Share stories and build knowledge

Share stories and build knowledge of Indigenous history and culture

Targets

- Increased awareness of Indigenous history and culture.
- Visible collections and services for Indigenous peoples.

Key strategies

- Support public libraries to collect, expose and share local and national resources on Australian Indigenous culture and history.
- Encourage public libraries to collaborate with local Indigenous peoples and communities to create and share stories — for example, collecting local histories relating to experiences of the Indigenous community, collecting ephemera, collaborating with Indigenous artists etc.
Resources for Public Libraries

- LOCAL STUDIES
- ORAL HISTORIES
- HERITAGE PLAQUES
- MAPS
- WIKIPEDIA

LOCAL STUDIES

Getting started

Building the collection

Building your Library’s local studies collection is an integral part of sharing stories and building knowledge of Indigenous Australian histories and cultures. We encourage you to build local studies collections that are broad-ranging in its representation of Indigenous stories, perspectives and authorial voice as well as being diverse in format. Audio visual materials, oral histories, children’s picture books and photographic materials are some examples of diverse formats that may enrich your existing collection.
ICIP Protocols

It is important to consider rights management when developing collections. Local studies collection development policies and procedures should include consideration of Indigenous Intellectual and Cultural Property (ICIP) Protocols. Terri Janke & Company have provided some valuable resources online relating to ICIP protocols. This video [1] gives a great overview on the background of the ICIP Protocols.

Visibility

The increased visibility of your local studies collection makes the content more accessible and easily recognisable. It is a way of celebrating Australian Indigenous histories and cultures. Some easily achievable steps to increase visibility include:

- Placing the Aboriginal flag on the spines of books.
- If shelved together rather than distributed through the rest of the collection, consider labelling your local studies materials with the name of the traditional custodians, for example: “Gadigal heritage collection” or “Gadigal local studies collection”.

Sensitivity Notices

In building your local studies collection it is vital to acknowledge the cultural protocols of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and your local Indigenous community. Issuing sensitivity notices acknowledges that some collections may contain historically biased content, or material that is sensitive or offensive in today’s context. You may have items in your collection that are valuable in terms of their connection with the local Aboriginal community, however they may be outdated in terms of attitudes or language.

For example, they may include derogatory and offensive language such as ‘part-Aboriginal’, 'full-blood', 'half-castes', or ‘blacks’, ‘gins’ or ‘darkies’. We suggest you remove these collections from open collections and manage them through a request. This way you can provide a sensitive notice when access to the collection is made. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has a number of Thesaurus tools [2] available to guide use of appropriate language and terminology.

Downloadable Resources

Spine Label PDF [3]

Special Care Notice PDF [4]

Special Care Notice Word Doc [5]

Tip

You can use our Special Care Notice PDF as an example or customise the wording for your local studies collection using the Word Doc version.

Working together

Involve your local Aboriginal community in the process of building your local studies collection on an ongoing basis. Work collaboratively to identify key subject areas or material formats that meet the needs and interests of the community, while also ensuring new acquisitions are reliably representing Indigenous history, culture and perspectives.

Tip

‘Local studies collection’ is preferable to ‘Indigenous studies collection’. This language is more inclusive to Indigenous people being represented in local collecting, whereas ‘Indigenous studies’ can also be seen as an academic field of study.
ORAL HISTORIES

Getting started

Oral histories offer first hand insights into living memories. Collecting the oral histories of Indigenous community members is not only a great way of documenting and preserving those memories for future generations, it is also a means of giving voice and agency to the (often underrepresented) Indigenous perspectives of history.

Working together

The National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) [6] Guidelines Working with Community: Guidelines for collaborative practice between libraries and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, endorsed by the State Library of NSW, outline best practice for engaging and working collaboratively with Indigenous communities. It’s a good idea to consult the guidelines before getting started on your oral history project to ensure you are following best practice right from the outset.

The NSLA guidelines communicate the importance of:

- Knowing your community: their history, experiences, contemporary priorities, language groups and governance structures
- Respecting Indigenous knowledge: recognising Indigenous peoples as the custodians of their knowledge and culture, and the significance of their contribution to your Library’s collection
- Identifying a process: defining a process or methodology that upholds these interests from the beginning.

Oral History NSW [7] also provides comprehensive guidelines for ethical practice, commissioning oral history projects, and determining fees for oral history.

Some useful resources include:

- Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies [8]
- Deepening Histories, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Intellectual Property (IP) Protocol [12]
- National and State Libraries of Australasia (NSLA) Working with Communities Guidelines [14]
- ATSILIRN Protocols [15]
- ABC Open Right Wrongs; [16]
- State Library of NSW Amplify (Faith Bandler) [17]

HERITAGE PLAQUES

Getting started

Heritage plaques are a tangible way of acknowledging the historic significance of a site or building, of an individual and/or commemorating an event.

Installing a heritage plaque at your library or within your township that recognises Indigenous history, culture or individual achievement can not only build positive relationships with your local Indigenous community but also encourages others to reflect on and engage with the Indigenous history of the area they live in.
Working together

When deciding whether a heritage plaque would be suitable for your library, it may help to ask the following questions:

- Who are the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which the library was built?
- What is the cultural significance of the site?
- Do you know any Indigenous community members whose life story or contribution to the history and character of your library or town deserves to be acknowledged?

MAPS

Getting started

The continent of Australia is home to many different Indigenous nations, clans and language groups, each occupying their own land demarcated by environmental, cultural and trade boundaries.

Maps outlining the boundaries of nations, clans and language groups are great resources for learning about the diversity and richness of Australian Indigenous cultures, and for understanding the living history of the traditional lands on which your library, or library cluster, is situated.

One of the most recognisable and widely-used maps of this nature is the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia [18], which can be purchased online or reproduced with permission. The Map showing the distribution of the Aboriginal Tribes of Australia by Anthropologist Norman Tindale, commonly referred to as the Tindale Map [19], provides another overview of Indigenous language groups in Australia. As the map was compiled in the 1940s and contains many errors, it is not reliable in today’s context but can used as a rough guide and to showcase the richness of Indigenous culture in Australia. You can download and display the Tindale Map from the Library's collections in your library.

Working with communities

Displaying a map of Indigenous Australia at your Library is a positive, welcoming gesture to the local Indigenous community and promotes education about the diversity of Indigenous cultures and languages across Australia.

Downloadable Resources

Tindale Map Collection PDF [20]

Tip

There are many maps of Indigenous Australia. Contact your local Aboriginal Land Council [21] for advice on which map best reflects the boundaries of the traditional custodians of your region. You may find there are more detailed maps available concentrating solely on your region.

WIKIPEDIA

Getting started

As one of the world’s largest reference websites, the open-content encyclopaedia Wikipedia [22] can play a significant role in both promoting and linking the public offsite to your library’s Indigenous collections.

Wikipedia editors can achieve this by:

- Embedding links to related items in your library’s catalogue in Wikipedia articles and citations
- Summarising and making accessible the resources your library has made available around the item/s or broader topics.
Working together

With limited representation of Indigenous peoples, histories and cultures on the site, there is enormous scope to create content that is relevant to your area as a collaborative effort with your local Indigenous community.

Speak with your local Indigenous community, consultative groups and/or the local Land Council to identify opportunities for highlighting stories on Wikipedia that can be linked back to the collection.

Tip

Anyone can edit existing articles without become a registered user, while registration is required to create an article from scratch for publication. It's good practice to embed links taking users directly to the source, whether this is your library’s website or catalogue. Aim for as few clicks as possible.

CASE STUDIES

- [Oakey library](#)

Oakey library

[Gooneburra mural at Oakey library](#)
This case study was kindly provided by Jo Beazley, Coordinator Programs and Services Library and Cultural Services, Toowoomba Regional Council.

The establishment of the Gooneburra Gardens and mural within the courtyard at Oakey Library was seen as the perfect way to ‘bring to life’ the Indigenous Gooneburra Collection and a unique way for the Oakey community at large to make connections and bridge the gap with the local indigenous community. The Gooneburra Gardens also aims to encourage learning and literacy in community collaboration with the growing of plants and the learning about how to use plants while gaining a greater understanding of native food. This area will also be one where everyone can enjoy the outdoor space at the library.

The garden and mural project was a joint collaboration with the Oakey Indigenous Community represented by Goondir Health Services. Funding for the project commenced with the Local Working Art Group calling for Expressions of Interests (EOI) of projects to be considered for RADF funding in line with the Oakey Public Art Plan as a reference point. Past funding has also been received from the State Library of Queensland and Toowoomba Region Libraries to help develop the welcoming spaces inside the building that incorporates another mural and Gooneburra Collection.

A broad range of fact and activity sheets have been created for the Gooneburra Collection, Gardens and Murals. These range from plant information, children's activities (with school curriculum ideas), Indigenous information, and reading lists of items from the collection. The Gooneburra Collection at the Oakey Library has also been gathered to compliment and promote the garden and murals.

Choose your strategy objective

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