332-7698
> **Acknowledgement** When displayed or reproduced, the photograph must be credited: Courtesy of H. Higgins

The accurate crediting of collection material is a matter of what is known as the creator's 'moral right'. With regards to visual material, this extends to reproducing the work in its entirety; if the work is cropped without the creator's permission, this is a breach of their moral rights.

Notes

Some objects may require additional notes. For example, an object might bear an old label or additional number, which could later prove useful in tracking down valuable historical information, or a registration number may have changed, although this is very rare. As noted on p. 52, items with complex construction, such as costumes, may have several sections that require measuring, so 'notes' is a useful place for the continuation of this sort of information if a field is not large enough.

If you find there is not adequate space for full documentation in any of the fields, further information can be continued under 'notes'. Needless to say, the cataloguer should take care that the field being continued is clearly titled, and that the source field indicates that it is being continued under 'notes'.

Cataloguer*

The name of the cataloguer should be recorded (surname, then first name or initials), along with the date of documentation. This enables any queries that arise about worksheet information to be directed to the to right person. The name of the person who transfers the information to the electronic catalogue should also be recorded, with the date this was done.

Appendices

1. Cataloguing worksheet
2. Sample cataloguing worksheets
3. Glossary of descriptive terms
4. Glossary of production methods
5. Glossary of materials
6. Useful resources

CATALOGUING WORKSHEET

REGISTRATION NO.*

OBJECT NAME*

TITLE

DESCRIPTION*

KEYWORDS*

INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKINGS

SIZE*

MAKER'S DETAILS*

name

role

street

town country

comments

WHEN MADE* ☐ extact date ☐ estimated date

WHERE MADE*

town/street

region country

WHEN USED ☐ extact date ☐ estimated date

WHERE USED

* MANDATORY FIELD

ACQUISITION DETAILS*

how acquired

when acquired

name of source

street/town

country telephone

record of gift/donor

comments

CONDITION ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

conservation report

STORAGE LOCATION*

CURRENT LOCATION*

SUPPLEMENTARY FILE* ☐ hard files ☐ digital files

RESTRICTIONS*

contact telephone

form of acknowledgement

NOTES

CATALOGUER*

* MANDATORY FIELD

CATALOGUING WORKSHEET

SAMPLE 1

REGISTRATION NO.* TM 875

OBJECT NAME* Suitcase, cardboard

TITLE

DESCRIPTION*
Suitcase belonging to Mr. Edmund Paulsen. Brown cardboard suitcase with metal corners, catches and handle. Sticker on exterior of lid. Interior of lid contains information regarding Edmund Paulsen's trip to Australia in 1958. Mr Paulsen fled from the Russian invasion of Hungary leaving family behind.

KEYWORDS*
suitcases; immigration; voyages & travels

INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKINGS
'Adler Koffer'

SIZE* L 758 x H 230 x D 380 mm

MAKER'S DETAILS*
name Adler Koffer
role Suitcase maker
street
town country
comments European manufacturer, possibly German.

WHEN MADE* ☐ exact date ☒ estimated date 1940 – 1950s

WHERE MADE*
town/street
region country Europe

WHEN USED ☒ exact date 1957 ☐ estimated date

WHERE USED Travel from Hungary to Australia

* MANDATORY FIELD

ACQUISITION DETAILS*

how acquired: Donation

when acquired: 06-2000

name of source: Paulsen, Edmund

street/town: Osborne Road, Warrandyte

country: Australia telephone: 03-9844 0000

record of gift/donor:

comments: Donation included other related items – cigarette case, small photo album and tools. Documents related to immigration in Supp File.

CONDITION ☐ good ☒ fair ☐ poor

conservation report:

STORAGE LOCATION* Storeroom Row 2 Shelf 3A

CURRENT LOCATION* On display

SUPPLEMENTARY FILE* ☒ hard files ☐ digital files

RESTRICTIONS*

Privacy Laws restrict giving out name & address details

contact: telephone:

form of acknowledgement: Source courtesy Mr. Edmund Paulsen.

NOTES

Items included in donation show meagreness and urgency to leave Hungary.

For related items see records TM 874, 876 & 877-883.

CATALOGUER* Rogers, Sally 06-03-2007

* MANDATORY FIELD

Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

CATALOGUING WORKSHEET

SAMPLE 2

REGISTRATION NO.* TM 432

OBJECT NAME* Axe

TITLE

DESCRIPTION*
Axe with large ground stone head, hafted handle bent round head and secured with resin.
Indigenous artifact or tool.
Materials used are wood and stone.

KEYWORDS*
axes; indigenous artefacts

INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKINGS

SIZE* L 500 x W 200 mm

MAKER'S DETAILS*
name
role
street
town country
comments

WHEN MADE* ☐ extact date ☐ estimated date

WHERE MADE*
town/street
region Northern Desert, Tennant Creek country Australia.

WHEN USED ☐ extact date ☒ estimated date 20th Century

WHERE USED

* MANDATORY FIELD

ACQUISITION DETAILS*

how acquired Purchase

when acquired 1965

name of source at auction

street/town

country telephone

record of gift/donor

comments Purchase made at local auction
*Relevant documentation in Supp File

CONDITION ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

conservation report

STORAGE LOCATION* Store room Cabinet 2 Shelf 2

CURRENT LOCATION*

SUPPLEMENTARY FILE* ☒ hard files ☐ digital files

RESTRICTIONS*

contact telephone

form of acknowledgement

NOTES

CATALOGUER* Rogers, Sally 19-05-2006

* MANDATORY FIELD

Photograph: Rodney Start. Source: Museum Victoria

CATALOGUING WORKSHEET

SAMPLE 3

REGISTRATION NO.* TM 114

OBJECT NAME* Print, Art

TITLE

DESCRIPTION*
Natural science print of Sydney Gumleaf Katydid, Terpandrus horridus (original name Great Green Gum tree Grasshopper, Locusta vigentissima) from the Prodromus of the Zoology of Victoria, Decade XI, page 36

KEYWORDS*
natural history; illustrations; insects;

INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKINGS

SIZE* H250 x W210 mm

MAKER'S DETAILS*
name McCoy, Frederick; Wild, John James
role publisher; artist
street
town country
comments

WHEN MADE* ☐ exact date ☒ estimated date 1860 - 1890

WHERE MADE*
town/street
region Victoria country Australia

WHEN USED ☐ exact date ☐ estimated date

WHERE USED

* MANDATORY FIELD

ACQUISITION DETAILS*

how acquired: Donation

when acquired: 2004

name of source: Pike, John

street/town: Bendigo

country: Australia telephone:

record of gift/donor:

comments: Details of donation in Supp. File

CONDITION ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

conservation report:

STORAGE LOCATION* Storeroom Plan press Dr 2.

CURRENT LOCATION*

SUPPLEMENTARY FILE* ☒ hard files ☐ digital files

RESTRICTIONS*

Copyright expired.

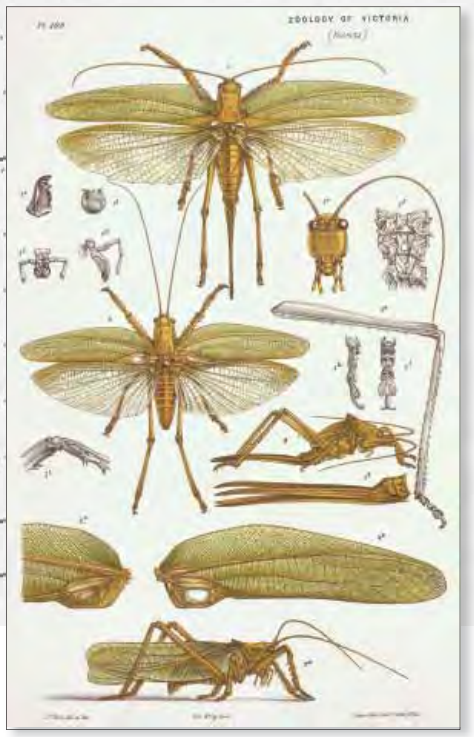
contact: telephone:

form of acknowledgement: courtesy Mr John Pike.

NOTES

CATALOGUER* Rogers, Sally 11-01-2001

* MANDATORY FIELD



Artist: John James Wild. Source: Museum Victoria

CATALOGUING WORKSHEET

SAMPLE 4

REGISTRATION NO.* TM 312

OBJECT NAME* Book

TITLE Prodromus of the Zoology of Victoria, vol 1

DESCRIPTION*
Dark blue cloth bound volume with gold lettering on spine. Contains natural science artwork and descriptions of vertebrate zoology from early Australia. Several vols published by Frederick McCoy. Collected artworks by artists such as John James Wild, Arthur Bartholemew and others.

KEYWORDS*
natural sciences; book illustrations; natural history illustrations;

INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKINGS
Publications/ of the/ Zoology of/ Victoria/ McCoy/ Vol 1

SIZE* H255 x W210 x D130 mm

MAKER'S DETAILS*
name McCoy, Frederick
role Publisher
street
town Melbourne country Australia
comments

WHEN MADE* ☒ extact date 1878 – 85. ☐ estimated date

WHERE MADE*
town/street
region Melbourne country Australia

WHEN USED ☐ extact date ☐ estimated date

WHERE USED

* MANDATORY FIELD

ACQUISITION DETAILS*

how acquired Donation (found in Museum Store by volunteer).

when acquired 1975

name of source unknown.

street/town

country telephone

record of gift/donor

comments see Supp File for further notes

CONDITION ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

conservation report

STORAGE LOCATION* Museum Library

CURRENT LOCATION*

SUPPLEMENTARY FILE* ☐ hard files ☒ digital files

RESTRICTIONS*

contact telephone

form of acknowledgement

NOTES

Contains illustrations and notes (descriptive) of Australian fauna. Rare book of scientific significance.

CATALOGUER* Rogers, Sally 11-01-2001

* MANDATORY FIELD

Photograph: Benjamin Healley. Source: Museum Victoria

CATALOGUING WORKSHEET

SAMPLE 5

REGISTRATION NO.* TMP 1324

OBJECT NAME* Photograph.

TITLE

DESCRIPTION*
Small format b&w print from Schmidt family showing their first motor car – a "buckboard". Mr. Edwin Schmidt is the driver with his wife Katherine Schmidt (nee Leib) and young daughter Karin Schmidt looking on. Photo taken circa 1952.
(? make of car & date made/used).

KEYWORDS*
motor vehicles; men; women; children; families.

INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKINGS

SIZE* H 60 x W 90 mm

MAKER'S DETAILS*
name Leib, Georg (Katherine's father)
role Photographer
street
town Temporary town country Australia
comments Mr. G. Leib died in 1970.

WHEN MADE* ☒ extact date 1952 ☐ estimated date

WHERE MADE*
town/street Temporary town
region country Australia

WHEN USED ☐ extact date ☐ estimated date

WHERE USED

* MANDATORY FIELD

ACQUISITION DETAILS*

how acquired: Donation

when acquired: 1996

name of source: Tims, Karin (nee Schmidt)

street/town: 46 Gumnut Close, Tempovary town

country: Australia telephone: 03 1234 5678.

record of gift/donor:

comments: Part of photo album — Reg number TM 433

CONDITION ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

conservation report:

STORAGE LOCATION* Stove room Cabinet 1 Drawer 1

CURRENT LOCATION*

SUPPLEMENTARY FILE* ☐ hard files ☒ digital files

RESTRICTIONS*

Taken prior to 1955 so copyright expired.

Katherine Schmidt died 2006 but Mr. Edwin Schmidt has given verbal subject consent for use of this image.

contact: Karin Tims telephone:

form of acknowledgement: courtesy Schmidt family.

Photograph Georg Leib

NOTES

Photograph has been digitised 19/06/2008 — see spreadsheet list for details

CATALOGUER* Rogers, Sally 23-04-2009

* MANDATORY FIELD

Source: Ingrid Unger

Glossary of descriptive terms

acanthus styled – carved ornament based on the leaves of the acanthus plant, especially as used on the capital of a Corinthian column
arm – resembling an arm in appearance, position or function, especially when branching out from a central support or larger mass; arm of the record player
base – bottom or supporting part
border – band or margin around or along the edge of something
bow – form or cause to form a curve or curves
bulbous – shaped like a bulb; swollen; bulging
cantilever – part of a beam or a structure projecting outwards beyond is support
cartouche – carved or cast ornamental tablet or panel in the form of a scroll, sometimes having an inscription
casing – protective case or cover
cavity – hollow or empty space; hole
checked – pattern of small squares
chevrons – badge or insignia consisting of one or more V-shaped stripes to indicate a non-commissioned rank or length of service
coil – wind or gather rope, hair or the like into loops, or to be formed in such loops
concave – curving inward
concentric circles – circles with a common centre
convex – curving or bulging outwards
cornucopia – representation of a horn in painting, sculpture or the like, overflowing with fruit and vegetables; horn of plenty; a horn-shaped container
cuboid/cubic – shaped like a cube; of three dimensions
dapple – to mark with spots or patches of a different colour
decagonal – polygon with 10 sides
decahedron – solid figure with 10 planes
distended – expanded as if by pressure from within; swell; inflate; to stretch out or extend
dome – hemispherical roof or vault
dovetail – wedge-shaped tenon; to fit or cause to fit together closely
drape – hang or cover with flexible material or fabric, usually in folds; adorn
elliptical – shaped like an ellipse
flange – radically projecting collar or rim on an object for locating or strengthening the object or for attaching it to another object
flecked – small markings or streaks; speckle
flex – a flexible, insulated electrical cable, used especially to connect appliances to mains
floral design – decorated with or consisting of flowers or patterns of flowers
fluting – design or decoration of flutes on a column or pilaster etc; grooves or furrows
foot – lower part or base of an object
fragment – pieces broken off or detached
fretwork – decorative interlaced work, the design formed by perforated areas
fringe – edging of hanging threads, tassels or the like
furrow – long deep groove
gild – cover with, or as if with, gold
globule/globular – spherical or approximately spherical; shaped like a globe
gnarled – knotty protuberance or swelling on a tree; rough, twisted and weather-beaten in appearance
gouge – to cut a hold or groove into something
grainy – resembling granules; a photo with poor definition due to large grain size

grill – framework, especially of metal bars, arranged to form an ornamental pattern; used as a screen or partition
ground – a surface finished; thickness reduced; an edge sharpened by grinding
heptagon – seven-sided object
herringbone – pattern used in textiles, brickwork and the like, consisting of two or more rows of short parallel strokes slanting in alternate directions to form a series of Vs or zigzags
hexagon – six-sided object
incise – to produce lines of a design or similar by cutting into a surface with a sharp tool
incision – cut, gash or notch
incurvate – to curve or cause to curve inwards
incuse – design stamped or hammered onto a coin
infill – filled cavity, gap, hole or the like
interlace – join together by crossing, as if woven; intertwine
intertwine – join by twisting, twining or interlacing
interweave – weave, blend, or twine together; see also *intertwine*
lobe – round projection that forms part of a larger structure
lozenge – diamond-shaped charge (heraldry)
lunate – shaped like a crescent
monochrome – black-and-white photograph or transparency; coloured in a range of tones of a single colour
moonlike – crescent-shaped
mottled – coloured with streaks or blotches of different shades
nonagon – nine-sided object
oblique – at an angle; slanting or sloping; lines neither perpendicular nor parallel to one another or to another line, plane, etc
oblong – elongated, usually from the round or square shape
octagon – eight-sided object
opaque – not transparent or translucent
openwork – ornamental work, as of metal or embroidery, having a pattern of openings or holes
ovate – shaped like an egg, or the longitudinal section of an egg with the broader end at the base
ovoid – egg-shaped
paisley – pattern of curving, teardrop-like shapes, with intricate detailing
pear-shaped – globular base and tapered towards the apex
pedestal – base that supports a column, statue or similar
pentagon – five-sided object
perforate – to make a hole or holes in something
periphery – outermost boundary of an area, or outside surface
perpendicular – lines or planes at right angles to one another
phallic – relating to or resembling a phallus
plait – to intertwine strands or strips in a pattern
piping – strands of icing decorating a cake; a thin strip of covered cord used to edge a hem
polychrome – made or decorated with various colours
polygon – closed plane figure consisting of three or more straight sides that connect three or more points (the vertices), none of the sides intersecting
porous – able to absorb air, water or other fluids, or have them pass through pores
prism – transparent polygonal solid, often having triangular ends and rectangular sides, for dispersing light into a spectrum or for reflecting and deviating light

quadrant – quarter of the circumference of a circle
recurve – to curve or bend something back or down
rhombus/rhomboidal – oblique-angled parallelogram, having four equal sides
scoop – a spoon-like utensil
scroll – roll of parchment; decorative carving or moulding shaped like a scroll
segment – one of several parts into which something is divided; portion
sheathing – material used as an outer layer, as on a ship's hull
stipple – drawn, engraved or painted dots or flecks
streamlined – contour on a body that offers minimum resistance to a gas or liquid flowing around it
striations – arrangement or pattern of *striae* (parallel scratches or grooves on the surface)
supine – resting on back with face, palms, etc, upwards
taper – becoming narrower towards one end
taut – tightly stretched; tense
tempered – heat treated
tenon – the projecting end of a piece of wood to fit into a corresponding mortise in another piece
tetrahedron – solid figure having four plain faces
textured – a surface not smooth or plain
torso – the trunk of the human body, without arms and legs
transparent – permitting the uninterrupted passage of light; clear
transverse – crossing from side to side; crossways
triangular – shaped like or relating to a triangle; having three corners and sides
trim – extra piece used to decorate or complete
truncate – shorten; having the apex or end removed
tubular – having the form of a tube
tuck – fold in a garment; a gather
turned – a piece such as wood shaped or cut by rotating on a lathe
variegation – displaying differently coloured spots, patches, streaks or the like
vignette – small illustration placed at the beginning or end of a book or chapter; carved ornamentation that has a design based upon tendrils and leaves, such as a vine motif
wavy – formed into curves or undulations
wedge-shaped – narrow V-shaped solid form
whorl – radial arrangement of petals or similar; single turn in a spiral shell
wirework – functional or decorative work made of wire; objects made of wire, especially netting

Glossary of production methods

alloy – to add one metal or element to another to obtain a substance with a desired property
ambrotype – thin collodian negative on glass with black backing of paper, cloth or paint to make look positive; usually in a velvet-lined presentation case
appliqué – decorate or trim one material by sewing or fixing onto another
bake – cook or harden by dry heat, as in an oven
basketry – containers made of a mesh of plant fibres using a technique similar to weaving
batik – fabric-printing method in which wax is used to stop parts of the fabric being dyed
beading – small, usually spherical beads of glass, wood or plastic sewn to fabric
beaten – shaped or made thin by hammering
bevel – to cut an oblique face on a piece of timber, or the like
blacking – a preparation for producing a black coating, as in shoes
blind-tooling – decorative technique used in leatherwork, especially in bookbinding; the design or lettering stamped, embossed or otherwise impressed on the surface of the leather and left blind, i.e., without the addition of gold leaf or colouring
blow – to shape glass and ornaments by forcing air or gas through the material when still molten
bound – in bonds; tied with, or as if with, a rope; secured within a cover or binding, i.e., a book
braid – decorate with an ornamental trim or border
burnish – make shiny or smooth by friction; polish
carve – to cut or chip to form a shape; decorate by cutting or chipping
cast – molten metal, glass or the like given shape by pouring into a mould
chalk – to draw or make something with chalk; mark, rub, or whiten with, or as if with, chalk
chase – ornament metal by engraving or embossing; to form or finish a screw thread with a chaser
chrome-plating – to plate with chromium, usually by electro-plating
cloisonne – design made by an outline of flattened wire filled in with coloured enamel; also made by Cloisonne
daguerreotype – photograph taken using silver-plated (rarely solid silver) or copper-sheet plate, usually found in velvet-lined leather case; introduced in 1839 and popular for around 20 years
dovetail – two pieces of wood joined at right angles by means of wedge-shaped tenons and mortices, carved out of each piece
draw – depict or sketch in lines, with a pencil or pen
drawn threadwork – some threads drawn out from a panel of linen, the rest grouped and whipped together to form geometrical and other patterns
dye – to colour or stain something, such as fabric or hair, with the application of a dye
ebonise – to stain or otherwise finish in imitation of ebony
electro-plating – to plate an object by electrolysis
emboss – to mould or carve a decoration or design on a surface, so that it is raised above the surface in low relief
embroider – to do decorative needlework upon cloth or similar
enamel – to inlay, coat or otherwise decorate with enamel
enchase – see *chase*
engrave – to inscribe a design or writing onto a block, plate, or other surface by carving, etching, or other process

etch – to wear away the surface of a metal, glass or similar with an acid; to cut or corrode a design on a metal or other printing plate by acid, on parts not covered by wax or acid-resistant coating
fabricate – to make, build or construct
facet – to cut faces, such as in a gemstone
ferrotype – see *tintype*
file – to shape or smooth a surface with a file
filigree – openwork decorations of slender threads and usually tiny balls of gold or silver
fire – to bake a ceramic in a kiln to harden the clay and fix the glaze
flake – to peel or cause to peel off in flakes; to cover or become covered with flakes
forge – to shape (metal) by heating and hammering
frame – to enclose a picture, window, door, etc
frosting – to cover with icing, as in a cake; a surface roughened, as if to cover with frost and preventing transparency
galvanise – to cover iron or steel with a protective zinc coating by dipping into molten zinc or by electro-deposition
gild – to cover with, or as with, gold
glaze – to fit or cover with glass; to cover with a vitreous solution to make impervious to liquid and smooth to touch; to cover (a painting) with a layer of semi-transparent colour to modify tones; to make glossy or shiny; a smooth lustrous finish or a fabric produced by various chemicals
gold-plating – to coat other metal with gold, usually by electro-plating
gold-tooling – a decorative technique used in leatherwork, especially bookbinding; the design or lettering is stamped, embossed or otherwise impressed on the surface and gold leaf applied with heated tools
gouache – also known as 'body colour'; a painting technique using opaque watercolour in which the pigments are bound with glue and the lighter tones contain white
ground – a surface finished, thickness reduced or edge sharpened by grinding, such as with a stone axe
handmade – made by hand, not machine, usually with great care and craftsmanship
hewn – something struck, especially wood, with cutting blows, as with an axe; to carve from a substance or sever from a larger portion
hochschnitt – engraving glass in cameo (rather than intaglio), so that the decoration is in relief
hone – to sharpen or polish with or as if with a hone (stone)
inlay – to decorate an object, especially furniture, or a surface, by inserting pieces of wood, ivory or another material into prepared slots in the surface
intaglio – incised relief carving, the opposite of cameo, especially on gems, hard stones or glass; also an old printing method
japan – lacquered with japan or any similar varnish
knit – to make a garment or textile by looping and entwining wool by hand, using long, eyeless needles
knot – to tie or fasten a knot
lacquer – decorative objects coated with lacquer, often inlaid
laminate – to make material in sheet form by bonding together two or more thin sheets; to cover or overlay with laminae
lantern slide – positive transparency intended for projection and produced between 1850 and 1914; usually around 9cm square and painted with oils or watercolours

lapping – the process for covering exposed copper in Sheffield plate, usually along rims and edges
lash – to bind or secure with rope, string or similar
luting – the process used for joining separate pieces of clay together with liquid slip, such as when applying clay decoration to a vessel
machine – to shape, cut or remove excess material using a machine tool
magnetise – to make a substance or object magnetic
marbling – colouring sheets of paper or edges of books through their contact with patterns of colour floating on water
mass produce – identical products made by machine in very large numbers
metallic – of, concerned with or consisting of metal
mint – to make coins by stamping metal
motion picture film – film strip, with or without sound, bearing a sequence of images which give the illusion of movement when run through a projector
mould – to shape or form, as with a mould
natural process – produced by nature
negative – developed photographic image in which the lights and shades are reversed (i.e., in negative), usually then transferred to positive through printing
oil – to lubricate, smear or polish with oil or an oily substance
opaque – to reduce transparency so light is not transmitted
photograph – recording of an image on a sensitised surface by the chemical action of light or radiation; see also *print*
plait – intertwine strands or strips in a braid
plate – coat with a layer of metal
polish – to make or become smooth or shiny by rubbing, especially with wax or an abrasive
press – to make objects from soft material by pressing with a mould; to squeeze or compress to alter in shape
print – to reproduce text or pictures, often in large numbers, by applying inks to paper or other materials; to mark or indent a surface by pressing something onto it; to produce a photographic print from a negative, using light and chemicals
pulp – to reduce a material to pulp
punch – to pierce, cut, stamp, shape or drive with a punch
quilt – to stitch together two pieces of fabric with a padding or lining between them
raising – an ancient craftsman's process of making a hollow vessel from a sheet of fairly soft metal by hammering it into shape on a wooden block
record – the act or process of recording, especially a sound recording but also documenting through transcription
sculpt – to carve, cast, or fashion a material in three dimensions, e.g., the art of making figures or designs in relief
sew – to join or decorate pieces of fabric or other material by means of needle and thread
silver – to coat with silver or a silvery substance, as in silvering a spoon
silver-plate – to coat a metal or object with silver through electro-plating
skin – to strip of the skin
smoke – to darken glass or similar material by exposure to smoke
solder – to join or mend with solder; joining metal surfaces by melting an alloy so that it forms a thin layer between the surfaces

spin – form or manufacture by spinning, e.g., spun glass, spun gold
stain – a solution of liquid used to penetrate a material's surface, especially wood, to colour the surface without fully covering its surface texture or grain
stamp – to impress or mark a device or sign on something
stencil – to mark a surface with a stencil
stereotype – a pair of photographic prints designed to be viewed in tandem, side by side, to produce an effect of depth; usually used for scenic views and taken with a camera with two lenses
stipple engraving – to decorate glass with incised dots of varying density, giving an appearance of light and shade
stud – to ornament or make with studs
tan – to change to brown through exposure to ultraviolet rays; to convert a skin or hide into leather by treating it with a tanning agent
taxidermy – the art of preparing, stuffing and mounting animal skins so that they have a life-like appearance
throw – to shape material on a potter's wheel
tie-dye – to dye textiles with patterns produced by tying sections of cloth together so they don't absorb the dye
tin – to plate, coat or treat with tin
tint – to colour or tinge with colour
tintype – photograph, usually portrait, produced in the second half of the 19th century by the collodian process directly on japanned iron; it contains no tin, but is grey or tinny in appearance
tool – to decorate a book cover with a bookbinder's tool
transparency – lantern slide or other positive image designed to be viewed by looking through it; the colour film for making modern transparencies was introduced in 1935
turn – to shape or cut a thread in an object by rotating it on a lathe against a cutting tool
type – to write copy using a keyboard
upholster – to fit with padding, springs, webbing and covering, e.g., chair, sofa, car seat
varnish – to cover with varnish (resinous matter dissolved in volatile liquid) or varnish-like substance
veneer – to face a material with a thin layer of wood or another material; to conceal something under a pleasing surface
videotape/recording – recording designed for television playback on which sound and images have been registered electronically
walter – to produce a wavy, lustrous finish on fabrics, especially silk
wax – to coat or polish with wax
weld – to join pieces of metal or plastic by softening with heat and hammering, or by fusion
wood-graining – to apply a pattern to a wood surface that looks like wood grain
weave – to construct something by interlacing elements, especially fabric produced by yarn woven on a loom

Glossary of materials

acid – any substance that dissociates in water to yield a sour corrosive solution containing hydrogen ions; having a pH of less than seven and turning litmus red
adobe – clay-like material from which sun-dried bricks are made
alabaster – fine-grained usually white, opaque or translucent variety of gypsum used for statues and vases etc; a variety of hard semi-translucent calcite, often banded like marble
alloy – metallic material, such as steel, brass or bronze, consisting of two or more metals or metallic elements with non-metallic elements
aluminium – light, malleable, ductile silvery-white metallic element that resists corrosion
amber – hard yellow or yellowish-brown translucent fossil resin derived from extinct coniferous trees
ammonia – colourless, pungent, highly soluble gas, mainly used in the manufacture of fertilisers, nitric acid and other nitrogenous compounds and as a refrigerant and solvent
asbestos – any of the fibrous amphibole and serpentine minerals; it is widely used in fabric or board form as a heat-resistant structural material
bakelite – any one of a class of thermosetting resins; used as electric insulators and for making plastic ware
balsa wood – very light wood of the bombacaceous tree
bamboo – any tall tree-like tropical or semi-tropical fast-growing grass of the genus *Bambusa*, with hollow wooded stems and ringed joints
barkcloth – papery fabric made from the fibrous inner bark of the paper mulberry or a similar tree
basalt – fine-grained, dark, basic igneous rock
beechwood – any temperate tree of the genus *Fagus* (family Fagaceae) especially *F. sylvatica* of Europe, with a smooth greyish bark
birch – hard, close-grained wood of betulaceous trees or shrubs
blacking – any preparation, especially one containing lampblack, for giving a black finish to shoes and metals, etc
blackwood – a tall Australian Acacia tree; a highly valued dark timber
boxwood – the hard, close-grained, yellow wood of the box tree, particularly *Buxus sempervirens*, used to make tool handles and small, turned or carved articles
braid – narrow ornamental tape of woven silk, wool or similar
brass – alloy of copper and zinc containing more than 50% copper
bristle – any short stiff hair of an animal or plant, such as that on a pig's back
Britannia metal – alloy of low-melting point, consisting of tin with 5–10% antimony, 1–3% copper and sometimes small quantities of zinc, lead or bismuth; used for decorative purposes and for bearings
brocade – rich fabric woven with a raised design, often using gold or silver threads
bronze – hard water-resistant alloy consisting of copper and smaller proportions of tin and sometimes zinc and lead
calico – white or unbleached cotton fabric, with no printed design
cambric – fine, white linen or cotton fabric
cane – the long, jointed pithy or hollow and flexible stem of bamboo, rattan or similar plant
canvas – heavy durable cloth made of cotton, hemp or jute, used for sails, tents etc
carbon – non-metallic element existing in the three allotropic forms – amorphous carbon, graphite and diamond; e.g., a rod or plate made of carbon, used in some types of battery

cast iron – iron containing so much carbon that it must be cast, not wrought, into shape
cedar – any old world coniferous tree of the genus *Cedrus*; made of the wood of a cedar tree
cellophane – thin transparent sheeting made from wood pulp and used as a moisture-proof wrapping
celluloid – transparent sheet on which film is prepared, as in cinema; flammable thermoplastic material of cellulose nitrate and a plasticiser, usually camphor; used in sheets, rods and tubes for making a range of articles
cement – fine, grey powder of calcined limestone and clay, used with water and sand to make mortar, or with water, sand and aggregate to make concrete
ceramic – brittle material made by firing clay and similar substances
chalk – soft, fine-grained, white sedimentary rock, consisting of nearly pure calcium carbonate
chambray – light fabric of cotton or gingham, with white weft and a coloured warp
chamois – soft suede leather, formerly made from the hide of this animal, and now obtained from the skins of sheep and goats
chemical – any substance used in or resulting from a reaction involving changes to atoms and molecules
chiffon – fine, transparent or almost transparent plain-weave fabric of silk, nylon, etc
china – ceramicware of a type originally from China; any porcelain or similar ware
chintz – printed, patterned cotton fabric, with glazed finish; painted or stained Indian calico
chipboard – thin, rigid sheet made of compressed wood particles bound with a synthetic resin; see also *particleboard*
chrome – a hard, grey metallic element (chromium) that takes a high polish, occurring principally in chromite; used in steel alloys and electro-plating to increase hardness and corrosion-resistance
chromium steel – another name for 'chrome steel'
clay – very fine-grained material consisting of hydrated aluminium silicate, quartz and organic fragments, occurring as sedimentary rock, soil and other deposits
coal – compact, black or dark brown carbonaceous rock
concrete – building material made of cement, sand, aggregate and water mixture that hardens as it dries
copper – malleable, ductile, reddish metallic element
coral – hard red, pink or white calcareous substance secreted by various marine polyps for support and habitation
corduroy – heavy cotton-pile, ribbed fabric
cork – thick, light, porous outer bark of the cork oak, used widely as stoppers for bottles, casks and the like
corrugated iron – a thin sheet made of iron or steel, formed with alternating ridges and troughs
crayon – a small stick or pencil of charcoal, wax, clay or chalk mixed with pigment
crepe – light fabric with a fine ridged or crinkled surface
crepe de chine – very thick crepe of silk or a similar light fabric
crystal – solid substance, such as quartz, with a regular shape in which plain faces intersect at definite angles
damask – reversible fabric, usually silk or linen, with a pattern woven into it
diamond – usually colourless, exceptionally hard allotropic form of carbon in cubic crystalline form; precious stone also used for industrial cutting and abrading
down – soft, fine feathers with free barbs that cover the body of a bird and prevent loss of heat

ebonite – see *vulcanite*
ebony – hard, dark wood derived from the tree of the Ebenaceae family
enamel – coloured glassy substance, translucent or opaque, fused to the surfaces of metal, glass etc; used to ornament or protect
felt – matted fabric of wool, hair etc, made by working the fibres together under pressure or by heat or chemical action
fibre – natural or synthetic filament; can be spun into yarn, such as cotton or nylon
fibreboard – building board made by hot-pressing a mass of wood or other vegetable fibres; woody fibres felted or bonded by natural wood *lignin* resins, not by cement or adhesives
fibreglass – material of matted fine-glass fibres, used as insulation in buildings, fireproof fabrics etc
film – thin flexible strip of cellulose coated with a photographic emulsion, used to make negatives and transparencies
foam – light, cellular solid made by creating bubbles of gas in liquid material and solidifying it
foil – metal in the form of a very thin sheet; gold foil
gauze – transparent cloth of loose, plain muslin or similar fabric
gesso – white ground of plaster, used especially in the Middle Ages and renaissance to prepare panels or canvas for painting or gilding; plaster of Paris or gypsum
glass – hard, brittle, usually transparent non-crystalline solid, consisting of metal silicates or similar compounds
glaze – vitreous or glossy coating
glycerine – colourless or pale-yellow, odourless, sweet-tasting syrup; a byproduct of soap manufacture, used as a solvent, antifreeze, plasticiser and sweetener
gold – dense inert bright yellow element that is the most malleable and ductile metal, occurring in rocks and alluvial deposits
gold leaf – wafer-thin gold sheet with a thickness between about 0.076 and 0.127 micrometre, produced by rolling or hammering gold and used for gilding
gold plate – a thin coating of gold, usually produced by electro-plating
graphite – blackish, soft allotropic form of carbon in hexagonal crystalline form
gum – any of various sticky substances exuded from certain plants, hardening on exposure to air and dissolving or forming a viscous mass in water
hardboard – thin, stiff sheet made of compressed sawdust and wood chips, bound together with plastic adhesive or resin under heat and pressure
hemp – fibres of hemp plant, used to make canvas, rope etc
hessian – coarse jute fabric similar to sacking, used for bags and upholstery
hide – skin of an animal, especially the tough, thick skin of a large mammal, either tanned or raw
horn – permanent outgrowths on the heads of animals such as cattle and antelopes, consisting of a central bony core covered with layers of keratin
horsehair – hair taken chiefly from the tail or mane of a horse, used in upholstery and for fabrics etc
Huon pine – large, coniferous tree, *Dacrydium franklinii*, found in Tasmania and valued for its pale-yellow timber
iron – malleable, ductile, silvery-white ferro-magnetic, metallic element occurring principally in haemalite and magnetite
ivory – hard, smooth, creamy-white variety of dentine comprising the major part of elephant tusks

jade – semi-precious stone consisting of either jadeite or nephrite, varying in colour from white to green and used in making ornaments and jewellery
japan – glossy, durable black lacquer used on wood, metal and similar materials
jarrah – Australian eucalyptus tree, *Eucalyptus marginata*, that yields a valuable timber
jute – herbaceous plant such as *Corchorus capsularis* cultivated for its strong fibre, used in making sacks, rope etc
kapok – silky fibre from the hairs covering the seeds of a tropical bombacaceous tree
lace – delicate decorative fabric, often made from cotton or silk, woven in an open web of patterns and figures
lacquer – hard glossy coating made by dissolving cellulose derivatives or natural resins in a volatile solvent
lamé – fabric of silk, cotton or wool interwoven with threads of metal
lampas – ornate damask-like cloth of cotton or silk and cotton, used in upholstery
lead – graphite or a mixture containing graphite, clay etc, used for drawing; a heavy, toxic, bluish-white metallic element in alloys, accumulators, cable sheaths, paints and used as a radiation shield
leatherette – trademark product that is an imitation leather, made from paper, cloth etc
lignum vitae – heavy resinous wood used in machine bearings, casters etc
linen – hard-wearing fabric woven from the spun fibres of flax
linoleum – sheet material made of hessian, jute etc, coated under pressure and heat with a mixture of powdered cork, linseed oil, rosin and pigment, used as a floor covering
lurex – trademark product of thin aluminium thread coated with plastic fabric containing such thread
magnetic tape – long, narrow plastic strip coated with iron oxide, used to record sound or video signals or to store information in computers
mahogany – chiefly from the tree *Swietenia mahogoni* (family Meliaceae) from the West Indies and Central America, valued for its hard, fine-grained reddish-brown wood often used in furniture; also used more generically when timbers have these qualities
maple – any tree or shrub of the northern temperate genus *Acer*; the hard, close-grained wood of these trees is often used for furniture and flooring
marble – hard, crystalline, metamorphic rock resulting from the re-crystallisation of a limestone; takes a high polish and is used for building and sculpture
Masonite – fibreboard trade name for tempered hardboard invented by William H. Mason and marketed by Masonite Ltd; tempered hardboards are impregnated with a polymer drying oil and are resistant to hard wear and weather; see also *fibreboard*
mercury – heavy, silvery-white, toxic liquid-metallic element occurring principally in cinnabar; used in thermometers, barometers and mercury-vapour lamps
methylated spirits – alcohol that has been denatured by the addition of methanol, pyridine and a violet dye
mica – any of a group of lustrous rock-forming minerals, which due to their resistance to electricity and heat are used as dielectrics in heating elements
microfilm – strip of film on which books, newspapers, documents etc can be recorded in miniaturised form

moire – fabric, usually silk, having a watered effect
moquette – a thick velvety fabric used for carpets, upholstery and the like
morocco – fine, soft leather made from goatskin and used, for example, for bookbinding and shoes
mortar – mixture of cement and/or lime with sand and water, used to bond bricks or stones and as a wall covering
mother of pearl – hard iridescent substance, mostly calcium carbonate, that forms the inner layer of certain mollusc shells, such as the oyster; it is used for buttons and to inlay furniture and is also called 'nacre'
mulga – any of various Australian Acacia shrubs
muslin – fine, plain-weave cotton fabric
newsprint – inexpensive wood-pulp paper used for newspaper
nickel – malleable, ductile, silvery-white metallic element that is strong and corrosion-resistant
nickel plate – thin layer of nickel deposited on a surface, usually by electrolysis
nickel silver – any of various white alloys containing copper, zinc and nickel used in making tableware and the like, also called 'German silver'
nylon – a class of synthetic polyamide materials; yarn or cloth made of nylon
oak – any deciduous or evergreen tree or shrub of the genus *Quercus*, having acorns as fruit and lobed leaves; the wood of these trees, used especially as building and furniture-making timber
ochre – any of various natural earths containing ferric oxide, silica and alumina; used as yellow and red pigments
onion skin – a glazed translucent paper
opal – amorphous form of hydrated silicon dioxide that is colourless, or of variable colour, and translucent; found in sedimentary and volcanic rocks and in deposits from hot springs in America and Australia
organza – thin fabric of silk, cotton, nylon or rayon
ormolu – gold-coloured alloy of copper tin or zinc used to decorate, for example, furniture and mouldings; gold prepared for use in gilding
pampas grass – any of various larger grasses of the South American genus *Cortaderia* and related genera
papier mâché – a hard, strong substance suitable for painting on, made of paper pulp or layers of paper mixed with paste and 'size', and moulded when moist
papyrus – a tall aquatic plant, *Cyperus papyrus* is part of the sedge family
parchment – skin of certain animals, such as sheep, treated to form a durable material once used for bookbinding and manuscripts
particle board – panel made of particles, wafers or sawdust, rather than fibres, and combining with a resin binder can be molded to shape; see also *fibreboard*
paste – hard shiny glass used for making imitation gems; also known as 'strass'
pearl – hard, smooth, lustrous and typically rounded nugget on the inner surface of a clam or oyster shell and much valued as a gem; any artificial gem resembling this
perspex – trademark of any of various clear acrylic resins, used chiefly as a substitute for glass
petersham – thick corded ribbon used to stiffen belts and skirt/trouser waists; heavy woollen fabric used, for example, for coats
pewter – any of various alloys containing tin (80–90%), lead (10–20%) and sometimes small amounts of metals such as copper and antimony
pigment – substance occurring in plant or animal tissue; any substance used to impart colour

pine – any evergreen resinous coniferous tree of the genus *Pinus*
pipe clay – a fine, white pure clay used in the manufacture of tobacco pipes and pottery and for whitening leather and similar materials
pitch – any of various heavy, dark viscid substances obtained as a residue from the distillation of tars
plant fibre – fibres from often long-leafed plants, typically used to create fabrics, hats, rope, basketry and other materials
plaster – a mixture of lime, sand and water, sometimes stiffened with hair or other fibres, that is applied to a wall or ceiling as a soft paste that hardens when dry
plaster of Paris – white powder mixed with water that sets hard when it dries; used for sculptures and casts, as an additive for lime plasters
plasticine – trademarked colour modelling compound, especially used by children
plywood – board comprising an odd number of thin layers of wood glued together under pressure, with the grain of one layer at right angles to the grain of the adjoining layer
polyester – large class of synthetic materials that are polymers; used as plastics, textile fibres and adhesives
polystyrene – a synthetic thermoplastic material obtained by polymerising styrene; used as white rigid foam for insulating and packing and as glass-like material in light fittings and water tanks
poplin – strong fabric, usually of cotton, in plain weave with fine ribbing, used for garments
porcelain – vitreous, more or less translucent, ceramic material, the principal ingredients being kaolin and *petuntse* (hard paste) or other clays
pumice – light, porous, acid volcanic rock having the composition of rhyolite; used for scouring, and in powdered form as an abrasive and for polishing
putty – stiff paste made of whiting and linseed oil that is used to fix glass panes into frames and to fill cracks and holes in woodwork
quartz – hard, glossy mineral of silicon dioxide in hexagonal crystalline form, present in most rocks, especially granite and sandstone
quartzite – white or grey sandstone composed of quartz
raffia – also called raffia palm, the stalks of its large plume-like leaves yield a useful fibre for weaving etc
rattan – climbing plants of the genus *Calamus* and related genera, having tough stems used for wickerwork and canes
rayon – textile fibre made from wood pulp or other forms of cellulose, and the fabrics made from such a fibre
reed – any of the tall grasses of the genus *Phragmites*, especially *P. communis*, that grow in swamps and shallow water and have pointed hollow stalks; the stalks of these plants, especially as used for thatching
resin – any of a group of solid or semi-solid amorphous compounds obtained directly from certain plants or their exudations; also known as 'rosin'
ribbon – a narrow strip of fine material, especially silk, used for trimming, tying, etc
rock – any aggregate of minerals that makes up part of the Earth's crust; it may be consolidated, such as granite, or unconsolidated, such as sand, clay or mud
rolled gold – a metal such as brass coated with a thin layer of gold, usually more than nine carat purity; used in inexpensive jewellery; also known as filled gold

rosewood – hard, dark wood of various tropical and sub-tropical leguminous trees, especially of the genus *Dalbergia*; has a rose-like scent and is used in cabinetwork

rubber – a cream to dark brown elastic material obtained by coagulating and drying the latex of certain plants, especially *Hevea brasiliensis*; also known as India rubber, gum elastic and *caoutchouc*

ruby – a deep-red, transparent, precious variety of corundum; occurs naturally in Burma and Sri Lanka, but is also synthesised; used as a gemstone, in lasers and for bearings and rollers in watch-making

rush – any annual or perennial plant (family Jancaceae) of the genus *Juncus* growing in wet places and typically having grass-like cylindrical leaves and small green or brown flowers; used to make baskets

salt-glaze – glaze giving a slightly rough, pitted surface, applied to stoneware by throwing salt onto the kiln fire when the temperature is at its highest

sandalwood – evergreen trees of the genus *Sartalum* (family Santalaceae), especially *S. album* (white sandalwood) of South Asia and Australia, having a hard, light-coloured heartwood; used for carving, burned as incense and for its aromatic oil used in perfume

sandstone – any of a group of common sedimentary rocks consisting of sand grains consolidated with materials such as quartz, haematite and clay minerals, used widely in building

sapphire – any precious corundum gemstone that is not red, especially the highly valued transparent blue variety

satin – a fabric closely woven to show much of the warp, giving a smooth, glossy appearance

satinwood – the tree *Chloroxylon swieteria* (family Flindersiaceae), occurring in Asia; hardwood with a satiny texture used in cabinetwork, parquetry and veneering

sennit – flat, braided cordage used on ships; plaited straw, grass, palm leaves etc, used for making hats

sequin – small disk of shiny, coloured metal foil or plastic used to decorate garments and other textiles

serge – twill-weave woollen or worsted fabric used for clothing

sheepskin – the skin of a sheep, especially when used for clothing etc, or with the fleece removed and used for parchment

Sheffield plate – silverware made at Sheffield, England; wares made of copper rolled between and fused with films of silver – a cheap substitute for solid silver

shell – the protective calcareous or membranous outer layer of an egg, especially a bird's egg; hard outer covering of many molluscs, secreted by the mantle; any hard outer layer, such as the exoskeleton of many anthropoids; the hard outer layer of some fruits, especially of nuts

shellac – yellowish resin secreted by the lac insect; commercial preparation of this used in varnishes, polishes and leather dressings

silk – very fine, soft, lustrous and strong fibre produced by a silk worm to make its cocoon; a thread or fabric made from this fibre

silver – very ductile, malleable, brilliant greyish-white element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal used in jewellery, tableware, coinage, electrical contacts and in electro-plating

silver plate – thin layer of silver deposited on a base metal

size – glutinous or viscous wash used in many papers and which imparts water-resistant qualities to the paper
slate – smooth, fine-grained metamorphic rock that can be split into thin layers and is used as a roofing and paving material
slip – clay mixed with water to a creamy consistency and used for decorating or patching ceramics
soapstone – massive compact variety of talc, used for making, for example, table tops, hearths and ornaments
solder – alloy for joining two metal surfaces by melting the alloy to form a thin layer between the surfaces
stain – solution used to penetrate the surface of a material, especially wood, and impart a rich colour without covering the surface or grain
stainless steel – type of steel resistant to corrosion due to the presence of large amounts of chromium
steel – any of various alloys based on iron containing carbon (usually 1–17%) and often small quantities of other elements
straw – stalks of threshed grain, especially wheat, rye, oats and barley, used plaited in hats, baskets etc, or as fodder; single, dry or ripened stalk, especially of a grass
string – thin length of cord, twine, fibre or similar material used for tying, hanging and binding
suede – leather finished with a fine, velvet-like nap, usually on the flesh side of the skin or hide; produced by abrasive action
taffeta – thin, crisp, lustrous plain-weave fabric of silk, rayon etc, especially used for women's clothing
tapa – the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree; a paper-like cloth made from this in the Pacific Islands; see also *barkcloth*
tapestry – heavy ornamental fabric, often representing a picture, used for wall hangings, furnishings and the like
teak – large verbenaceous tree, *Tectona grandis*, of India and South-East Asia; the hard, resinous, yellow-brown wood of this tree, often used for furniture making
terracotta – a hard, unglazed brownish-red earthenware; the clay from which it is made
tin – malleable, silvery-white metallic element used extensively in alloys, especially bronze pewter
topaz – hard, glassy material consisting of asilicate of aluminium and fluorine in crystalline form; yellow, yellowish-brown or colourless and a valuable gemstone
tortoiseshell – horny translucent yellow and brown mottled substance obtained from the outer-layer of the shell of the Hawksbill Turtle; used for making ornaments, jewellery etc
towelling – absorbent fabric, especially with a nap, used for making towels and bathrobes
tulle – fine net fabric of silk, rayon or similar used for evening dresses, ballet dresses and as a trimming for hats
tungsten – hard, malleable, ductile greyish-white element occurring principally in wolf ramite and scheelite; used in lamp filaments, electrical contact points, X-ray targets and (alloyed with steel) in high-speed cutting tools
turquoise – greenish-blue, fine-grained secondary mineral consisting of hydrated copper aluminium phosphate; used as a gemstone
tusk – pointed, elongated and usually paired tooth in the elephant, walrus and some other mammals that is specialised for fighting; see also *ivory*
tweed – thick, woollen, often-knobbly cloth produced originally in Scotland
twill – weave in which the weft yarns are worked around two or more warp yarns to produce an effect of parallel diagonal lines or ribs
twine – string made by twisting together fibres of hemp, cotton etc

varnish – preparation consisting of a solvent, drying oil and usually resin, rubber or bitumen that polymerises to a hard, glossy, usually transparent surface when it dries; a similar preparation consisting of shellac or cellulose ester dissolved in a volatile solvent, such as alcohol, which hardens to a film on evaporation of the solvent; also known as 'oil varnish'

vegetable ivory – hard whitish material obtained from the endosperm of the ivory nut

velcro – trademark fastening comprising two strips of nylon fabric, one having tiny hooked threads and the other a coarse surface, that form a strong bond when pressed together

vellum – a fine parchment prepared from the skin of a calf, kid or lamb

velour – any of various fabrics with a velvet-like finish, used for upholstery, coats, hats and the like

velvet – fabric of silk, cotton, nylon etc, with a thick, close, soft, usually lustrous pile

veneer – thin layer of wood, plastic or similar, with a decorative or fine finish that is bonded to the surface of a less-expensive material, often wood

vinyl – consisting of or containing the univalent group of atoms CH_2=CH-; a vinyl polymer; vinyl chloride; consisting or made of a vinyl resin

voile – light, semi-transparent fabric of silk, rayon, cotton etc, used for garments

vulcanite – hard, usually black rubber produced by vulcanising natural rubber with a large amount of sulphur; resistant to chemical attack and used in chemical containers and electrical insulators

wallpaper – paper usually printed or embossed with designs for pasting onto walls and ceilings

walnut – any juglandaceous deciduous tree of the genus *Juglans*, occurring in America, south-eastern Europe and Asia, especially *J. regia*; the nut of these trees, having a wrinkled two-lobed seed and a hard, wrinkled shell; the light yellowish-brown wood of these trees, often used in making furniture and for panelling

wax – any of various viscous or solid materials of natural origin; characteristically lustrous, insoluble in water and sensitive to heat, and consisting largely of esters of fatty acids

whale bone – horny, elastic material forming a series of thin plates hanging from the upper jaw on either side of the palate of the toothless (baleen) whales and used to strain plankton from water; a thin strip of this substance, once used to stiffen corsets and bodices; also known as 'baleen'

white metal – see *Britannia metal*

wool – outer coat of sheep, yaks etc, consisting of short curly hairs; yarn spun from the coat of sheep etc and used in weaving, spinning, knitting, carpets etc

worsted – a closely twisted thread made from combed, long staple wool; a fabric made from this, with a hard, smooth close-textured surface and no nap

wrought iron – pure form of iron having a low carbon content and a fibrous micro-structure; made by various processes and often used for decorative work

zinc – brittle, bluish-white metallic element that becomes coated with a corrosion-resistant layer in moist air and occurs chiefly in sphalerite and smithsonite; used in die-casting, galvanising metals and in battery electrodes

Useful resources

Publications

Aitchison, Jean, Alan Gilchrist and David Bawden, *Thesaurus construction and use: a practical manual* (4th edn), Aslib, IMI, London, 2000

'Do documents and objects mix?', a symposium of Deakin University and the Health & Medicine Museums Section of Museums Australia Inc., June 1993

Ellis, Judith (ed.), *Keeping archives*, (2nd edn), D.W. Thorpe, Melbourne, Vic., 1994

Freeman, Kirsten, *The 1992 Victorian museum survey report*, Museums Association of Australia Inc. (Vic. branch), Melbourne, Vic., 1993

Frost, Lenore, *Dating family photos 1850–1920*, Lenore Frost, Essendon, Vic., 1992

Headings for tomorrow, American Library Association, Chicago, 1992

Holm, Stuart A., *Facts & artefacts: how to document a museum collection, Museum* Documentation Association, Cambridge, UK, 1991

McAdam, Angela, *Keep it for the future! How to set up small community archives*, National Archives of Australia, Belconnen, ACT, c. 2007

SHIC Working Party, *Social history and industrial classification (SHIC): a subject classification for museum collections* (2nd edn), Museum Documentation Association, Cambridge, UK, 1993

Ward, Patricia and Judy Washington (eds), *Managing local studies collections*, Australian Library & Information Association, Local Studies Public Libraries Sections, Sydney, NSW, 1990

Yoxall, Helen, Collecting archives: *a challenge to the museum community Museums National*, 4(1), 1995, pp. 11–13

—— *Documenting our own place: the need for archival programs in museums, Museums National*, 3(4), 1995, pp. 14–15

Professional organisations

Australian Copyright Council
www.copyright.org.au

Arts Victoria
www.arts.vic.gov.au

Collections Australia Network
www.collectionsaustralia.net

Copyright Agency Limited
www.copyright.com.au

Heritage Victoria
www.heritage.vic.gov.au

Koori Heritage Trust
www.koorieheritagetrust.com

Museums Australia (Victoria)
www.mavic.asn.au

Museums Australia
www.museumsaustralia.org.au

Museum Victoria
www.museumvictoria.com.au

Public Records Office Victoria
www.prov.vic.gov

Digital resources

Adlib (collections software)
www.adlibsoft.com

Art and Architecture Thesaurus Online
www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/aat/

Australian Picture Thesaurus
www.picturethesaurus.gov.au

Information Services and Technology (Mosaic collections software)
www.istechnology.com.au

Maxus (collections software)
www.maxus.net.au

Officeworks (data storage devices)
www.officeworks.com.au

Vernon (collections software)
www.vernonsystems.com

Materials suppliers

Archival Survival
www.archivalsurvival.com.au

Mediflex Industries (nitrile gloves)
tel. 1800 240 448

Zetta Florence
www.zettaflorence.com.au