



Australian Government

Geoscience Australia

Collection Management Policy

For Physical Collections

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Introduction

Purpose

The Collection Management Policy (CMP) exists to provide a framework for Geoscience Australia to manage the various physical collections that it holds. The CMP provides specific policies that guide how Geoscience Australia will manage its collections and aim to meet best international practice whilst also meeting the strategic vision and outcomes of Geoscience Australia.

A CMP is a standard tool used for managing Museum collections; this CMP recognises that Geoscience Australia maintains diverse working collections beyond the normal scope of a Museum collection and seeks to provide policies and procedures that meet Geoscience Australia's specific collection needs.

The Geoscience Australia collections form a central plank of Geoscience Australia's Strategic Priority to [Maintain Geoscience Knowledge and Capability](#)¹, and in meeting the following strategies and outcomes:

Strategy - Ensuring geoscientific and geospatial data, information and collections are gathered, managed and made accessible for the use of all Australians both now and into the future.

Strategy - Promote, educate and build public awareness of geoscience and its benefits.

Outcome - Australia's geoscience data, information and collections are managed and maintained.

Outcome - Australia's geoscience data, information and collections are discoverable and accessible as a public resource for informed decision making.

Outcome - Australia has as an established infrastructure to ensure the ongoing collection of fundamental geoscience data²

As more of the collections data is digitised and made publicly accessible it will also assist Geoscience Australia in meeting other areas of Strategic Priority, particularly [Building Australia's Resource Wealth](#) and [Providing Fundamental Geographic Information](#).

The CMP also exists to ensure that the Geoscience Australia collections can continue to underpin the six [Science Principles](#) that guide Geoscience Australia³:

- Principle 1 - Relevance to Government
- Principle 2 - Collaborative science
- Principle 3 - Quality science
- Principle 4 - Transparent science
- Principle 5 - Communicated science
- Principle 6 - Sustained science capability

¹<http://www.ga.gov.au/about/role/maintaining-geoscience-knowledge-and-capability>

²<http://www.ga.gov.au/about/role/maintaining-geoscience-knowledge-and-capability>

³<http://www.ga.gov.au/about/corporate-documents/science-principles>

Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Geoscience Australia officials, volunteers and contractors;
- material that has been collected or acquired by Geoscience Australia in the course of its responsibilities for meeting the Australian Government's geoscience requirements⁴ in relation to scientific study and research, display and education; and
- collections held by Geoscience Australia and any of its previous entities, namely the Australian Survey Office (ASO), Australian Surveying and Land Information Group (AUSLIG), Australian Geological Survey Organisation (AGSO), and Bureau of Mineral Resources, Geology and Geophysics (BMR).

⁴<http://www.ga.gov.au/about/history>

Principles

Geoscience Australia maintains collections of scientific and cultural heritage material to enable it to maintain geoscience knowledge and capability⁵

Geoscience Australia manages its collections using internationally accepted best practice codes of ethics, including those of ICOM⁶ and Museums Australia⁷

Geoscience Australia manages its collections using internationally accepted best practice standards and guidelines including those of SPECTRUM⁸, ICOM⁹ and Museums Australia¹⁰.

⁵<http://www.ga.gov.au/about/role/maintaining-geoscience-knowledge-and-capability>

⁶ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2013

⁷Museums Australia Incorporated Code of Ethics 1999

⁸SPECTRUM is the UK Museum Collections Management Standard, widely used internationally.

⁹ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums 2013

¹⁰Museums Australia Incorporated Code of Ethics 1999

Policies

Acquisitions

Acquisition is the act of obtaining an item or group of items. It involves taking legal possession and ownership of the item/s to develop and enhance the Geoscience Australia collection.

Geoscience Australia will only acquire items that fulfil its strategic priorities including maintaining geoscience knowledge and capability, and the strategy to “ensure geoscientific and geospatial data, information and collections are captured, curated and made accessible to the community for use now and into the future”¹¹. Geoscience Australia may acquire specimens or collection items using the following means:

- field collection;
- scientific analysis;
- donation;
- purchase; and
- internal transfer.

Geoscience Australia will ensure that any items acquired for its collection have a clear provenance and have not been collected or trafficked illegally. All collecting by Geoscience Australia staff must comply with all relevant local, state and federal laws and regulations and those international treaties and agreements to which Australia is a signatory.

Geoscience Australia will normally only acquire material which is not subject to burdensome restrictions (such as requirements for display or access). All material acquired or collected for the Geoscience Australia collections becomes the unencumbered property of the Commonwealth of Australia (Geoscience Australia).

Geoscience Australia will seek to develop its collections through acquisition of items or specimens that meet scientific and/or educational and promotional priorities.

Items acquired for the Geoscience Australia collections must meet the generic requirements of relevance, provenance and legal title.

Note that material loaned (short or long-term loans) to Geoscience Australia is covered by [Section 3.4 Loans – Incoming and Outgoing](#).

Accessioning and Registration

Accessioning is the process of formally recording or processing a new item or specimen into the permanent inventory of the Geoscience Australia collections, and assigning to that item a particular level of care.

Geoscience Australia will accession and register items into its collections using accepted international standards. Any item in the Geoscience Australia collections must have a minimum level of data recorded to be considered accessioned.

¹¹<http://www.ga.gov.au/about/role/maintaining-geoscience-knowledge-and-capability>

Deaccessioning and Disposal

Deaccessioning is the formal and permanent removal of an item from the Geoscience Australia collection following stringent guidelines. It is the procedural action taken in relation to an item prior to its disposal. Disposal is the physical removal of an item from the collection after it has been deaccessioned.

Geoscience Australia will deaccession and dispose of items in its collections in accordance with the criteria set out in the Collection Management Procedures.

Geoscience Australia will dispose of collection material in accordance with the *Records Disposal Authority Geoscience Australia* and the *Accountable Authority Instructions* (AAIs) (see Supporting Information in Section 4).

Geoscience Australia will only dispose of collection item(s) once they have been deaccessioned.

Loans – Incoming and Outgoing

Loans are the temporary physical transfer of items from one institution to another where there is no transfer of ownership.

Geoscience Australia will allow the temporary loan of items both into and from its collections for bona fide purposes, subject to the safety and security of the item(s) being assured and appropriate records maintained.

Bona fide purposes include:

- geological and related research;
- display and geoscience-related promotion; and
- education.

Storage and Display

The majority of collection items will spend most of their lives in storage. It is therefore imperative that storage materials and methods are of the highest standard, as incorrect materials and conditions can accelerate deterioration.

Collection items are most vulnerable when on display due to inappropriate environmental conditions (light, humidity, temperature) and security. Material should be displayed under conditions specified by international collection standards, and specific to the material being displayed.

Geoscience Australia will provide appropriate conditions at all times for the storage and display of its collection, including appropriate environments and housing materials.

Collection Care / Maintenance

Maintaining a collection involves practices that ensure each item remains in the most stable state possible. This includes keeping the items clean and in good repair so they can be handled, moved, researched, analysed, scanned or photographed safely. This may involve conservation treatments on some aspects of the collection.

Geoscience Australia will provide appropriate care and maintenance procedures for its collections to ensure they are kept in optimum condition.

Access

Access to the collections involves allowing the physical or digital viewing of an item and/or its related information (metadata) either by Geoscience Australia staff or volunteers, or other interested parties as permitted by Geoscience Australia.

Geoscience Australia will facilitate and promote all forms of access to its collections and collection information by staff, volunteers and bona fide researchers, provided that access does not pose a risk of damage or deterioration to the item(s) or collection. Geoscience Australia will provide open access to its collection data and any related collection images unless there are sound reasons to withhold information (e.g. valuations, donor details, geographic location information, etc.).

Security

Providing secure environments for the collections is imperative to maintain collection integrity. Security measures include the presence of suitable procedures for securely moving and handling items and also involve both physical and electronic systems for monitoring and securing items in storage or on display. Maintaining accurate and up to date collection documentation is a vital element of securing a collection.

Geoscience Australia will provide a secure environment for the storage, display and transport of its collections at all times.

Work Health and Safety

Some collection material can pose Work Health and Safety (WHS) risks if not properly managed. The adherence to WHS guidelines for handling and accessing collection items reduces or eliminates the risks to both the collection and the people working with the collection.

Geoscience Australia will provide a safe environment for accessing and handling collection items. Staff and volunteers will receive suitable training and guidance on the potential risks involved with accessing the collection, and be provided suitable knowledge and tools to mitigate or eliminate these risks.

Inventory and Valuations

To maintain the integrity of a collection a regular inventory of the collections will be undertaken which may incorporate the valuation of specific collection items or parts of the collection.

Geoscience Australia will undertake an annual stock-take for significant assets over Geoscience Australia's Heritage and Culture assets threshold.

Geoscience Australia will conduct valuations with sufficient frequency to ensure that the carrying amounts of the collections will not differ materially from the collections' fair values in Geoscience Australia's annual financial statements at the reporting date. The regularity of independent valuations depends upon the volatility of movements in market values for the relevant assets. Valuations will be conducted at least every three years.

Geoscience Australia's Heritage and Cultural assets will be reported in Geoscience Australia's annual financial statements.

Supporting Information

Related Policies

Accountable Authority Instructions (AAIs) and Delegations	• The acceptance of gifts • Managing property
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Definitions

Sample	Used by some areas of Geoscience Australia to define a unique specimen or a field collection that may include one or more unique specimens.
Specimen	A unique scientific item in the collection that has been curated (identified, labelled, and registered). Often used interchangeably at Geoscience Australia with Sample.
Item	For the purposes of this CMP the term “Item” is used when referring to individual elements of a collection that are not considered to be scientific specimens. This might include scientific apparatus, field notebooks, etc. In some cases the terms “Item”, “Specimen”, and “Sample” can be used interchangeably.
Collection	A discrete grouping of items, specimens or samples that are normally physically co-located and registered, and share a similar purpose or characteristic. A collection may consist of a number of smaller sub-collections.
Curator	Geoscience Australia staff member with overall responsibility for the collections identified in this Collection Management Policy.
Custodian	Geoscience Australia staff member responsible for a discrete collection or subset of a collection governed by the Collection Management Policy.

External Mandates

Staff should be aware that compliance with this policy does not necessarily guarantee compliance with all external mandates, laws and policies. Staff should satisfy themselves of their compliance with all relevant laws and policies, including those listed below. In the event of conflict, legislation and binding whole of government directions take precedence.

Source	Nature of risk to be managed
Legislative mandates	
<i>Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986</i>	Geoscience Australia regularly loans material internationally and adherence to the PMCH Act ensures the risk to Geoscience Australia's reputation is minimised. Scientific specimens are listed as Class B objects under the National Cultural Heritage Control List.
<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i>	Adherence to the WHS Act reduces the risk of staff being injured through exposure to dangerous material and/or unsafe facilities. This also reduces the risk of potential damage to the collections themselves.
<i>Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</i>	As a non-corporate Commonwealth entity, Geoscience Australia is subject to audits by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). Managing physical collections is an area of interest to the ANAO.