

SPECIAL REPORT NO. 27

• *Management of
Heritage Collections*

NOVEMBER 1993

auditing the public interest
COLLECTIONS

VICTORIA

Auditor-General
of Victoria

SPECIAL REPORT No. 27

**MANAGEMENT OF
HERITAGE COLLECTIONS**

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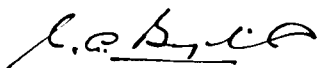
November 1993

The Honourable the Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Melbourne, Vic. 3002

Sir

Under the provisions of section 48A of the *Audit Act* 1958, I transmit the Auditor-General's Special Report No. 27 on Management of Heritage Collections.

Yours faithfully


C.A. BARAGWANATH
Auditor-General

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PART 1

Executive Summary

OVERALL AUDIT CONCLUSION

1.1.1 The Museum of Victoria, the National Gallery of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria are the custodians of a significant part of the State Collection which has been acquired and developed over 150 years. The State Collection includes works of art, books and the Museum's collection of natural and human history. Given their heritage, cultural, academic, reference, economic and financial value, the vast collections within each agency represent an extremely valuable resource to the people of Victoria, and indeed the nation.

1.1.2 The principal mandates of the Museum, Library and Gallery involve the effective and efficient management and utilisation of the State Collection. As such, the roles and functions within each agency exhibit similar characteristics with each having responsibility for the development and management of their collections.

1.1.3 Since 1986, a number of reviews of the 3 agencies have made recommendations covering such matters as the security, storage, insurance, cataloguing and valuation of the collections. Audit found that limited progress had been achieved in implementing those recommendations over the past 8 years. Audit acknowledges that the size of the respective collections is immense. The Museum has in excess of 10 million items, the Library has over 1.3 million books and serials and over 700 000 items comprising maps, pictures, exhibition catalogues and newspaper volumes. The Gallery holds in excess of 55 000 works of art.

1.1.4 The implementation of the various recommendations is a task of some magnitude requiring substantial ongoing commitment from the Government in terms of resourcing. While the resourcing may not have been sufficient for this task, there has been a high level of commitment and dedication to the collections from the 3 organisations' curatorial and operational staff and management despite the generally poor physical conditions in which staff operate. Notwithstanding the requirement for greater funding, audit concluded that to optimise the value to Victoria of the State's heritage collections there was a need for a greater level of strategic planning and policy determination in relation to collection management.

Overall audit conclusion - *continued*

1.1.5 Audit identified the following deficiencies in the management and utilisation of collections. Many of these areas, which are summarised below, were common to the 3 agencies:

- ▶ The failure of each agency to develop and utilise relevant performance indicators to assess the performance of curatorial and operational divisions;
- ▶ A need to enhance strategic planning procedures in each agency in order to provide a clearer focus and direction,
- ▶ Totally inadequate storage facilities at the Museum and Library and an acute shortage of storage facilities at the Gallery. In such circumstances the safety and condition of the collections are at risk;
- ▶ An absence of overall policies regarding collection development at the Museum and Gallery, with all 3 agencies unable to measure the effectiveness of their collection development;
- ▶ Poor conservation resourcing and management at the Museum and Library;
- ▶ No effective review of the continuing benefits of holding aspects of the collection or individual items in the collection by any of the agencies;
- ▶ Significant segments of each collection remain unresearched, unexhibited or are not readily accessible;
- ▶ A lack of market research to identify current and future user patronage and means of optimising the utilisation of the State Collection;
- ▶ The need to provide effective registration, barcoding and cataloguing which would improve access to the 3 collections; and
- ▶ The opportunity to improve security and disaster planning at the Museum and Library.

1.1.6 In order to address these areas, each agency needs to systematically identify and prioritise the work required to improve its current collection management practices. Such action is necessary to assist key decision-making and to support any funding requests to the State Government for the allocation of scarce resources to areas of greatest need.

1.1.7 The most significant issue presently facing the Museum relates to the relocation of its operations, from the current site in Swanston Street, Melbourne which houses both the Library and the Museum, to the Royal Exhibition Building site located north of Melbourne in Carlton. The relocation of the Museum is further complicated by the timing of the redevelopment of the current site in Swanston Street, for the eventual sole occupation of the Library collections. This is likely to require the Museum to relocate its natural science and human studies collections prior to its intended relocation to the Royal Exhibition Building site by the year 2000. The crucial issue still to be clarified is whether the relocation to the Royal Exhibition Building site will include the Museum's exhibitions, curatorial and research activities, or only involve its exhibition function. In any event, the need for a substantial improvement in the research and storage facilities is paramount to the future of the Museum's collection.

Overall audit conclusion - continued

1.1.8 It is important that the Swanston Street Library Redevelopment Project continues in accordance with established timelines to enable the smooth transition of occupation for the Library and relocation of the Museum. Equally important is the need to ensure that State collections do not excessively deteriorate in the interim.

1.1.9 The audit disclosed that, to a large extent, all 3 collections remain unvalued. This matter, which has been raised in previous Reports of the Auditor General to the Parliament, was also identified by the Victorian Audit Commission in 1993 in relation to the need for complete financial reporting of State assets. At present, the 3 agencies have neither the expertise nor the resources to effectively value their collections. Audit recognises that the task of obtaining meaningful valuations of collections is extremely complex, and that little guidance can be gleaned from interstate and international practices. Nevertheless, each of the 3 agencies needs to specifically consider options for valuation which would meet the objective of providing a fair valuation of their collections at minimal cost.

1.1.10 Finally, with the commonality of operational environments at the 3 agencies, there is scope for greater cooperation in addressing common issues in collections management. In particular, there is considerable potential for the interchange of ideas and expertise in areas relating to conservation needs and the valuation of collections. Also, as all 3 agencies require environmentally controlled off-site storage facilities, there may be scope to consolidate these requirements, at a mutually convenient site, and achieve significant cost savings.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR AUDIT FINDINGS

MUSEUM OF VICTORIA

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- ▶ The absence of structured strategic planning has adversely impacted on the quality of management practices and direction at the Museum.
Paras 4.6 to 4.8
- ▶ The Museum needs to develop relevant performance indicators to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its strategies and the use of resources in achieving organisational objectives.
Paras 4.6 to 4.8
- ▶ Although, the Hancock Committee recommended in 1986 that the Museum introduce a collection development policy, to date, no overall policy statement has been prepared and as a result the Museum's collection of over 10 million items continues to evolve without specific direction.
Paras 4.9 to 4.19
- ▶ The Museum is yet to formulate a policy on disposal of items.
Paras 4.20 to 4.25
- ▶ Some 7 years have elapsed since the Hancock Committee made its recommendations on the need to develop a more specific research direction. To date, a definitive strategic focus for research activities relevant to the Museum's objectives has not been developed. Like the Museum's collection development policy, its research policies are only draft documents which have not been subject to any process of formal review and approval.
Paras 4.28 to 4.29
- ▶ The Museum needs to ensure its planned special advisory committee on research becomes operational without further delay.
Paras 4.36 to 4.38
- ▶ The Museum should undertake post-exhibition reviews to assess the effectiveness of its exhibitions.
Para. 4.41
- ▶ The last complete market survey of users of the Museum was undertaken over 10 years ago, limiting the Museum's awareness of current consumer sentiment, needs and expectations, and restricting the effectiveness of future exhibition planning.
Paras 4.42 to 4.44

MUSEUM OF VICTORIA - *continued*

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- ▶ The Hancock Report identified the priority need for conservation services in 1986 but the Museum's conservation strategy was not developed until 1991, and the conservation function was found to be under-resourced and hampered by poor storage conditions.

Paras 4.47 to 4.54

- ▶ The Museum's ethnographic collection, which includes its Aboriginal collection, is housed in poor conditions that are susceptible to water damage and variable environmental conditions.

Paras 4.48 to 4.49

- ▶ The lack of an effective centralised registration process restricts the Museum's ability to undertake a comprehensive survey of the overall state of its collection in order to determine priority areas for conservation treatment.

Para. 4.51

- ▶ Storage facilities at certain locations remain seriously deficient and continue to contribute to a steady deterioration of the Museum's collection.

Paras 4.60 to 4.66

- ▶ Priority needs to be given to effective planning for the relocation of the Museum to the Royal Exhibition Building site if the Museum is to avoid a continuation of exhibition, storage and research deficiencies that have existed in the past.

Paras 4.70 to 4.74

- ▶ Despite previous audit recommendations and those of the Hancock Committee, limited progress has been made in the development of a central computerised register of the collection with about 70 different registration databases operating in isolation.

Paras 4.79 to 4.80

- ▶ As the target rate of registration of the collection is unlikely to be achieved by 1995, the Museum remains without effective control over its collection and the ability to facilitate a safe relocation of its collection.

Para. 4.81

- ▶ Despite measures taken by the Museum to improve security, an opal specimen with an estimated value of \$2 000 was stolen from the Museum in 1992. As the majority of the collection remains unregistered and formal stocktaking procedures are not in place, the possibility exists for further items of the collection to be lost or stolen without detection.

Paras 4.83 to 4.84

- ▶ In light of the proximity of Scienceworks to the Altona petrochemical facilities, the Museum should finalise its disaster plan for Scienceworks as a matter of urgency.

Paras 4.85 to 4.86

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

Page 55

- ▶ Although certain strategic directions had been formulated and conveyed to staff, audit considered that greater benefits would have been achieved through the continued development of a formal corporate plan.

Paras 5.8 to 5.9

- ▶ There was a virtual absence of any meaningful performance indicators which would assess the efficiency and effectiveness of strategies developed to achieve the Library's objectives.

Paras 5.11 to 5.12

- ▶ The Library holds a significant collection of paintings and Victorian suburban and regional newspapers but was unable to provide audit with data regarding the utilisation of these collections. Accordingly, the benefits of holding these items, particularly the paintings which may be a duplication of the function of the National Gallery, could not be ascertained.

Paras 5.19 to 5.24

- ▶ The Library had not developed meaningful criteria to assess the effectiveness of its collection development policy, in terms of whether it is meeting public expectations and is compatible with the Library's objectives.

Paras 5.26 to 5.27

- ▶ The Library does not undertake regular market surveys or detailed research of user requirements to facilitate a review of its target user groups. The dual aim of such a review should be to broaden the range of people accessing the collection and to ensure that the Library makes the most advantageous use of its collection.

Paras 5.28 to 5.30

- ▶ Although the Library had implemented a review of its collection policy, the review guidelines were deficient in that no criteria had been established for non-book items, such as newspapers, maps, ephemera and photographs which comprise a significant proportion of the collection.

Paras 5.31 to 5.33

- ▶ Although the Library has criteria for disposal of items held, it does not apply these criteria but follows a policy of indefinite retention for most items. Further, reviews to identify items that should be disposed of have rarely been undertaken.

Paras 5.37 to 5.38

- ▶ The Library should ensure that it optimises the effective use of its collection by further developing its business information services for the broader benefit of the community.

Paras 5.55 to 5.57

- ▶ Although a formal conservation policy for the Library was adopted in October 1992, it only deals with the preservation of books, and does not cover the non-book collection which includes approximately 1.4 million items or over 60 per cent of its collection.

Paras 5.59 to 5.60

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA - *continued*

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- ▶ Overall, existing storage facilities at the Library are overcrowded, susceptible to water leaks, without air-conditioning and remain inadequate as they do not safely and securely house its collection. Further, notwithstanding action taken to redress this issue through the Library Redevelopment Project adequate storage of the Library's collection will not be achieved for some 8 years.

Paras 5.65 to 5.68

- ▶ Library security needs to be improved as most of its collection is not security tagged, and there is a need for enhanced staff training in security surveillance in conjunction with the installation of more video monitoring equipment.

*Paras 5.71 to 5.72***NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA**

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- ▶ The Gallery has developed a comprehensive mission statement but does not have a corporate plan clearly detailing its strategic objectives, key targets and measures of performance.

Paras 6.4 to 6.7

- ▶ Although collection development policies are prepared by individual curators, the Gallery has not developed an overall policy statement.

Para. 6.9

- ▶ In 1986, the Economic and Budget Review Committee suggested regular valuations as a means of assessing the effectiveness of its collection development. The Gallery has not yet established performance criteria to measure its effectiveness, particularly in relation to buying ahead of the market.

Paras 6.15 to 6.17

- ▶ To date, a formal disposal policy has not been developed nor has the Gallery's collection been reviewed to ascertain the continuing benefits of holding items under its responsibility.

Paras 6.19 to 6.21

- ▶ Collection exhibition data maintained by the Gallery is of limited value in determining the extent to which its collection is rotated over a period of time as it only provides a snapshot of the extent that the collection is exhibited at a particular point in time.

Paras 6.30 to 6.34

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA - *continued*

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- ▶ The Gallery's attendance statistics do not provide information on the ethnicity, socio-economic background, age or domestic location of visitors for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of its exhibition's policy in terms of seeking to attract a broad spectrum of the community.
Paras 6.39 to 6.40
- ▶ Although the conservation policy was approved in 1985, a survey of paintings recently completed by the Gallery found that approximately 20 per cent of the paintings held in storage needed some form of restoration.
Paras 6.45 to 6.46
- ▶ Conservation activities are not ranked, nor are timelines specified for the completion of tasks, a situation which can result in the unnecessary deterioration of those artworks most at risk.
Para. 6.47
- ▶ The non-painting items, which constitute approximately 90 per cent of all artworks held in storage, have not been subject to a formal condition survey to identify items most at risk of permanent deterioration.
Para. 6.48
- ▶ The Gallery's storage facilities are currently at a premium resulting in the storage of artworks stacked on top of each other in walkways and corridors. This situation exposes the Gallery's collection to the risk of damage.
Paras 6.49 to 6.50
- ▶ Despite a pressing need for additional storage space the Gallery had not undertaken a formal assessment of the current storage requirements of the collection, estimated future collection growth rates and corresponding additional storage requirements.
Paras 6.56 to 6.57

PART 2

Principles of Collection Management

2.1 The Department of the Arts, Sport and Tourism has administrative responsibility for the State's major public arts and heritage agencies which include the Museum of Victoria, the State Library of Victoria and the National Gallery of Victoria. With respect to the State collection, the Department has the objectives of:

- ▶ developing and promoting appreciation and practice of the arts;
- ▶ increasing the availability and accessibility of the arts; and
- ▶ providing facilities for the arts to be performed and displayed.

2.2 The budget of each agency is subject to the approval and monitoring of the Department. The agencies are also required to report to the Department on the progress of operational performance.

2.3 The governing bodies, the Councils of each agency, are subject to the general direction and control of the Minister for the Arts. However, the extent of powers and functions assigned to the Councils, under their respective legislation, means that responsibility for the management of heritage collections is effectively devolved to the Councils.

2.4 The main functions involved in the management and utilisation of collections of the nature held by the Museum, Library and Gallery are **strategic management, collection development, deaccessioning, conservation, storage, research, access, registration and documentation, and security and disaster planning.**

2.5 For the purpose of the audit, criteria representing the conditions necessary for sound practices in collection management and utilisation under each of the above functions were determined to provide a common framework for the review of the 3 agencies. The criteria determined by audit also took into account the findings of earlier reviews, namely:

- ▶ The 1986 Government initiated Museum Development Study, which was supervised by a steering committee headed by Mr Arnold Hancock and the final report was known as the *Hancock Report*;
- ▶ Various reports of the Auditor-General, which referred to deficiencies in the Gallery's procedures in relation to stocktaking, cataloguing, insurance, security and valuation of its collection. In December 1986, the Economic and Budget Review Committee, in their 17th Report to Parliament, inquired into these and other matters;
- ▶ In relation to the Library, the Government in April 1987 initiated the State Library Development Study which aimed to clarify the role, functions and financing of the Library; and
- ▶ Audit's examination of the Museum's registration process and storage facilities which was communicated to the Parliament in the Auditor-General's Reports on Ministerial Portfolios of May 1989 and May 1990. The issues raised in these reports were subsequently followed up by the Economic and Budget Review Committee in their 26th and 28th reports to Parliament.

2.6 This part of the Report describes the evaluative criteria for effective collection management and utilisation formulated by audit. Performance of each of the agencies has been measured against these criteria. Parts 4 to 6 document the results of the audit examination of the 3 agencies based on these criteria.

Benefits of effective strategic management

2.7 An integral component in the management of an organisation is the strategic planning process. Strategic planning provides an organisation with a disciplined focus to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation is, what it does and why it undertakes the activities. An effective strategic plan provides an organisation with direction and unity of purpose by ensuring that clear, relevant and comprehensive objectives are established and understood by all staff. To be effective, the strategic direction of an organisation should be articulated in a corporate plan which should include:

- ▶ a mission statement;
- ▶ a statement of corporate objectives;
- ▶ the overall strategies upon which corporate objectives will be achieved; and
- ▶ a statement of corporate performance indicators that measure the efficiency and effectiveness of strategies implemented to achieve the organisation's objectives.

2.8 The corporate plan should be reviewed periodically in light of changes in the operating environment to determine if the current strategy and objectives of an organisation remain the most effective means of achieving its overall mission. Further, the implementation of the corporate plan should be facilitated through the development of annual action plans.

Direction of collection development

2.9 One of the primary statutory objectives and functions of each of the agencies is the development of the State Collection. To assist in the effective development of the Collection an agency should:

- ▶ prepare a collection development policy that is consistent with its mission statement and corporate objectives;
- ▶ make acquisitions in accordance with this policy;
- ▶ assess the ongoing costs associated with the acquisition of items;
- ▶ periodically review the collection development policy; and
- ▶ establish criteria to assess the effectiveness of the collection policy with periodical evaluations against these criteria.

Importance of deaccessioning

2.10 The retention of items in a collection involves costs associated with registration, storage, exhibition, conservation, and includes the input of curatorial resources. When any item in the collection ceases to be of any discernible value, good management would require its disposal. Specifically, an item may be considered for removal from a collection, that is a process known as deaccessioning, for a number of other reasons which include:

- ▶ the item has no relevant place or useful purpose within the agencies collecting, exhibition, educational or research programs;
- ▶ the item does not add historical significance to the holdings of an agency;
- ▶ the object is a duplicate or is not authentic; and
- ▶ the specimen, book or work of art has deteriorated beyond usefulness.

2.11 The decision to dispose of any object, provided the agency has the legal power to do so, should be the responsibility of the governing body of the agency. As important and valuable items can be lost irrevocably because of an error in judgement or interpretation, deciding which objects to deaccession and how best to dispose of them requires careful consideration. Full records should therefore be kept of all such decisions to dispose of aspects of the collection, the objects involved and the arrangements made for disposal, which could include outright sale, exchange, gift or destruction.

The role of research

2.12 Although all 3 agencies undertake some form of research into their collections, the conduct of research is a primary function of the Museum. Research provides information on how society has changed and developed, the effects of science and technology on the community, and fulfils the scientific role of identifying, describing and classifying objects and species. The *Hancock Report* identified the rationale for a program of research as:

- ▶ adding intellectual strength to exhibitions and educational programs;
- ▶ providing a means to guide collection classification, storage and conservation; and
- ▶ contributing to the status and intellectual standing of the Museum.

Access issues

2.13 Each of the agencies hold significant collections which represent an extremely valuable resource in both educational and financial terms. Therefore, it is important that each agency has exhibition and access policies designed to ensure the maximum utilisation of the State Collection. Specifically:

- ▶ Museum access issues are primarily concerned with aspects relating to exhibitions, their educational and entertainment value, presentation and layout;
- ▶ Library access issues are generally concerned with fulfilling the reading, reference and research requirements of users of the collections; and
- ▶ National Gallery access issues are predominantly concerned with aspects relating to exhibitions, particularly in terms of the educational and entertainment value, presentation and layout.

The need for conservation

2.14 One of the primary responsibilities of the Museum, Gallery and Library is to ensure that the State Collection is properly maintained and conserved for the use of future generations. Conservation is basically comprised of 2 key functions, preservation and restoration and is inextricably linked with issues relating to storage and exhibition facilities. Preservation of the Collection involves ensuring the proper housing and adherence to appropriate handling procedures in order to minimise the deterioration of the Collection. Restoration is required where an item becomes damaged or has deteriorated due to usage, age or deficient storage conditions.

2.15 In order to fulfil the conservation requirements of their collections each agency needs to have:

- ▶ developed and implemented a conservation policy; and
- ▶ prioritised the collection for preventative or restorative treatment.

The importance of storage facilities

2.16 Due to the size of the State Collection it cannot, at any stage, be completely utilised for the purposes of exhibition, access, loan or research. Therefore a key function of each of the agencies is to provide storage facilities, both on-site, and where required off-site, which house the Collection in an environment that contributes to the preservation of the Collection, and enables relative ease of access.

Function of registration and documentation

2.17 The registration and documentation of collections is an important function as it facilitates identification, location, storage and conservation requirements. The full documentation of items provides a description and interpretation of artworks, books, specimens or artefacts for the purposes of research and public exhibition. In addition, a comprehensive and well maintained centralised register allows for effective monitoring of collection movement when used in conjunction with periodic stocktaking and should include:

- ▶ the location of an item;
- ▶ documentation relating to the condition of the item, its history, use and authenticity; and
- ▶ the value of the item.

Effective security and disaster planning

2.18 In fulfilling stewardship responsibilities, an agency needs to provide adequate security to protect the collection from theft or damage, including the establishment of disaster planning procedures in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as flood, fire or natural disasters. Accordingly, an agency should have:

- ▶ a policy regarding security over the collection and a policy for disaster planning procedures; and
- ▶ regular reviews to evaluate security risks and ensure security procedures are maintained at a level aimed at minimising such risks.

PART 3

Conduct of the Audit Review

AUDIT OBJECTIVES

3.1 The principal objective of the audit was to review the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the management and utilisation of the heritage collections held by the Museum, the State Library and the National Gallery.

AUDIT SCOPE

- 3.2** The scope of the audit included a review of:
- ▶ the strategic management of each agency including the corporate planning process and the use of performance indicators;
 - ▶ the effectiveness of collection development policies and the determination of whether acquisitions to the State Collection were consistent with the overall objectives of each agency and in accordance with the collection policies;
 - ▶ the implementation of deaccessioning policies as a means of ensuring the continuing relevance of certain aspects of the State Collection;
 - ▶ the research direction and activity particularly with respect to maximising the utilisation of the State Collection;
 - ▶ issues relating to maximising the accessibility of the collection to the public for the purposes of exhibition or research;
 - ▶ the effectiveness of conservation guidelines aimed at ensuring the preservation and restoration of the State Collection;
 - ▶ the adequacy of storage facilities in providing safe and environmentally stable conditions in which to house the State Collection;
 - ▶ the registration, documentation and cataloguing of the collections; and
 - ▶ the security of the State Collection including disaster planning procedures.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED DURING THE AUDIT

3.3 Management and employees at the Museum, Library and Gallery provided significant support and assistance throughout the course of the audit.

PART 4

Museum of Victoria

BACKGROUND

4.1 The National Museum of Victoria was established in 1854. The *Museums Act 1983* amalgamated the National Museum of Victoria and the Science Museum of Victoria, which grew out of the Industrial and Technological Museum established in 1870, into a single major organisation, known as the Museum of Victoria. Today, the natural science and human studies collections are exhibited at the Museum's Swanston Street site, in the Melbourne central business district, which it currently shares with the State Library, while the science and technology collection was relocated to Scienceworks in Spotswood in 1992.

4.2 The Council of the Museum of Victoria is responsible for the State Collection of artefacts. The objectives of the Council as stated in the *Museum Act 1983* include the:

- ▶ management and operation of the Museum of Victoria in an efficient and economic manner;
- ▶ development and maintenance of the State Collection of natural history, the history of human society and the history of science and technology; and
- ▶ development and promotion of educational programs based on those collections.

4.3 The principal functions of the Council include the:

- ▶ exhibition of material from those collections for the purposes of education and entertainment;
- ▶ promotion of the use of those collections for scientific research;
- ▶ promotion of the use of the Museum's resources for education in Victoria; and
- ▶ conduct scientific research.

4.4 The Museum's 3 principal areas of collecting are the divisions of natural sciences, human studies, and science and technology. The natural sciences division consists of the geology, marine zoology, terrestrial invertebrates and terrestrial vertebrates sections. The division of human studies represents the disciplines of Aboriginal history, anthropology, Egyptology, social history and numismatics. The science and technology collection relates to contemporary science and acts as a repository of Australia's technological heritage. **The total size of the Museum collection is in excess of 10 million items.**

4.5 Under the organisational structure of the Museum, various curatorial and operational directors are responsible to the Director of the Museum. The Museum Director reports to the Museum Council and also provides reports to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. The Museum Council is responsible to the Minister for the Arts for the strategic management and direction of the Museum.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Museum's business plan

4.6 Prior to the development of its inaugural business plan covering 1991-92, the Museum had not formally articulated its strategic direction. A draft business plan was also developed for 1992-93. The audit identified that both business plans were an amalgamation of the annual programs prepared for the directorate and the divisions of public programs, business services, scienceworks, natural sciences and human studies. The audit further disclosed that:

- ▶ no formal assessment was undertaken of goals or projected outcomes as specified in the 1991-92 business plan for use in the development of the 1992-93 business plan;
- ▶ the Museum had not assessed the changing environment in order to determine the most current and relevant business plan;
- ▶ although divisions had developed targeted outcomes, relevant performance indicators that measure the achievement of objectives had not been developed; and
- ▶ given funding availability, projected program outcomes for correcting the continuing deterioration of the Museum's collection exceeded what was realistically achievable.

4.7 Audit concluded that the lack of effective strategic planning had contributed to various shortcomings in management practices at the Museum outlined throughout this part of the Report including:

- ▶ the absence of formally approved guidelines and direction for collection development;
- ▶ a lack of control and direction over the conduct of research activity;
- ▶ an inability to adequately conserve and maintain the Museum's collection; and
- ▶ slow development of a centralised computer register of the collection, with a significant proportion of the Museum's collection remaining at varying levels of registration on fragmented databases.

4.8 **There is clearly a need for the Museum to develop an overall strategic focus for the agency with a clear identification of its goals and strategies and how the external environment affects its operations.** Specifically, the Museum should, as a matter of priority, develop a comprehensive corporate plan that:

- ▶ identifies its strengths, weaknesses and needs;
- ▶ clearly determines its essential goals and the strategies it must implement to achieve these goals;
- ▶ evaluates its position in the research, education, recreation and leisure markets by assessing market trends, the level of competition and avenues for promotion;
- ▶ critically analyses economic, financial, social and government impacts on the future direction of the Museum;

- ▶ involves all staff in the preparation of the business plan; and
 - ▶ includes performance indicators which provide a measurement of the Museum's effectiveness and efficiency in achieving its objectives.
- *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

The benefits of effective strategic management are acknowledged. Since 1986 the Museum has been required to be deeply involved in the development processes aimed at delivering a major new, world-class museum facility. First the Queen Victoria Hospital site proposal, then the development of Scienceworks in suburban Spotswood, and then the Southbank project.

The Museum is not master of its own destiny with respect to museum redevelopment, particularly as this relates to the appropriate housing, registration, conservation and utilisation of its vast collections. As a result, the Museum is criticised, either directly or by implication, for its so-called failure to plan strategically with regard to the management and utilisation of the collections

Long-range strategic plans were developed in conjunction with each of the proposed museum redevelopment projects encompassing the core business areas of collection management and conservation, research and related curatorial functions, and extensive public education and information programs. To ensure that year-to-year management was undertaken effectively at the time these exhaustive strategic and other planning processes were being undertaken, business plans were developed for the Museum and initial sets of performance indicators developed

It is acknowledged that the business plans and associated performance indicators need improvement, and that they should be integrated into an overall corporate or strategic plan. However, it is disappointing to note the lack of recognition by audit that significant steps have been taken over the past 3 years in strategic and related corporate and business planning, and the development of performance indicators. All operational divisions within the Museum have developed, monitored and measured performance indicators and, with further experience, will arrive at ever more meaningful assessments. Staff skills in these areas have been encouraged by widespread participation in training courses such as Total Quality Advantage and Quality Management Skills

Audit fails to draw adequate attention to the fact that past State Governments have promised, and then failed to deliver, new museum facilities. With each new promise, extensive strategic work has been carried out by the Museum's Council and staff. Over the past few decades, the Museum Council has been faced, not only with a lack of adequate funds, but with the dilemma of whether any funds should be spent on improving storage and other facilities when "a new, great Museum facility is imminent".

Comprehensive strategic planning is sensible and appropriate only when a final, irrevocable decision on the future of the Museum is made by the Government together with a realistic development timetable. The current Government has made such a commitment. It has secured the necessary funds, will provide an early off-site, purpose-built collection storage facility, and has promised delivery of the new Museum by mid-2000.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Museum collection development policy

4.9 The Museum's collection has been built up over the past 130 years and consists of the natural science, human studies and science and technology collections. The Museum acquires artefacts through field research, donations, purchases and through its function as a State repository. In this latter capacity, the Museum assesses the worthiness of material provided by Government, academic researchers and mining companies to form part of the State Collection.

4.10 In 1986, the Hancock Committee recommended that the Museum develop a collection development policy. **To date the Museum has not prepared an overall policy statement on collection development. Those collection policies that are in place are draft documents, that have not been subject to any formal process of review and approval.**

4.11 Curators at the Museum advised audit that the progressive development of the collection over the years has been influenced by 4 main factors, namely:

- ▶ the research interest of particular curators or curatorial directors;
- ▶ action to reduce known deficiencies in the collection;
- ▶ an emphasis towards building on existing collection strengths; and
- ▶ the ongoing acceptance of donations or statutory deposits.

4.12 Discussions with curators also indicated that acquisitions to the Museum's collection are expected to continue to be developed in this manner. **In audit opinion, this approach does not enable a critical evaluation of potential benefits of acquisitions to the Museum or ensure that its collection is developed in a manner which will facilitate achievement of the Museum's statutory objectives.**

4.13 The absence of any formal policy to provide guidance on collection development has resulted in the State Collection evolving over the years without specific direction and:

- ▶ Without always demonstrating the relevance of each acquisition with the Museum's objectives;
- ▶ In the absence of detailed evaluations of benefits in terms of research, exhibition and heritage or cultural value;
- ▶ In a manner that has contributed to difficulties in the registration and determination of the overall size of the collection. This position is evidenced by the existence of about 70 different registration databases and slow progress in the registration of its collection;
- ▶ Without due regard to the limitations of storage facilities; and
- ▶ In a manner which has allowed for growth in areas where its collection was perceived to be deficient without evaluating the costs and benefits of this type of development focus.

4.14 To effectively fulfil its vital statutory responsibility of developing the State Collection the Council should formulate overall guidelines on collection development which reflect the Museum's commitment to research, exhibitions, public education and cultural preservation.

Action to improve collection development planning

4.15 During the review, audit examined draft collection development policies prepared by the division of human studies. These policies specify the rationale for collection practices and include selection criteria such as funding considerations, storage requirements, exhibition potential, research and educational benefits, and conservation needs. The approval process for these draft policies provides for the endorsement by the curatorial director and the corporate management group prior to final ratification by Council.

4.16 This initiative by the human studies division is commended and is in line with sound collection development. However, in audit opinion, the Council should give priority to the development of an overall collections policy that provides broad collection development guidelines consistent with the overall strategic direction of the Museum. The collection policy should be supported by the development of individual curatorial policies in a manner similar to the initiative taken by the human studies division. The collection development of the Museum would be further enhanced by periodic reviews of individual collection policies and the development of performance measures to assess the effectiveness of collection development.

The Museum as a State repository

4.17 Under the *Museum Act* 1983, government agencies, universities and researchers are required to deposit items with the Museum for assessment of their worthiness to form part of the State Collection. The Act requires, in general terms, that Museum staff undertake assessments in terms of the uniqueness of items, research values or exhibition potential. Curatorial staff have the discretion to decide what is retained for the State Collection. The Museum does not maintain any statistics on the number of acquisitions made to the Collection through its State repository role or document the criteria under which specimens are accepted into the Collection.

4.18 Accordingly, it was not possible to determine the exact number of items added to the Collection through the repository function, or to establish whether the items accepted into the Collection had merit in terms of the Museum's objectives. Further, continually acquiring items through the repository function without effective control and review, places pressure on the Museum's limited storage facilities and conservation resources and makes registration of its collection more difficult.

4.19 The Council needs to act to approve guidelines for accepting specimens into the State Collection that are in accordance with the criteria specified in the Act.

■ **RESPONSE** provided by Director, Museum of Victoria

The Museum's collections number some 10 million items as a minimum, the majority of which are pertaining to the natural sciences. Audit has omitted to give credit to the fact that collection development policies for the science and technology and the human studies collections were being developed at the time of the audit and have subsequently been formally adopted by the Council.

A formal collection development policy for the natural sciences collections is being developed. However, it needs to be recognised that natural sciences collections are entirely different from those of human studies or science and technology. In the former, there is a universally recognised, inherent logic to the nature of the collections. The taxonomic (naming and grouping) principles are accepted throughout the world, and the development of the collections has been, and continues to be, in accord with those principles. Highly qualified, trained and experienced curators have been employed over the years with the specific tasks of developing the collections in their particular areas of expertise, and in areas where the collection is inadequately represented.

The other collections do not have the same in-built logic, and audit has rightly indicated the need for formally adopted policies. It should also be acknowledged that significant and/or expensive items or collections of items are only acquired with the specific approval of the Museum Council. Procedures for the acquisition of other items, such as field trip specimens, have not been so rigorously pursued in the past, a deficiency clearly identified by audit and currently being addressed. As stated above, this does not mean that those collections have been developed in an unreasoned manner.

Procedures for recording acquisitions via the Museum's State repository obligations and donations will be implemented as soon as possible.

DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning at the Museum

4.20 The *Museums Act* 1983 provides that the Museum may sell, lease or dispose of an object that is part of the State Collection provided the Council has determined that the object is unnecessary and inappropriate to its activities, and the Governor-in-Council has granted approval for the sale, lease or disposal. The Act also stipulates that duplicate material may be exchanged with other agencies which have similar responsibilities to the Museum.

4.21 The Hancock Committee in 1986 concluded that it was important for the Museum to develop a deaccessioning policy to provide firm direction on identifying and removing aspects of the collection no longer considered appropriate to be part of the State Collection. The Museum is yet to develop such a policy.

4.22 Audit observed that there is a strong preference among curatorial staff towards developing collections in perpetuity and a reluctance to dispose of any items in the Museum's collection. This approach ignores the role of deaccessioning in developing and maintaining a collection at a high standard. **Although the Museum's collection totals in excess of 10 million items, audit could not identify any recent instances of deaccessioning.**

4.23 Audit concluded that there is an urgent need for the Museum to critically assess the relevance of its collection. A review should be undertaken within each department of each curatorial division with the focus on justification for retaining all items under their control.

4.24 In discussions with Museum management, it was suggested that such review should encompass:

- ▶ An assessment of the potential benefits to be derived from undertaking research of that part of its collection yet to be researched;
- ▶ An assessment of the exhibition potential of all items;
- ▶ Consideration as to whether the Museum is the most appropriate body to continue to hold certain parts of the collection. In the event that the Museum does not intend to actively utilise aspects of its collection, it would seem appropriate that it consider the devolution, exchange, or loan of these items to other agencies which may be better suited to housing, exhibiting or deriving research benefits from these aspects of the collection; and
- ▶ An analysis of economic considerations, such as costs associated with storage, conservation, registration, documentation and security.

4.25 In making the above comments, audit recognises that the Museum collection has been developed over an extensive period of time and represents significant cultural, research and heritage value to the community. Therefore, it is important that deaccessioning of the Museum's collection is not simply viewed as a cost-control measure. Nevertheless, **a process of rationalisation would provide the Museum with a means by which it can take stock of its collection and re-evaluate its focus. It would also give the Museum an opportunity to facilitate the more efficient relocation of the State Collection.** (refer to paragraphs 4.67 to 4.74 of this Report).

Aboriginal secret and sacred items

4.26 The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, which was established in 1984, advises the Council of the Museum and relevant Museum staff on issues relating to Victorian Aboriginal cultural heritage, including the return of skeletal remains to Aboriginal communities.

4.27 This special form of deaccessioning secret and sacred Aboriginal items is undertaken by the Museum after it evaluates each Aboriginal community's claim over such items. **An example of where the Museum has successfully undertaken this form of repatriation includes the return of skeletal remains to the Echuca Aboriginal Co-operative.**

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

It is acknowledged that deaccessioning has a role in developing and maintaining a collection at a high standard. This is a highly controversial area within museums worldwide and is the subject of much debate at the local, national and international level. Deaccessioning is not realistic in the natural sciences collections. The specimens represent the variation within the natural environments of the past and present and provide a unique record for future generations. The human studies and science and technology collections appear, on the surface, to offer better potential for deaccessioning. The problem is to decide today what is not necessary for tomorrow and there are examples within museums and art galleries of disastrous decisions in this area. The value of collection items can change over time in accordance with social developments. (For example, Ned Kelly's armour was deaccessioned in ages past as it represented "a celebration of a criminal"). The Museum has, contrary to the findings of audit, deaccessioned parts of its collection. Attention is drawn to significant deaccessioning of parts of both the numismatics and the science and technology collections.

The need for a comprehensive review of the collection as proposed by audit is fully endorsed. Resources are extremely limited for undertaking a comprehensive review, but steps have already been initiated in the areas as proposed by audit.

RESEARCH

Research direction and policies

4.28 In 1986, the Hancock Report concluded that the Museum:

- ▶ did not have a comprehensive statement of research policies and objectives;
- ▶ needed to develop operational policies to guide the Museum's research program and to relate research back to the other activities of the Museum; and
- ▶ lacked consistent policies between curatorial divisions.

4.29 **Some 7 years have elapsed since the Hancock Committee made its recommendations and the Museum is yet to develop a definitive strategic focus for research. Like the Museum's collection policies, its research policies are only draft documents which have been prepared by individual curators and are not subject to any process of formal review and approval by curatorial directors or the Council.**

Divisional research plans

4.30 The 3 curatorial divisions each undertake research into those collections under their responsibility. The audit examination of current divisional research plans disclosed that:

- ▶ divisional research plans give no indication of how current research projects relate to the Museum's objectives, including the utilisation of its collection, exhibitions and the development of education programs;
- ▶ timelines for undertaking and completing research projects were not well defined;

- ▶ performance indicators had not been established to assess the effectiveness of research activity; and
- ▶ there was no clear identification of commercial or academic benefits expected to be derived from research and the proportion of the Museum's collection that remains unresearched is not known.

4.31 The human studies division has taken action to address some of the deficiencies in the divisional research plans and recently drafted a new research policy. In its draft form, the policy establishes divisional research principles and objectives. The division proposes to submit the research policy to the Council for approval.

4.32 This policy direction is a positive step towards establishing a base upon which research activity in the human studies division can be more accountable and consistent with the Museum's objectives.

4.33 In order to ensure the best results from the implementation of this approach, the human studies research policy should be further developed to incorporate guidelines establishing a process for the periodic review of research direction and the development of performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of research activity. **Further, this initiative should be extended to the Museum's natural science and science and technology divisions.**

Research facilities

4.34 Many of the Museum's research staff are of international renown and are very dedicated to their tasks despite the difficult conditions under which research activity is undertaken. Audit identified that research facilities at both the Swanston Street site and the Abbotsford off-site facility were:

- ▶ crowded and poorly lighted; and
- ▶ not appropriately air-conditioned and ventilated.

4.35 As part of the planning for the relocation of the Museum, research facilities and conditions for natural science and human studies curators should be upgraded to an appropriate standard to assist in the conduct of research into the State Collection and the maintenance of the Museum's position in the international research community.

Future research direction at the Museum

4.36 Museum management advised audit that plans are in place for the establishment of a scientific advisory committee, whose key task would be the provision of advice to the Council on the Museum's research direction. The role of the committee will be to guide the Council on scientific and research trends and promote the Museum's research undertakings and achievements. **Despite these plans for the future direction of research, the aims, objectives and membership of the scientific advisory committee have yet to be determined.**

4.37 Audit concluded that in order to optimise the value of the State Collection the Museum needs to:

- ▶ develop an overall policy statement which clearly specifies the Museum's research direction, aims and objectives;
- ▶ maintain recognition of curatorial expertise in the development of divisional research policies;
- ▶ ensure that divisional research policies are subject to formal review by curatorial directors and final ratification by the Museum Council;
- ▶ determine what proportion of its collection remains unresearched and whether it is worthy of retention and research, or whether it should be deaccessioned;
- ▶ encourage external access to its collection for research purposes where the Museum's curatorial staff are not in a position to research its collection;
- ▶ ensure that it is the most suitable agency to be undertaking any particular research project, and where possible clearly identify the value added to the Museum's intellectual base as a result of research activity;
- ▶ actively promote the benefits of research into its collection to the public and special interest groups through its exhibition programs and publications; and
- ▶ consider the active promotion of the utilisation of its intellectual base as a means of entering into joint research ventures or securing commercial research contracts, particularly where there is an emphasis on utilising its collection.

4.38 **As an initial step, the Council should ensure that its planned special advisory committee on research direction becomes operational without further delay, with primary research activity based on deriving benefits from the existing collection.**

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

It is acknowledged that the Museum needs to develop a strategic plan for its research. The process for the development of a comprehensive plan has been in place for the past 3 years, but the necessary change in museum culture needed to embrace strategic and long-term planning in this area has required patience and persistence.

Curatorial divisions have now developed detailed research policies and plans, some of which have been already been formally adopted by Council. The preparation of an overall research policy with an attendant Museum-wide strategic plan and set of performance indicators is underway.

ACCESS AND EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition planning and review

4.39 Access to the collection is in the main provided through the exhibition of artefacts and specimens. The exhibition objectives of the Museum are to:

- ▶ manage, implement and maintain the exhibition program to maximise public access to objects and information held by the Museum; and
- ▶ ensure that the broad range of community needs are catered for through a diversity of exhibitions, education programs and publications.

4.40 Although the Museum does not have a formal policy on exhibitions, it does have detailed guidelines covering the initiation, approval, establishment, implementation and review of exhibition proposals.

4.41 While the planning and implementation of exhibition projects proved to be in accordance with Museum guidelines, audit found that, following most exhibitions, the Museum does not undertake a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of exhibitions in achieving their stated aims and objectives. **It is vital that post-exhibition reviews are regularly undertaken to assess the effectiveness of exhibitions and to identify areas of where future exhibition planning and implementation may be enhanced.**



"The Bridging of 2 worlds - Jews and Italians of Carlton" exhibition.

Marketing

4.42 Exhibition planning in the past has, in the main, been based on an identification of exhibition requirements by curators. In an effort to facilitate better exhibition planning, the Museum proposes to gauge public perception during the planning stage of exhibitions. Using this method the Museum should be in a better position to evaluate the likelihood of an exhibition's success and make an informed decision before committing extensive resources to a project. Such pre-exhibition testing would be contracted through a market research firm.

4.43 The Museum planned to undertake a comprehensive market survey in November 1992 to establish the current and potential users of the Museum. However, to date, no market survey has been undertaken and the last market survey was undertaken over 10 years ago. As a consequence the effectiveness of exhibition planning is restricted as the Museum has only limited awareness of current consumer sentiment, needs and expectations. In such circumstances the Museum cannot be assured that planned exhibitions and programs will be fully supported and meet visitor expectations.

4.44 Action should be taken by the Museum to support its initiative of pre-exhibition testing with regular comprehensive market surveys of potential and current users of Museum facilities. The results of the market research should then be used in its exhibition development.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

Access to collections and the intellectual property represented by the curatorial and other staff is not limited to exhibitions. Audit has not recognised that access is accomplished in a variety of ways. These include:

- electronic systems via computerised databases and electronic image banks which can be accessed at extremely remote locations;*
- extensive schools programs;*
- outreach programs, where staff take materials to remote areas and to the elderly and the infirm;*
- direct access by students, scholars and interested public;*
- publications, including academic and popular formats;*
- collaborative research programs (e.g. with universities, resource management agencies); and*
- delivery of talks, seminars and lectures to the general public and special forums.*

A comprehensive public programs policy, encompassing issues of access, has been prepared and will shortly be submitted to Council for formal adoption.

It is acknowledged that there needs to be post-evaluation of exhibitions (and other public access programs for that matter). A position of Manager, Exhibitions Evaluation has been created and filled, and a program of pre and post-exhibition development evaluation has been implemented. The pre-development evaluation has involved the implementation of market surveys, including the use of the invaluable focus group evaluation technique.

CONSERVATION

Conservation at the Museum

4.45 The Museum Council is responsible under its Act for the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage contained in the State collection.

4.46 The *Hancock Report* concluded that conservation and preservation of the collection at the Museum was compromised by poor storage facilities, overcrowding and a lack of environmental controls. It recommended that high priority be given to the provision of conservation services.

4.47 Although the *Hancock Report* identified a priority need for conservation services in 1986, the Museum did not develop a conservation strategy until December 1991. This strategy states that the most effective means of providing a comprehensive conservation service is by the establishment of highly trained staff to provide all preventative conservation and identify treatment needed for items to be displayed.

4.48 The strategy stated that a priority area for conservation was the Museum's ethnographic collection. **This collection comprises over 100 000 items and includes the Aboriginal collection. The entire ethnographic collection is housed in poor conditions which are susceptible to flooding and variable environmental conditions. These conditions are particularly detrimental to ethnographic collections as most items consist of natural materials which are prone to deterioration.**

4.49 A survey conducted by the Museum found that the non-Australian ethnographic collection was at particular risk. The study found that 12 600 objects required cleaning, 6 000 needed some form of standard treatment and 3 600 were in need of complex treatment. This collection is serviced by a single curator. **The Museum has estimated that to effectively treat the non-Australian ethnographic collection alone would require one conservator several hundred years to complete.**

4.50 The natural science collection is also regarded by the Museum as in need of priority treatment. However, audit was advised that there are no trained natural science conservators in Australia.

Effectiveness of conservation at the Museum

4.51 The audit of the conservation function at the Museum disclosed that:

- ▶ Much of the collection is inaccessible, or has been stored away for many years and together with the lack of an effective centralised registration process restricts the Museum's ability to perform a comprehensive survey of the overall state of its collection and, in turn, determination of priority areas for conservation treatment;
- ▶ Although some priority areas for treatment have been identified, the conservation strategy does not provide a program to prioritise areas of treatment for the total collection, the measures and nature of treatment which should be implemented, or specify timelines for such activities;
- ▶ Storage conditions remain overcrowded, a position when coupled with a lack of environmental controls, contributes to a continuing deterioration of the collection;
- ▶ The conservation department was without a manager for nearly 2 years; and
- ▶ The current composition of the conservation department of 4 staff is significantly below its staffing establishment of 4 curators and 5 technical assistants specified in the conservation strategy. The current conservation staffing level at the Museum is also well below that at the National Gallery of Victoria which has an establishment of 18 conservators.

4.52 To achieve a more comprehensive approach to the conservation of its collection, the Museum should review and enhance the conservation policy and establish priority areas and items for conservation.

4.53 The Museum should also ensure that conservation resources are at a level sufficient to implement regular condition surveys of its collection and thereby establish priority areas for preventative treatment, target levels of performance and timelines for the completion of conservation priorities.

4.54 **In the longer-term, the central issue requiring resolution in relation to conservation is the need for improved storage facilities so that the State Collection can be housed in a stable climatic environment with enhanced access.**

Addressing future conservation requirements

4.55 As the Museum is in the process of planning for its future relocation into new premises (refer paragraphs 4.67 to 4.74 of this Report), it will be essential to carefully evaluate the conservation requirements of its collection. This action will be important in determining the handling, packaging and storage requirements necessary to ensure the safe relocation of all items in its collection.

4.56 **Given the current conservation staffing establishment and the demands that will be placed on the conservation department in relation to both exhibition preparation and the relocation of the collection to new premises, audit does not consider that the department will be in a position to adequately discharge its responsibilities in this area.**

4.57 It will be important that sufficient conservation resources are available to facilitate relocation planning and to ensure that the current difficulties faced by the Museum in attempting to provide for the adequate conservation of its collection are not further exacerbated.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

It is acknowledged that the conservation of the collections will not be truly effective until appropriate, secure, environmentally controlled storage facilities have been provided, and an appropriate level of financial resourcing can be applied to the conservation program. The Government is committed to providing the appropriate facilities as soon as practicable.

In spite of overall limited financial resources, the Museum has significantly increased the resourcing of the Conservation Department over the past 12 months. Staffing has been increased from 5 to 9, the Department is housed in better (leased) laboratories, and operational funding has been lifted. Despite this improvement, the "catch-up" work will take approximately 10 years.

STORAGE FACILITIES

Storage facilities at the Museum

Background

4.58 The Museum's collection is currently housed in Melbourne at Swanston Street, at Scienceworks in Spotswood and in off-site storage facilities located in Abbotsford and Maribyrnong.

4.59 In 1986, the Hancock Committee concluded that the Museum's collection was at risk of deterioration because of severe overcrowding, uncontrolled environmental conditions and a lack of resources which restricted access and constrained the Museum from adequately preserving its collection. Further, the continued growth of the Museum's collection created a need for greater off-site storage.

Swanston Street

4.60 Storage facilities located at Swanston Street have remained deficient in that:

- ▶ Climatic conditions are not stable;
- ▶ Storage space remains at a premium with the Museum's collection housed in overcrowded conditions;
- ▶ Items have to be stored wherever there is space on floors, in work areas, on top of cabinets and next to water pipes. Such items are not readily accessible and are prone to accidental damage; and
- ▶ The Museum's significant Aboriginal collection and other ethnographic artefacts are housed in the La Trobe Gallery (a former exhibition gallery) which is very dusty, environmentally unstable, and prone to water damage. Due to insufficient space, artefacts are stored in walkways and on top of storage cabinets.



An example of inadequate storage facilities at the Museum.

Off-site storage facilities

4.61 Aspects from all 3 parts of the Museum's collection, including larger more bulky items, are stored at the off-site locations. Audit observed that the Maribyrnong store is not of high quality, does not have any climatic controls, is dirty and dusty, and susceptible to flooding. In addition, access is hindered by the many items stored at ground level.

4.62 A significant part of the Museum's collection of mammals and birds are stored at the Abbotsford site. Due to this collection's fragility and natural composition, such storage facilities need to be climatically stable and insect and vermin free. These storage requirements are not met at the Abbotsford store which suffers from significant climatic variations and poor levels of cleanliness.

Scienceworks

4.63 Storage facilities at the new Scienceworks site in Spotswood are a significant improvement on the Museum's other storage areas. The facilities are clean, fully air-conditioned and provide relative ease of access to the Scienceworks collection. Most of the Museum's science and technology collection is housed at the Scienceworks site except for the armoury collection housed at Swanston Street, agricultural machinery stored at Abbotsford and other large objects such as aeroplanes and printers located at Maribyrnong.

4.64 The audit did disclose some matters at Scienceworks which require attention, namely:

- ▶ the air-conditioning at the store has been prone to significant climatic variation;
- ▶ storage facilities of approximately 3 300 square metres were insufficient to house the total collection at the time of opening by approximately 1 000 square metres and necessitated off-site storage; and
- ▶ the Hancock Study estimated that the science and technology collection would grow to over 7 000 square metres by the year 2000, which will require further off-site storage requirements.

Addressing storage issues

4.65 The storage problems faced by the Museum have been an ongoing dilemma which can not realistically be rectified in the short-term. Further, the redevelopment of the Swanston Street site for the eventual total occupation by the State Library of Victoria would suggest that the Museum may need to relocate part of its collection prior to its planned relocation to the Royal Exhibition Buildings site.

4.66 **There is a need for the Museum to implement low-cost, short-term improvements to existing storage facilities, particularly off-site storage, so that its collection does not excessively deteriorate in the interim period.**

MUSEUM RELOCATION

Decision to relocate

4.67 Over a number of years, various options have been considered for the relocation of the Museum from its present site at the State Library of Victoria in Swanston Street. Proposals to relocate the Museum have been a general acknowledgement of the inadequacies of the facilities and space available at Swanston Street. In 1988, the Government decided to redevelop the Swanston Street site solely for use by the State Library and completely relocate the Museum from Swanston Street to a new development at Southbank. The proposal at that time was to construct a museum complex which would completely house the human studies and natural science collections. In the order of \$36 million had been applied by the Government to the planning and construction of the site at Southbank.

4.68 In June 1993, the Minister for Major Projects announced that the Museum would be relocated at the Royal Exhibition Building site on the northern boundary of Melbourne in lieu of the Southbank development. This decision was made to allow the construction of an exhibition centre and casino in the Southbank precinct. **The Exhibition Building site is expected to be operative as a museum by the year 2000.**

4.69 The Museum advised audit that the extensive and costly plans developed for the Southbank proposal cannot be adapted to the Royal Exhibition Building proposal and that an entirely new planning process will need to be initiated. Audit was also advised by the Museum that the development costs associated with the Royal Exhibition Building's proposal are estimated to be in the vicinity of \$230 million. An evaluation of documentation on which the decision to relocate to the Exhibition Building site was not part of the scope of this audit.



Planned relocation of the Museum to the Royal Exhibition Building site.

Planning for the relocation of the Museum collection

4.70 In order to successfully plan and undertake the relocation of a collection, in excess of 10 million items, and to evaluate various storage and exhibition alternatives, it will be necessary for the Museum to undertake:

- ▶ a physical evaluation of the collection encompassing:
 - the determination of the exact collection size;
 - an analysis of current and future storage facilities to maintain required standards; and
 - resource requirements and logistical support for relocation;
- ▶ a conservation assessment to identify object fragility, chemical stability, environmental requirements and treatment issues.

4.71 An assessment of the Museum's information management systems will also need to be undertaken to identify the level of collection information contained on various databases and where the level of documentation should be enhanced.

4.72 Audit was advised by the Museum that the relocation of the collection held by the Australian Museum in Canberra involved around 5 years forward planning. Given the continuing redevelopment of the Swanston Street site for the eventual sole occupation of the State Library, the Museum will need to progressively relocate its collection. The Museum must determine the physical needs of its collection if the safety of the collections is to be ensured when relocation takes place. Of particular significance is the need to clarify with the Government whether the Exhibition buildings site will only be an exhibition facility or whether it will include curatorial and storage facilities.

4.73 Given the circumstances outlined in this Report extensive planning and development of new exhibition and storage facilities must be assured if the Museum is to avoid a continuation of exhibition, storage and research deficiencies that have existed in the past. Such planning will need to consider all available options for the display and storage of artefacts.

4.74 For the successful development of the new Museum exhibition site and related storage facilities, and to ensure the safety of its collection, the Museum, in conjunction with the Government, should act to ensure that priority is given to the effective planning and implementation of this development.

- *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

The future storage facilities, both on-site at the new museum facility to be developed in the Carlton Gardens, and off-site will be of world-class standard. A Collection Relocation Manager has been appointed to develop the strategic and technical planning necessary to ensure that the relocation program is carried out satisfactorily.

As stated earlier, the Government is committed to the development of the new museum complex and has secured the necessary funding and established a timetable for construction. The Museum, in conjunction with the Office of Major Projects, has the necessary knowledge and skills to ensure the delivery of an innovative, effective and enduring museum facility that will rank among the world's best.

REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Registration of the Museum's collection

4.75 The Auditor-General's *Fourth Report for 1983-84* to the Parliament commented that the Museum accounted for its collection through a combination of manual, microfiche and on-line computer records. That Report concluded that the Council's control over the State Collection was impaired due to the absence of a complete, comprehensive and centralised register of collection. The Auditor-General's *Second Report for 1985-86* reviewed the matters raised in the 1983-84 Report and concluded that the position regarding the Council's lack of control over the State Collection had not changed.

4.76 The Museum's Information Systems Strategic Plan for the period 1990-1995 states that the objective of the Plan is to register approximately 2.1 million items (15 per cent of a total collection of approximately 13 million items) over 5 years. To achieve this level of registration, the Museum decided that:

- ▶ the smaller and more valuable collections would be fully registered; and
- ▶ in respect of larger collections, registration of 300 000 specimens would provide sufficient control over the collection.

4.77 The Auditor-General stated in his *Report on Ministerial Portfolios, May 1990* that progress in compiling the centralised register had been slow and until the collection was fully registered and regular stocktakes instituted, the Museum would not be in a position to exercise effective control over its collection.

4.78 Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Auditor-General and similar views that were expressed by the Hancock Committee on the need for a central computerised register of the collection, the Museum is still a significant way from achieving its objective of registering 15 per cent of the total collection by 1995.

4.79 The audit established that despite the fact that central registration was first recommended some 10 years ago:

- ▶ about 70 different registration databases, including duplicated manual register systems established by curators, remain in operation;
- ▶ there is no definitive centralised control over registration databases with the precise number of records unknown; and
- ▶ the Museum is still undertaking initial steps towards centralising the computer database of its collection including an assessment to determine the number and quality of registration systems currently operative.

4.80 Figures provided to audit at March 1993, indicated that approximately 439 300 items in the collection had been registered, which represents some 18 per cent of the target registration figure or approximately 3 per cent of the total collection. Further, since the 1990 inquiry of the former Economic and Budget Review Committee into the registration of the collection there has only been a marginal increase in the achievement of the target registration figure from 10.6 per cent. Museum management explained that the registration process was progressing slowly because of insufficient funding to fully implement its Information Systems Strategic Plan.

4.81 In audit opinion, the Museum should have acted more promptly and not allowed such a fragmented registration practice to remain. The Museum has not given the registration process the priority it warranted in order to achieve more effective control and security over its collection. At the current rate of registration, it is highly likely that the Museum will not achieve:

- ▶ the target rates of registration of 15 per cent of the total collection by 1995; and

- ▶ levels of registration required to enable it to have any degree of confidence in effecting a safe and secure relocation of the human studies and natural history collections to new premises.

4.82 The Museum Council should take immediate action to ensure that target registration figures remain appropriate and are achieved prior to any relocation of the Museum collection.

- *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

The Museum rejects the criticism of audit that it "should have acted more promptly and not allowed such a fragmented registration practice to remain". Audit has failed to acknowledge that 3 years ago the then Government could not provide the promised additional funds to implement the expensive information systems program essential to effective registration and documentation

Disappointingly, audit also fails to acknowledge that the Council subsequently raised its own funds through improved commercial activities and has injected in excess of \$500 000 a year into the implementation of the Information Systems Strategic Plan which is predominantly aimed at providing the necessary system for collection registration. Three years ago there was a total of approximately 20 personal computers, of inferior quality, throughout the Museum. Today there is a total in excess of 300 PCs which are mostly networked within and across the Museum's various campuses. The registration process is, consequently, accelerating at a rapid rate.

The Museum acknowledges that a comprehensive review of the registration and documentation needs to be undertaken. As a first step, work has commenced to an assess:

- *the size and volume of the collection; and*
- *the extent and quality of the data contained on various collection databases.*

SECURITY AND DISASTER PLANNING

Security at the Museum

4.83 The Museum does not have a formal policy on security. Despite the measures taken to improve security, an opal specimen with an estimated value of \$2 000 was stolen from the Museum in 1992. Given that much of the Museum's collection remains unregistered, and in the absence of any formal stocktaking procedures, the Museum is not in a position to know how much of the collection could potentially be missing.

4.84 As a means of fulfilling its stewardship responsibilities the Museum should ensure that security at the Museum is periodically reviewed with regular stocktakes of especially the smaller more valuable aspects of the collection which the Museum has given an undertaking to fully register.

Scienceworks

4.85 The audit revealed that various security issues at Scienceworks, located at Spotswood, require attention, namely:

- ▶ a disaster plan scheduled to be developed by February 1992 remains in draft form with no firm timelines for completion;
- ▶ although evacuation drills are undertaken at the site, these are not conducted during public access hours and, thus may not be a true indicator of a capacity to successfully affect an emergency evacuation; and
- ▶ there is no closed circuit surveillance of the storage and exhibition facilities or public admission areas on the lower ground floor.

4.86 **In light of the proximity of Scienceworks to the Altona petrochemical facilities, the Museum should finalise its disaster plan and institute an evacuation drill during normal operating times in order to realistically test its emergency evacuation procedures. In addition, consideration should be given to the merits of installing a closed circuit surveillance system.**

- *RESPONSE provided by Director, Museum of Victoria*

The security problems are acknowledged. The museum complex in Swanston Street is an old building and the maintenance of a comprehensive security control system, as would be expected in a modern storage collection facility, is difficult. Periodic security reviews are undertaken by Australian Protective Services (APS).

Regular stocktakes of the collections are not practicable given the resource implications and the size and scope of the collections, although steps are being taken to improve security around smaller, more valuable items. It should be noted that Scienceworks has developed a statistical sampling process of the collection in recognition of the difficulties of undertaking regular comprehensive stocktakes.

Security at Scienceworks is deemed adequate as it is in accord with the best advice available via APS. Audit's recommendation concerning evacuation drills is being implemented. The disaster plan for Scienceworks is dependent upon finalisation of the Williamstown district disaster plan, which should be completed in the near future.

PART 5

State Library of Victoria



BACKGROUND

5.1 The State Library of Victoria, which has been in existence for 137 years, is a reference and research library and, in such capacity, does not make loans to the general public. Some of the most notable aspects of the collection include extensive holdings of books and serials, a collection of rare medieval works of international significance, and a historically and culturally significant collection of manuscripts relating to Victoria and its inhabitants.

5.2 The Council of the Library is a statutory body established under the *Libraries Act* 1988. The major objectives of the Council, as specified in the Act, include:

- ▶ ensuring that the State Collection is managed, operated and accommodated in an efficient and economic manner as a major source of knowledge and information for general reference, specialist enquiry and research;
- ▶ overseeing the provision and promotion of access to information;
- ▶ overseeing cooperation in programs with other libraries and information organisations to promote access to library and information services and resources; and
- ▶ exercising leadership and promoting high standards in the provision of library and information services.

5.3 The functions of the Council include:

- ▶ maintaining, preserving and developing the State Collection of library material including a comprehensive collection of library material relating to Victoria and the people of Victoria;
- ▶ ensuring that library material in the State Collection is available to such persons and institutions, and in such a manner and subject to such conditions as the Council determines with a view to the most advantageous use of the State Collection; and
- ▶ ensuring the availability of such services and facilities in relation to library matters and library material (including bibliographical services) as the Council determines.

5.4 The collection held by the State Library includes over 1.3 million volumes of books and serials and over 80 000 volumes of newspapers. The Library's reference collection includes subject areas such as social science, technology, history and literature. The Library's special collections encompass the arts, music and performing arts collections, the map collection and rare books. The La Trobe special collections include the newspaper, picture and Australian manuscripts collections. Further details regarding the actual size of total collections are contained in paragraph 5.18 of this Report.

5.5 Curatorial and operational directions fulfil a key role in the day to day operations of the Library and report to the Library's Director. The Library Council is responsible for the overall strategic direction and oversight of the Library and reports to the Minister for the Arts.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strategic management at the Library

5.6 In April 1987, the Government commissioned the State Library Development Study to clarify the role, functions and financing of the Library. The Study recommended that the Library place more emphasis on planning and corporate development. As a result, the Library developed a corporate plan which was endorsed by the Council in 1991.

5.7 **Audit considered that the Library's first corporate plan which covered the 1991 year only was developed in a thorough manner. A significant number of staff were involved in the process, and economic and financial considerations were taken into account in the context of the Library's internal and external operating environments.**

5.8 Despite the successful development of this initial plan, the audit disclosed that the Library's second corporate plan for the period 1992 to 1995 was not finalised. A statement on the strategic directions of the Library has been prepared and includes broad strategies by which objectives will be achieved. The 5 main objectives are:

- ▶ the development of a clear plan of purpose and direction;
- ▶ ensuring that organisational structures are geared towards identified service provision and programs;
- ▶ ensuring performance measurement;
- ▶ ensuring systems and procedures facilitate quality service provision; and
- ▶ the implementation of policies and practices for systematic support and continuous improvement.

5.9 **This statement of strategic direction is especially necessary given the change in the senior management of the Library and the appointment of a new director in May 1993. The importance of strategic planning in times of change is heightened and, as a result there is a need for the Library to develop a corporate plan to complement and drive the strategic directions outlined above for the 3 year term to 1996. The corporate plan will also need to take into consideration the current and potential user needs (refer paragraph 5.29 of this Report).**

Implementation of the Library corporate plan

5.10 The Library implemented its initial corporate plan in 1991 through annual action plans. These plans presented one year program objectives, projected outcomes and target dates for task completion. Annual performance was reviewed by senior Library management with future directions considered in light of overall Library priorities and budget information.

5.11 Audit observed that the most significant deficiency in the preparation of action plans was the absence of relevant performance indicators which measure the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. In most plans, the performance indicators identified were little more than statements of ongoing tasks that would be undertaken to achieve stated objectives. For example, performance indicators in place included the monitoring of expenditure figures, the establishment of review teams, staff training and the development of internal procedures.

5.12 The absence of performance indicators does not enable Library management to undertake a meaningful assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the strategies implemented to achieve overall Library goals and objectives.

5.13 There is a need for Library management to ensure that annual action plans reflect the recently developed strategic directions of the Library. In addition, the plans should incorporate performance indicators that provide information concerning the extent to which objectives have been achieved, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the Library's ongoing performance.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The Report fails to acknowledge that the development of the corporate plan for the period 1992-1995 was well advanced at the time of the audit being undertaken. The finalisation of the plan was deliberately deferred pending the appointment of a new Director. Audit staff were advised that the existing Corporate Plan was not going to be produced in a more elaborate form because other efforts are to be undertaken to review and more fully integrate the planning process, but drafts are available and were provided.

The Report makes a number of comments concerning deficiencies in the performance indicators used by the Library in program review documents. Overall, the Library would argue strongly that the quality of such plans was of a high standard and that, in the main, the performance indicators used do provide the Library with information to monitor most areas of performance. As noted above, current efforts are intended to review performance indicators, particularly quantitative indicators, but a wide range are already collected and used. Good management practice requires that such measures are continually refined. This has been done at the Library and will be continued.

Quarterly performance indicators are provided to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, and these link programs, objectives and performance indicators. In addition, the Library currently has:

- an annual program review;*
- a building redevelopment planning process; and*
- a regularly-updated information technology strategic plan.*

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Background

5.14 One of the primary statutory objectives and functions of the Library Council is the development of the State Collection. Acquisitions to the State Collection occur through actual purchase, donations and the Library's statutory responsibility to accept all Victorian publications into the Collection. However, the Library may, in accordance with its legislation, exercise some discretion over the acceptance of publications that do not meet the selection criteria established in its collection development policy.

5.15 In 1986, the Library formally articulated its collection development policy. Under this policy, acquisitions to the Library's collection are determined by 4 principal factors, namely, the statutory responsibilities of the Library, the needs of current and potential users, the development of collections for people or institutions whose needs are not specifically provided for by other collections, and building upon existing strengths in its collection.

Library purchases

5.16 Library acquisition guidelines state that new acquisitions of books and serials must be subject to review by the acquisitions librarian to ensure that they are consistent with subject categories specified in the collection development policy. All donations are also assessed for suitability against this criteria. All purchases over \$500 are considered by the Library's selection committee. The selection committee refers purchases above \$10 000 to the Library Director for approval.

5.17 The audit examination of significant acquisitions made by the Library over 1991-92 indicated that all acquisitions were consistent with selection criteria.

The Library collection

5.18 Table 5A presents a summary of the Library's total holdings during the period 1989-90 to 1992-93.

TABLE 5A
THE LIBRARY COLLECTION

<i>Item</i>	<i>Measure</i>	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Monographs and serials	(volumes)	1 232 457	1 276 260	1 317 901	1 354 887
Newspapers	(volumes)	74 275	75 247	78 490	80 893
Pictures	(number)	355 095	381 977	435 547	453 808
Maps	(number)	89 761	94 676	96 865	97 690
Discs, tapes, videos(a)	(number)	2 755	10 050	10 334	10 487
Manuscripts	(linear metres)	1 761	1 838	1 879	1 948
Exhibition catalogues	(number)	(b)	47 458	51 576	54 706
Ephemera(c)	(linear metres)	772	863	884	(b)

(a) Recently developed collection.

(b) Data for 1989-90 not available.

(c) Estimates only.

Picture collection

5.19 The above Table indicates that the Library's holdings of pictures, which include paintings, prints and photographs, has grown by some 28 per cent, or around 98 700 items over the 3 year period to June 1993, a growth rate far in excess of any other aspect of the collection. **Audit was unable to establish whether this degree of growth was attributable to strong utilisation of the picture collection as no data has been provided by the Library to suggest this trend. Further, the rationale for this growth is not clear, given that the picture collection was identified by the chief conservator as one of the key areas in need of significant conservation treatment.**

5.20 The Library's collection development policy establishes a role for the Library to collect artistic works which illustrate the social, cultural and historical development of Victoria. The Director advised audit that, in this context, aspects of the Library's paintings collection may be more appropriately held by the National Gallery. In such circumstances, there would be merit in the Library and Gallery jointly reviewing this possibility. **Where it can be shown that certain paintings would be more effectively utilised or maintained by the Gallery, responsibility for the paintings should be transferred to the Gallery.**

Newspapers

5.21 The Library retains newspapers in accordance with the national newspaper plan, which was issued by the Council of Australian State Libraries. The aim of the plan is to preserve all Australian newspapers and ensure adequate public access. The plan also states that the primary responsibility for hardcopy retention of newspapers rests with the State of origin.

5.22 Victoria's 2 major daily newspapers do not retain hard copies of their publications, therefore the Library collects all hard copies for historical and research purposes. In addition to these 2 newspapers the Library retains hard copies of selected interstate and overseas publications as well as all Victorian suburban and regional newspapers.

5.23 No data regarding the utilisation of newspapers, particularly regional and suburban papers, could be provided to audit. Accordingly, audit was unable to determine the extent of utilisation of these 2 categories of newspapers.

5.24 **The Library should review the utilisation of this aspect of the collection, maintain pertinent data on the utilisation of newspapers currently collected and critically assess its collection strategy towards publications that have an identified level of demand. The assessment of collection direction should also take account of the significant level of conservation and storage requirements of newspapers.**

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

There has been no unusual growth in the size of the Picture Collection. As is the case with all other collections, items are counted as being added to the collection when they are accessioned. Over the last few years a picture accessioning backlog has been caught up, partly through the videodisc project, and therefore accessioning rates, as opposed to purchase or acquisition rates, were high during jp64

that period. Audit did not seek information to clarify this apparent anomaly. Year-to-year comparison of expenditure on pictures shows that there have been no abnormal levels of purchasing.

The relationship between the Library and the National Gallery with regard to their different collecting roles has been clearly determined in the past by the 2 institutions. The works held by the Library were acquired for the informational and educational purposes of illustrating the social, cultural and historical development, and not for their merit as works of art.

Data requested on newspaper utilisation was provided by the Library, in substantial detail, in late 1992. The information provided included all of the newspaper use data included within the Information Services quarterly report for the preceding period.

Suburban and regional newspapers are acquired by the Library as part of its legal deposit responsibility, and this is ignored (or, implicitly challenged) by the point made about level of demand. Legal deposit caters as much (or more) for future demand as for current demand, and this has also been ignored.

Collection Development Policy

Effectiveness of collection development policy

5.25 The collection development policy requires that acquisitions reflect the needs of current and potential users. The Library's primary method of assessing current user requirements is heavily based on a review of request slips for books and the comments contained on the request slips. These request slips are completed by Library users with the details of the book required.

5.26 **The Library's approach to assessment of current user requirements is inadequate in that the analysis of request slips for books provides only a broad indication of current user demand by subject category and does not provide details of individual book usage or cover the Library's non-book collection. Further, due to the volume of books requested, the analysis of user slips for more detailed analysis is not generally practicable.**

5.27 Collection utilisation data will not provide a meaningful measure of effectiveness until it incorporates more specific utilisation data such as, information by title, author and usage of recent acquisitions. It is acknowledged that, as an indicator of effectiveness, collection utilisation data will be progressively enhanced in relation to the book collection as more of the collection is barcoded (refer paragraph 5.49 of this Report). The Library estimated that this project will be completed by June 1994.

5.28 Even though the limitations of the user slips has been recognised, the Library has not undertaken any comprehensive analysis of potential user needs since a user survey undertaken in 1984 and follow-up surveys of 1985 and 1986.

5.29 Given that the needs of current and future users of the Library is a principal factor underpinning the collection development policy, user surveys and market research covering the Library's total collection should be undertaken on a more regular basis. Such activities should incorporate an analysis of categories of users, the future requirements of existing library users, non-users of library facilities, future trends in the information requirements of business, government and the general community, technological trends, and research directions, particularly relating to history, technology and the social sciences.

5.30 Finally, to assist in assessing the effectiveness of its collection development policy, the Library should consider additional criteria such as the number of new users and reasons why they have been attracted to utilise the Library's book and non-book collections.

Review of the collection development policy

5.31 The Library is currently undertaking its first formal review of the collection development policy. The segment of the review relating to the book collection aims to determine:

- ▶ the strength of the subject fields in the collection;
- ▶ user demand in each subject field;
- ▶ target readership; and
- ▶ the level and location of holdings in other libraries.

5.32 Collection development at the Library is also directed towards building on the existing strengths of the collection. In audit opinion, further development of major subject areas should be considered in light of continued growth in current user demand in those particular subject categories, or where user surveys indicate potential growth in user demand.

5.33 One of the key determinants of the review guidelines is user demand which, as previously outlined, is currently determined through an analysis of manually produced request slips and provides only a broad indication of utilisation by subject category. **In audit opinion, an effective review of the collection development policy would require more refined utilisation details such as usage of individual books and an up-to-date analysis of current and future user needs. In addition, the collection review guidelines were found to be deficient in that no basis of review had been established for other aspects of the collection, such as newspapers, maps, ephemera and photographs.**

5.34 The Library estimates that its review of the collection development policy will be finalised by June 1995.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The analysis of request slips is the primary quantitative method of reviewing current user demand. In view of the current fairly low level of automation, non-quantitative methods (e.g. judgement of staff based on their work with users) are particularly important in assessing current use; for future use, historical quantitative measures are of little value and non-quantitative methods are even more significant.

DEACCESSIONING

Background

5.35 The *Libraries Act* 1988 states that the Council may sell, exchange or dispose of any objects of the State Collection that it deems to be unnecessary and inappropriate to the activities of the Council provided no objection is lodged to the contrary. The criteria documented by the Library for removal of items from its collection include:

- ▶ materials which have deteriorated to a condition no longer capable of serving a useful purpose;
- ▶ information and content which is duplicated;
- ▶ information on specific subjects which is out of date and not primary subjects of emphasis in the collection; and
- ▶ the existence of copies in other collections.

5.36 The Library advised audit that about 70 000 items were sold and about 100 000 disposed of in 1992. Material was mainly disposed of by sale, gift and recycling. Other than the disposal of these items, which reflects a change in the focus of the Library from a lending Library to a reference only library, audit established that the Library does not apply its deaccessioning criteria but follows a policy of indefinite retention for most materials in recognition of its obligation to retain and preserve materials as part of the heritage of Victoria.

5.37 As collection utilisation data at the Library becomes more sophisticated and produces information on an individual item usage, the Library will be in a position to accurately assess its collection focus. Consequently, the Library will be better placed to selectively deaccession significantly under-utilised holdings and add to the collection in areas where there is significant existing or potential future demand. The application of deaccessioning to the entire collection would improve access and provide benefits in that conservation and storage resources can be directed to high utilisation areas of the collection.

5.38 **Given the Library's mandate as a reference and research library which caters for the needs of current and potential users, the Library should consider disposal of items where user demand has substantially diminished or where it is known that the aspect of the collection is no longer consistent with the collection development policy.**

- *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The Council has adopted an explicit policy on withdrawal of material from the collection. Within the context of this policy, the Library observes its criteria for withdrawal of materials. It is important to the Library's role in cooperative collection development with other institutions that arbitrary decisions about the withdrawal of material are not made, simply on the grounds of level of use.

The Report makes no mention of the cost of withdrawal of material, which is significant, and has led to extensive work in this field being relegated to a low priority in favour of other more positive and cost-effective efforts to improve collections and services.

ACCESS TO THE LIBRARY COLLECTION

Background

5.39 The *Libraries Act* 1988 provides that it is a function of the Council to ensure that the State Collection is made available to users as freely as possible. The Library adheres to this position and generally no charge is made for access to Library materials. Access is limited where items in the collection are either too fragile, valuable, rare or unique. Persons can gain access to materials that are restricted if they can demonstrate a need for utilising these aspects of the collection. There are approximately 50 000 books, which have been determined by the Library as frequently used and are placed on open access for users. The balance of the collection, including the non-book collection consisting of maps, pictures, ephemera, manuscripts, newspapers and rare books must be requested by users for retrieval from storage areas.

Library usage

Target user groups

5.40 The Library's collection development policy states that the major target group of users are what the Library characterises as "the informed reader", that is an individual with a relatively advanced level of knowledge and interest. Other major target groups of users include other libraries, occupational groups and professional researchers. This assessment of target user groups is not totally in line with the *Libraries Act* 1988 which states that it is an objective of the Council to:

"...ensure that the State Collection is managed, operated and accommodated in an efficient and economic manner as a major source of knowledge and information for general reference, specialists enquiry and research".

5.41 As the Library represents a valuable public resource and all people of Victoria are freely entitled to use the collections, the Library should review its target user groups with the aim of establishing strategies which broaden the range of people accessing the collection and so ensure that the Library makes the most advantageous use of the State Collection. Audit considers that such action could be taken while remaining within its role of a reference and research library and without duplicating the roles of public and academic libraries.

Service delivery and book retrieval

5.42 The current method of book retrieval at the Library is a manual process. Users request books on handwritten "request slips", which are then manually retrieved by Library staff. Under the current process, Library staff must physically check if the required book is in storage. As a result, during periods of heavy user demand, retrieval times can be lengthy with the expected time of retrieval indicated to users as request slips are submitted.

5.43 Table 5B, **compiled from Library data**, provides a summary of items delivered from the Library stacks.

TABLE 5B
LIBRARY ITEMS DELIVERED TO USERS
(Number)

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Main Library -			
Reference and information centre	95 869	94 274	107 024
Art, music and performing arts	25 805	24 918	30 204
Maps	5 203	7 899	7 166
La Trobe Collections -			
La Trobe ground floor	18 418	16 727	17 739
Newspapers	132 900	183 641	72 625
Secure reading room	4 061	1 791	(a)
Manuscripts	3 447	4 142	1 200
Total	285 703	333 392	235 958

(a) Data not available for 1992-93.

5.44 The Table indicates that the general rate of retrieval of reference and information material from collection storage stacks has increased by approximately 12 per cent, with significant growth experienced in newspaper utilisation contributing to the overall growth in total items delivered from storage stacks in 1991-92. However, in 1992-93 the number of newspaper items delivered fell by 111 000, a decrease of some 60 per cent and overall, total retrievals have fallen by over 97 000 items, or 29 per cent over this period. **As stated previously, more detailed data regarding utilisation, especially in relation to newspapers, was not provided by the Library, therefore it was not possible for audit to evaluate the reasons and merits of the variations in the number of items delivered from storage stacks.**

5.45 Given the Library's policy of retaining all of Victorian newspapers, audit expected that utilisation data would be maintained on newspaper usage. Further, the significant reduction in newspaper utilisation over 1992-93 warrants a review of the appropriateness of this policy.

5.46 Further, one of the Library's main indicators of performance is provided through data maintained in relation to items retrieved per hour. Although basic data is maintained for this measure no analysis of the information is undertaken.

5.47 **Audit concluded it was not possible to ascertain the effectiveness of the Library's retrieval service.**

Barcoding of the collection

5.48 The Library began barcoding new book material from mid-1990 and retrospective barcoding of the existing book collection commenced in late 1991. Audit was advised that in the vicinity of 200 000 titles had been barcoded by December 1992. The Library has estimated that all books in the collection would be barcoded by June 1994.

5.49 As the availability and status of books will be recorded on computer, the barcoding of the collection should:

- ▶ improve service delivery and access to the collection;
- ▶ enable improved tracking of the collection; and
- ▶ provide a wider range of statistics on collection usage.

5.50 The long-term goal of the project is to barcode all items in the collection, however, no firm targets or timelines have been established for this wider project. As a result the Library will not have access for some period to improved utilisation data for the balance of the collection which comprises over 500 000 items.

5.51 **Given the substantial benefits associated with the barcoding of the collection, the Library should critically assess the priority and benefits attributed to this project in terms of its extension to the non-book aspects of the collection.**

Centralisation of collection catalogues

5.52 Over the last 3 years, the Library has been involved in the process of amalgamating all earlier catalogues into a single centralised computer database as a means of simplifying and enhancing user access to the collection.

5.53 The Library has made considerable progress in relation to books, serials and non-book material held in the arts, music and performing arts, and the picture collections. The Library advised that plans exist for the automation of records for maps and manuscripts. However, implementation of these plans is dependent upon funding availability.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The anomaly referred to in this part of the Report relates to changes in the method of keeping statistics of newspaper use, not to changes in pattern of use. In 1991-92 microfilm reels were included as "retrievals" even though they are largely retrieved by members of the public; in 1992-93 they were not included. Because the retrieval of newspapers involves unlike categories (bound volumes, reels of microfilm, single newspapers) meaningful statistics are difficult to produce and analyse. Assessment of which statistics will be most meaningful as performance indicators has been reviewed. Audit did not seek information on this matter.

The following points should be made in relation to centralisation of catalogues:

- *Interstate and overseas newspaper records will be created (not converted) and this will be done by June 1994; Victorian newspaper records (not the newspapers themselves) have been automated already;*
- *The entire Picture Collection has, by definition, been accessioned; over 60 000 items (about 10 per cent) have machine-readable records, and this will rise to about 100 000 by the end of 1994. To produce machine-readable records for the remainder of the collection will cost a little over \$1 million;*
- *Plans do exist to automate records for maps and manuscripts, and a record structure has been devised for manuscripts. Implementation of these plans is dependent on funding;*
- *There is no intention of producing machine-readable records for each item of ephemera, as this could not be justified on cost-effectiveness grounds; and*
- *All decisions about which records to automate and the speed with which this can be done have been made on the basis of cost-effectiveness relative to other priorities.*

Business Information Services

5.54 The strategic directions for the Library indicate that in developing a clear plan of purpose and direction it will be necessary for the Library to define its core business and determine what is most important in serving customers.

5.55 The Library's Business Information Service (BIS) began as a commercial service in November 1991. The BIS incorporates a fee-based service which undertakes a variety of searches including press, company and statistical searches. Information is accessed through the Library's own resources and through national and international databases. The BIS is currently staffed with 2 full-time librarians and one part-time library clerk and in 1992-93 generated revenue of \$84 000 from about 800 fee-based enquiries, with total enquiries of 4 500. Data provided by the Library indicates that revenue generated by the fee-based component of the BIS increased gradually over 1992-93 and approximately 70 per cent of fee-based users were repeat clients. The growth in business services is a result of positive initiatives by the Library.

5.56 The Library's experience to date indicates there may be potential to widen the ambit of business services. In line with its role to serve the information needs of the Victorian community and promote high standards in the provision of library and information services, the Library should:

- ▶ undertake market research to identify private and public sector information requirements;
- ▶ assess the technological means required to meet anticipated demand for information services;
- ▶ commit sufficient resources to ensure that infrastructure requirements and staff training needs are met; and
- ▶ ensure that the value-added service is provided at no net cost to the Library.

5.57 Further, the Library Council should determine whether it is appropriate for the Library to develop a more commercially driven focus, particularly in terms of the potential for greater utilisation of the collection for community benefit as well as enhancement of its revenue base.

- *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

Revenue in 1992-93 increased by 18 per cent compared with 1991-92, and there were similar increases in previous years. Clear evidence has been provided that the proportion of income derived from commercial activities has steadily increased. The Report confused the Business Information Service (a specific commercial service) with commercial services generally. The Library will continue to seek and develop possibilities for commercial services, taking care that all overheads required are carefully costed, to ensure that the revenue generated is a net gain and not raised through efforts diverted from core activities.

CONSERVATION

Development of a conservation policy

5.58 A formal conservation policy dealing with the preservation of printed monographs (books) was adopted in October 1992. In its current form, the conservation policy is a general statement that documents the various options available for conservation treatment and the roles of departments in the Library with respect to the conservation function. The policy states that the Library is moving towards bulk treatment programs that are preventative in nature and more efficient than intensive treatment of individual items. The policy also articulates a preservation program for books.

5.59 Audit considered that the development of a policy on conservation was a positive step by the Library towards the maintenance of the collection. However, the policy does not deal with the Library's non-book collection which includes serials, newspapers, pamphlets, maps, photographs, manuscripts and sheet music and constitutes in the vicinity of 1.4 million items, or over 60 per cent, of the total collection.

5.60 **The Library's conservation policy would be enhanced by extending its coverage to all items within the collection and by also:**

- ▶ **stating short to medium-term goals for the conservation of the collection;**
- ▶ **establishing minimum standards for conservation; and**
- ▶ **specifying performance targets and timelines for the achievement of specific objectives.**

Prioritisation of conservation activities

5.61 Librarians perform ongoing monitoring of the condition of books and serials, with seriously damaged items referred for immediate repair. The Library has shown its high level of commitment to conservation by addressing many conservation requirements including:

- ▶ the identification of around 20 000 Victorian imprints and rare books housed in the main storage stack, of which 1 100 have been boxed and 8 000 shrink wrapped and now housed under appropriate conditions in the rare books and La Trobe collections;
- ▶ plans to cover most of the high use open-access collection and long-term reference materials with plastic covers;
- ▶ over 1991-92 more than 40 collections of manuscripts requiring attention were sorted and boxed, and the cleaning of 11 000 deteriorating glass negatives; and
- ▶ the instruction of staff by the conservation department on the appropriate handling of books.

5.62 However, remaining problem areas for conservation include:

- ▶ Pictures and sketches which are deteriorating due to acidity. Although a temporary employee with the necessary skills has been performing this restoration task, the Library's capacity to arrest this deterioration is inhibited by a lack of expertise. The growth in the pictures collection, particularly over the period from 1990-91 to 1992-93 would, in audit opinion, exacerbate this problem; and
- ▶ A significant collection of historic nineteenth century newspapers which continue to deteriorate in off-site storage facilities.

5.63 Conservation resource priorities should be reviewed to ensure that action is taken to minimise undue deterioration of the collection.

- *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The State Library meets the requirements of conservation. In fact:

- *There is a conservation policy at a greater level of development than that in almost any other comparable Australian library. The State Library's conservation expertise is nationally and internationally recognised;*
- *There is a good understanding of priorities for treatments;*
- *There are very clear and precise standards and procedures for handling of the collections; and*
- *There is a wide range of preservation programs, of which the audit was informed.*

As audit was informed, the monograph policy is the first phase of a plan to produce a complete conservation policy for the Library.

STORAGE FACILITIES

Library storage facilities

5.64 The audit found that existing storage facilities at the Library were inadequate to safely and securely house the collection in that:

- ▶ facilities are not air-conditioned resulting in humidity and temperature variations that are not ideal for book storage;
- ▶ storage stacks are overcrowded which results in books stored on and under work benches, on the floor and in open spaces which not only contributes to their deterioration but increases the risk of accidental damage;
- ▶ basement storage areas are dirty, infested with rodents and susceptible to flooding;
- ▶ the La Trobe Library, although air-conditioned, is susceptible to water damage; and
- ▶ off-site storage facilities at Abbotsford were found to be very dusty, not environmentally controlled, prone to flooding and generally poorly maintained with books and newspapers spread over the facility.

5.65 Audit concluded that the condition of storage facilities at the Library was far below a standard necessary to provide adequate protection of the collection.



Inadequate storage facilities at the State Library.

Provision of improved storage in the future

5.66 A major initiative to improving storage at the Library occurred in 1990 when government funding was approved for the State Library Redevelopment Project. This Project included, as part of Stage 1, the construction of 2 new storage facilities on the corners of La Trobe and Russell Streets (known as the North Infill) and Little Lonsdale and Russell Streets (known as the South Infill). The new storage facilities were completed in late 1992 and have the potential to provide 3 000 square metres of environmentally controlled storage space and house the existing collection.

5.67 The new storage infills will not be fully available for use by the Library immediately as the portion of the building between the 2 storage infills is still utilised by the Museum. The Library estimates that initially only 350 square metres of the North Infill will be utilised for storage purposes.

5.68 It is apparent that under the current arrangements storage conditions will not improve to a reasonable standard in the short-term and that this position is likely to result in further deterioration of the Library's significant collection.



Storage areas prone to water damage.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The Library is aware of the inadequacy of much of its collection storage, and has frequently noted this to Government. However, there is a number of errors in the report:

- Basement areas are not "infested with rodents";*
- The La Trobe Library has never been significantly susceptible to water damage, and is not now. There was some entry of water several years ago during a violent storm, which affected the pictures an manuscripts area but did not threaten the collections. The collections have now been moved, with others, to high quality storage conditions in the north-east wing, and the La Trobe building is also scheduled for redevelopment;*
- Abbotsford is not prone to flooding either. There is nothing wrong with books and newspapers being spread over the facility - that it what it is for; and*
- There is no mention of the relocation of five special collections in July-October 1993 to optimum storage conditions in the north-east wing.*

SECURITY AND DISASTER PLANNING

Security

5.69 The Library has various policy statements and general guidelines regarding access to aspects of the collection. These documents allow access to fragile, valuable, rare or unique material only to persons who can demonstrate that their information needs cannot be met from any other source. Areas of restricted access are also extended to the storage stacks, newspapers awaiting preparation for storage binding and archival, the picture collection, maps and manuscripts.

5.70 In addition to the introduction of video monitoring equipment and security staff training, the Library has instituted a program to security tag the collection. To date, the open access collection and the magic and occult sections, have been tagged. The Library intends to security tag the entire collection but at this stage no timelines or priorities have been established to complete this task which represents the vast majority of the collection.

5.71 Given that a significant proportion of the collection remains untagged, Library management acknowledges that they are not in a position to know the extent of items missing from its collection.

5.72 Although security tagging in isolation cannot ensure complete safety over the collection, it should continue to be undertaken in conjunction with continuing security training for staff and the installation of additional video monitoring equipment where required. Further, in order to provide this most important level of security over the collection, the Council needs to consider the merit of accelerating the security tagging project.

Disaster planning

5.73 In 1987, under the *Building Control Act 1981* the Metropolitan Fire Brigade reviewed fire safety at the Library - Museum complex in Swanston Street and recommended that a significant number of works were required to be undertaken. While fire safety improvement works have been ongoing, it has not been possible to complete some works due to the State Library redevelopment project. Main works completed relate to emergency exits, which are vital for human evacuation, and works relating to fire isolation, smoke detection and designated storage areas for flammable liquids.

5.74 Deferred works include the installation of sprinklers, fire doors and work on enclosed stairwells. Audit was advised that the delay experienced in undertaking these works has reduced the number of safe exit paths, and that works undertaken to date would not sufficiently isolate fire.

5.75 As the redevelopment of the Library will involve significant building works over an extended timeframe of up to 8 years, maintaining adequate security of the collection will require a concerted effort on the part of Library management.

■ *RESPONSE provided by Director, State Library of Victoria*

The Report fails to mention the introduction of sophisticated video monitoring equipment in recent years. There has been significant expenditure in the past 3 years to improve overall security. Security staff have also recently undergone external training in various aspects of security.

In commenting on the program of security tagging, the Report omits reference to the tagging work undertaken as part of the Library Improvement Program. A substantial part of the La Trobe Stack collection has been tagged as well as the open access and special collections mentioned.

The note that the library is not in a position to know the number of untagged items missing implies a naive assumption that tagging in itself will provide full security and a full security record. This is not the case. Tagging is one tool which can assist in the overall improvement of security but it is by no means a total solution. Apart from balancing cost of tags and processing against the likelihood of theft an item, there is a danger that knowledge or assumption that all items are tagged will simply lead to mutilation, through removal of pages or sections of books. Standard practice in security conscious libraries is to rely on a combination of selective tagging, along with observation, exit control, and general monitoring of areas throughout the building, as is the case at the State Library of Victoria.

There has been an annual program for works related to fire safety, resulting in a significant improvement in compliance with appropriate standards. The works program has been developed in conjunction with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and is being completed over more than one financial year, as funding permits.

PART 6

National Gallery of Victoria

BACKGROUND

6.1 The National Gallery has been in existence since 1851 and was originally located in Swanston Street at the State Library. It has occupied its current site in St Kilda Road since 1968. The Gallery collects works of Aboriginal, Oceanic, Asian and Australian art, costumes and textiles, European paintings, photography, prints, drawings and sculpture.

6.2 The *National Gallery of Victoria Act 1966* confers on the Council of Trustees of the Gallery (the Council) responsibility for the management and control of the State art collection. Under the legislation, the main functions of the Council are to:

- ▶ manage and control the Gallery;
- ▶ maintain and develop the State Collection of works of art;
- ▶ make material within the State Collection available to persons, departments and institutions in such manner and subject to such conditions as the Council determines with a view to the most advantageous use of the State Collection; and
- ▶ carry out and make available such other services, including the printing, publication and sale of books, information and reproductions, in relation to pictures, works of art and art exhibits as the Council thinks fit.

6.3 Curatorial and operational managers report to the Gallery Director, who in turn reports to the Council. The Council of Trustees is ultimately responsible to the Minister for the Arts for the strategic direction of the Gallery.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strategic management at the Gallery

6.4 The Gallery has developed an extensive mission statement which was approved by the Council and subsequently issued in February 1991. The mission statement incorporates many of the features of a corporate plan by presenting an overview of the Gallery, its main objectives and broad strategies by which these objectives are to be achieved. However, the Gallery's mission statement was not accompanied by detailed action plans, nor did it articulate:

- ▶ the manner in which the external environment, including the economic, social and government policy impacts on the Gallery's operations;
- ▶ how Gallery clients and users interrelate with Gallery planning and policy development; and
- ▶ overall performance indicators designed to assess the effectiveness of the Gallery's strategies in achieving its mission.

6.5 The review of the Gallery's strategic management practices revealed that:

- ▶ a consolidated policy for collection development or for de-accessioning items in the State Collection had not been developed;
- ▶ the conservation policy was not fully implemented;
- ▶ its objective of increasing exhibition space by 25 per cent without compromising storage space had not been achieved and storage space was at a premium;
- ▶ strategies presented in the mission statement did not specify timelines for completion; and
- ▶ performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the management and utilisation of the collection had not been developed.

6.6 Given the significance of the Gallery as a national cultural organisation, audit considers that it should formalise its strategic management processes by developing a corporate plan, which articulates its strategic objectives, key targets and measures of performance. To support the corporate plan, annual action plans in line with the Gallery's overall strategic direction should also be implemented.

6.7 Through the establishment of key targets, timelines for the implementation of strategies and performance indicators, Gallery management will be able to assess performance in vital areas of operations such as collection development, conservation and the effectiveness of exhibitions.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Gallery collection development

6.8 The Gallery's mission statement states that it should have in place a collection development policy. Acquisitions to the State Collection at the Gallery occur through actual purchase and donations.

6.9 Day to day responsibility for the art collections rests with the individual curators who each cover one of 15 areas of collection development. Each curator prepares a separate collection development policy which is approved by the Gallery director and is subject to review at approximately 18 month intervals. While these individual policies detail the direction of collection development and list priority items for acquisition, **the Gallery does not have an overall policy statement on collection development.**

6.10 The Gallery Director emphasised that the focus of collection development has been based on:

- ▶ purchasing artworks ahead of the market, that is before the works have become popular or a trend has been established, in order to minimise acquisition costs;
- ▶ evaluating the extent and type of art collection development in other Australian galleries to avoid duplicating significant collections;
- ▶ developing collections which reflect the diversity of the community;
- ▶ developing the collection in areas where there is a strong likelihood of donation; and
- ▶ acquiring contemporary works because of their lower cost.

6.11 The Gallery's current focus for collecting has shifted towards contemporary art, with an emphasis towards buying ahead of the market. In particular, a recent direction has involved the development of a contemporary Aboriginal art collection.

6.12 The Director also stated that in future, due to budgetary constraints, there would be an increased emphasis on conserving and exhibiting existing works held in the collection, rather than committing extensive and scarce resources to the purchase of additional artworks.

6.13 **Audit recognises that individual curators develop collection policies that reflect their knowledge and expertise in the areas of curatorial responsibility. However, an overall collections development policy for the Gallery, which reflects the broad collecting principles and priorities, as determined by the director and curatorial staff, would enhance future collection development. This overall collection policy should be subject to formal approval by the Council.**

Purchases of artworks

6.14 Currently, all potential purchases of artworks require the approval of the Gallery Director. Purchases of less than \$10 000 require the approval of the Gallery's acquisition committee and purchases in excess of \$10 000 require the ratification of the full Council. Submissions put to Council for the acquisition of artworks are required to establish the authenticity of the work, provide an assessment of the work's value, identify the collecting priority associated with the work and include storage, conservation and exhibition considerations. **In audit opinion, the acquisition and purchase of artworks is adequately controlled.**

Effectiveness of the Gallery's collecting strategy

6.15 Assessing the effectiveness of a collection strategy undertaken by an agency such as an art gallery can be a subjective process, particularly where the aim is to collect works of the highest aesthetic value. Aesthetic values essentially represent subjective judgements, whereas a measure of effectiveness would require a more objective indicator.

6.16 The Gallery has not developed performance criteria by which it can assess the effectiveness of its collection strategy. In 1986, the Economic and Budget Review Committee suggested that changes in the value of past acquisitions may be a useful means of evaluating the effectiveness of collections.

6.17 **Notwithstanding the vagaries associated with artwork valuations, the Gallery's current focus of buying ahead of the market means it is well placed to examine the effectiveness of its strategies in terms of changing values of recent acquisitions. To fully implement this performance measure the Gallery would need to value the collection.**

DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning at the Gallery

6.18 One of the key functions of the Gallery is to acquire objects and develop its art collection. Due to the risk associated with deaccessioning arising from the potential effects on art values of changing tastes, rather than the intrinsic value of artworks, the Director is of the view that deaccessioning is primarily applicable to works that are either beyond repair or where artworks are not authentic.

6.19 The Gallery's mission statement provides that one of the strategies by which the overall objectives relating to collection development would be achieved is through the development of a responsible deaccessioning policy. The Director advised audit that the Council has requested that such a policy be developed but, to date this action had not occurred.

6.20 The *National Gallery of Victoria Act 1966* states that the Governor-in-Council shall not approve the sale, exchange or disposal of any works of art in the State Collection unless he is satisfied that a resolution of the Council, in favour of disposal, has stood unrevoked for a period of not less than 10 years. While the Act presently provides a long-term safeguard over the collection, the duration of 10 years may effectively render the process of deaccessioning inoperative.

6.21 **The Gallery should take action to develop a deaccessioning policy as requested by the Council and provided for in its mission statement. The policy needs to clearly articulate the criteria upon which aspects of the collection may be deaccessioned, and thereby provide a mechanism whereby resources may be redirected into priority areas and away from maintaining works that are no longer relevant to the collection.**

ACCESS AND EXHIBITIONS

Gallery exhibitions

6.22 The Gallery operates a 5 year exhibitions program which is developed by the Director of Public Programs in conjunction with curators and is subject to the formal approval of the Gallery Director. The exhibition program encompasses the Gallery's permanent collection and includes overseas and interstate travelling exhibitions.

6.23 The aims and objectives of the Gallery's exhibition policy are to:

- ▶ increase the public's active participation in its programs;
- ▶ ensure access to Gallery facilities and activities by various disadvantaged groups such as Aborigines, people of non-English speaking backgrounds, low income earners, people with disabilities and the elderly;
- ▶ increase admissions and revenue earned from exhibitions and other commercial activities; and
- ▶ develop programs which entertain as well as educate visitors.

6.24 The Gallery participates in travelling exhibitions when it has established the curatorial purpose of the exhibition and has full details of the proposed budget, which includes details relating to transport, handling, storage, revenue, cost-sharing, merchandising, security arrangements and insurance.

6.25 In audit opinion, the Gallery undertakes thorough planning of its exhibitions program.

Permanent collection on exhibition

Availability of exhibition space

6.26 The Gallery's mission statement refers to an objective of increasing exhibition space by 25 per cent. Based on advice that the Gallery's total display areas measured approximately 9 400 square metres, an increase in exhibition space by 25 per cent translates to a targeted increase in space of approximately 2 350 square metres.

6.27 The Gallery indicated to audit that it will be difficult to increase exhibition space until new storage facilities can be secured to house part of the furniture collection currently stored on the third floor of the Gallery in an area originally allocated for exhibitions. If this furniture was relocated, an additional 413 square metres, or 4 per cent, of additional total exhibition space would be made available and allow more of the collection to be exhibited.



Exhibition space reduced due to lack of furniture storage facilities.

6.28 A further proposal currently under consideration by the Gallery is the relocation of Gallery staff from the first and third floors and the Gallery library to the adjacent School of Art building. This proposal would provide approximately 1 200 square metres of additional exhibition space at a cost of approximately \$2.3 million. Linked with this proposal is an initiative by the Gallery to raise revenue from naming rights of the Gallery's Great Hall, foyer and special exhibition gallery. The funds from this initiative are anticipated to be applied to the redevelopment of existing administrative areas into exhibition areas and provide for their continued maintenance.

6.29 **Audit agrees that the proposal to relocate Gallery staff and the library has considerable merit and should be pursued. However, after accounting for the exhibition space that has been converted to art storage space (see paragraph 6.56 of this Report), the Gallery is likely to find it difficult to fully achieve its objective of increasing exhibition space by 25 per cent and accommodating future growth in the collection until a long-term solution for additional storage facilities is found.**

Exhibition of the collection

6.30 Table 6A outlines information provided to audit regarding the level of artworks exhibited at the Gallery at 2 points in time, September 1992 and September 1993.

TABLE 6A
COLLECTIONS ON EXHIBITION

	September 1992		September 1993			
	Items on display	Total collections	Items on display	Total collections		
	(no.)	(%)	(no.)	(no.)	(%)	(no.)
Paintings and sculptures	438	11.9	3 675	484	12.8	3 792
Aboriginal art	97	7.7	1 265	75	5.5	1 373
Decorative arts	1 684	17.8	9 435	1 151	12.5	9 193
Prints and drawings	129	0.6	21 702	92	0.4	21 843
Asian art	94	2.8	3 362	142	4.1	3 478
Costumes and textiles	5	0.1	7 450	47	0.6	7 576
Photographs	-	-	6 868	-	-	7 221
Antiquities and pre-Columbian	10	0.8	1 310	62	4.5	1 370
Total collection on display	2 457	4.5	55 067	2 053	3.7	55 846

6.31 The above Table shows that, despite the increase in the size of the total collection by 779 to 55 846 items at September 1993, the number of items on display actually fell by 404.

6.32 This data conveys only a limited position of collections on exhibition as it represents a snapshot picture of the extent that the collection is exhibited at a point in time. The Gallery could improve the quality of information provided to management regarding the extent that the collection is exhibited by maintaining data which demonstrates the rotation of the collection during exhibitions over any one year or other specified periods of time. This enhanced level of information would provide the Gallery with a useful indicator of the utilisation of the collection through exhibitions.

6.33 Notwithstanding the limitations of the data in Table 6A, aspects of the collection such as prints and drawings, photographs and costumes and textiles that only have a small percentage of their total collection on exhibition at any stage, are likely to remain in storage for lengthy periods.

6.34 **Based on the premise there is no immediate solution to the Gallery's need for additional storage facilities, exhibition space is unlikely to increase significantly in the short-term** (refer to paragraphs 6.52 to 6.57 of this Report for future storage proposals). **In these circumstances, future additions to the collection should be critically assessed in terms of exhibition potential and the impact of the acquisition on the exhibition value of artworks already existing in the collection. In addition, opportunities to maximise access to the collection can occur through increasing the number of loans or possible exchange of artworks with similar institutions that have a greater capacity to exhibit such artworks.**

Gallery attendances

Growth in attendances

6.35 Table 6B shows attendances at the Gallery over the last 5 financial years including those related to special exhibitions, for which a separate charge is levied, and local exhibitions.

**TABLE 6B
GALLERY ATTENDANCES**

	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93
Paid attendances	316 173	305 763	316 808	409 857	442 216
Unpaid attendances	259 653	238 255	243 478	245 714	250 060
Total attendances	575 826	544 018	560 286	655 571	692 276

6.36 The Table indicates that:

- ▶ following a decline in attendances in 1989-90 by some 5 per cent, attendances have grown by around 27 per cent from 1989-90 to 1992-93; and
- ▶ paid attendances have increased by 39 per cent in the 3 years to June 1993, clearly reflecting the public appeal of the Gallery's special exhibitions, including the Frederick McCubbin and Toulouse - Lautrec exhibitions which attracted 106 667 and 64 871 admissions respectively.

Free admissions

6.37 In March 1990 the Council decided to make Monday a day of free public admission to the ground floor of the Gallery. The rationale for this decision was to give the disadvantaged members of the community an opportunity to visit the Gallery. During 1992-93, around 90 200 people visited the Gallery on Mondays which represented 36 per cent of total unpaid attendances or 13 per cent of total attendances.

6.38 While the Gallery maintains figures for general admissions on Mondays it is not able to determine what proportion of these admissions relate to the disadvantaged. Consequently, the Gallery is not in a position to assess whether the objective of Monday openings is met. Further, if it was determined that a significant proportion of those attending the Gallery on Mondays were in a position to meet an admission charge, a reduced admission charge for access to the ground floor only may be a viable initiative. Free admission could be provided to those who are able to prove that they are disadvantaged and accordingly the Gallery would be better placed to determine the effectiveness of its policy.

Analysis of attendance

6.39 While the Gallery is able to discern between general visitation and attendances at special exhibitions, the Gallery's attendance statistics provide no information regarding the ethnicity, socioeconomic background, age or domestic location of Gallery visitors.

6.40 Given that it may be difficult to determine these types of statistics at the point of admittance, the Gallery should consider providing visitors with short survey questionnaires that attempt to elicit basic visitor information. **In conjunction with such questionnaires, the Gallery should undertake regular market surveys to establish more detailed visitor information.** Through such data the Gallery would be better placed to:

- ▶ assess the effectiveness of its exhibitions policy in terms of attracting students, recreational visitors, tourists, families and the elderly; and
- ▶ plan its exhibitions.

Access Gallery

6.41 The concept of the Access Gallery was developed in 1990 as a means of making available exhibition space at the Gallery for the general community to display significant aspects of their art, craft or performance unknown to the wider community. The Access Gallery also serves to attract audiences that would otherwise not use the Gallery and thus promote community participation in the Gallery's programs. Over the 2 year period from June 1991 to June 1993, various community, school and ethnic groups have utilised the Access Gallery.

6.42 Bookings for the Access Gallery extend into 1995 and clearly reflect the popularity of the Access Gallery to those wishing to utilise the facility. Nevertheless, the Gallery is unable to determine Access Gallery attendances which would indicate broadly the benefits derived by the wider community of viewing lesser known aspects of artistic pursuit.

CONSERVATION

Gallery conservation policy

6.43 The Gallery has a formal conservation policy which was approved by the Council in 1985. The policy states that the highest standards of conservation would be achieved through actions including:

- ▶ surveying, examining, documenting, monitoring and researching the condition of the collection;
- ▶ establishing priority lists of works to be treated;
- ▶ maintaining complete documentation on all examinations, research and conservation treatments; and
- ▶ recommending and establishing proper environmental and storage conditions for works of art in the collection or on loan.

6.44 The Gallery places significant emphasis on preventative conservation measures and has instituted works which include:

- ▶ the mounting of prints and drawings which are subject to a greater risk of deterioration on to alkaline supports;
- ▶ the cleaning of storage areas and the dusting of paintings;
- ▶ the installation of protective glass screens for paintings; and
- ▶ reframing of photographs.

Approach to conservation

6.45 Despite the policy emphasis on preventative conservation, the Gallery does not have a comprehensive and strategic approach towards the monitoring of the overall condition of the collection. Although the conservation policy was approved in 1985, a recently completed condition survey of paintings held in storage represents the first major assessment of the overall condition of a significant aspect of the collection since that time.

6.46 Audit observations regarding the paintings survey revealed that:

- ▶ little information was documented with regard to determination of the scope of the survey;
- ▶ the survey was conducted without the establishment of priority areas for review and assessment;
- ▶ 682 paintings out of an approximate 3 000 paintings held in storage were identified as requiring some form of treatment, with 79 works in either an emergency state of disrepair or highly unstable and at risk of immediate further loss;
- ▶ accurate timelines and costings for restoration work will not be known until each painting is reviewed and a proposal for treatment is established; and
- ▶ preliminary estimates provided to audit suggest that the restoration of approximately 150 paintings identified for priority treatment could take up to 5 years at an approximately cost of \$260 000, while the restoration of all works identified in the survey could take 20 years.

6.47 It is clear that the Gallery has not adhered to its conservation strategy which recommends undertaking regular condition surveys as a means of prioritising conservation works.

6.48 Further, in audit opinion, the recent survey of paintings should be taken as an indication of the significant level of conservation activity that needs to be undertaken and provides a basis for prioritising conservation activity. Given that non-painting items constitute approximately 90 per cent of all artworks held in storage and have not been subject to a formal condition survey, the Gallery should:

- ▶ institute condition surveys of the remaining collections with priority to those aspects of the collection most at risk of permanent deterioration;
- ▶ rank conservation requirements according to the established priorities determined as part of the condition survey;

- ▶ establish timelines for the completion of tasks and performance targets; and
- ▶ monitor the progress of the conservation projects and take remedial action where appropriate.

STORAGE FACILITIES

Gallery storage facilities

6.49 The audit examination of the Gallery's storage facilities for that part of the collection not on exhibition identified that:

- ▶ Although humidity and temperature variations are within acceptable limits, the air-conditioning system does not guarantee complete climatic stability in all areas, with the photographic collection stored in the warmest and most volatile environment. Despite plans to relocate the photographic collection to a cooler more stable environment it remains housed under inappropriate conditions;
- ▶ Storage areas are currently at a premium resulting in the storage of artworks in walkways and corridors, with artworks stacked on top of each other. Such storage exposes the collection to the risk of damage and infringes the occupational health and safety regulations;
- ▶ Furniture storage on the third floor of the Gallery is overcrowded with items stored in aisles required for emergency exits; and
- ▶ There is no designated store for large, recently purchased Aboriginal works which are currently stored with the European collection.

6.50 Despite the securing of some off-site storage facilities that house associated art materials, the central issue of addressing the need for additional storage space to house the existing and future growth of the collection is yet to be resolved.

6.51 **As storage and exhibition space are at a premium, the Gallery needs to secure alternate storage facilities to house the furniture collection currently stored in premium exhibition space and areas originally designed for facilitating public access to the collection on the third floor of the Gallery.**

Future storage requirements

6.52 The last extensive storage survey undertaken by the Gallery was in 1985. A subsequent survey undertaken in 1986 concluded that *"...the fact that collections have outgrown their storage areas means many items are stored in an ad hoc fashion around the building"*. In the short-term, the solution to the problem was to reorganise existing storage facilities to better utilise existing storage space.

6.53 The continuing growth of the collection has resulted in a shortage of storage facilities and has led to the conversion of former exhibition areas in order to house the collection. Audit was advised by the Gallery that:

- ▶ the Gallery's art storage area had increased by 1 072 square metres, with 632 square metres representing converted exhibition space; and
- ▶ the Council recently decided to close the Sir Andrew Grimwade Boardroom at the Gallery to allow its use as a permanent store for artwork and to permanently use the second floor costume balcony as storage space.

6.54 In August 1992, the Council wrote to the then Minister for the Arts explaining the Gallery's need for additional storage facilities. The letter outlined a proposal to convert to storage facilities 116 car parking spaces of a total of approximately 2 000 spaces, adjacent to the Gallery's conservation department, in the Arts Centre complex carpark. The Victorian Arts Centre Trust which manages the carpark is yet to decide on the Gallery's proposal. The proposal is now listed on the Gallery's capital works program for 1993-94. The main features of the proposal are that:

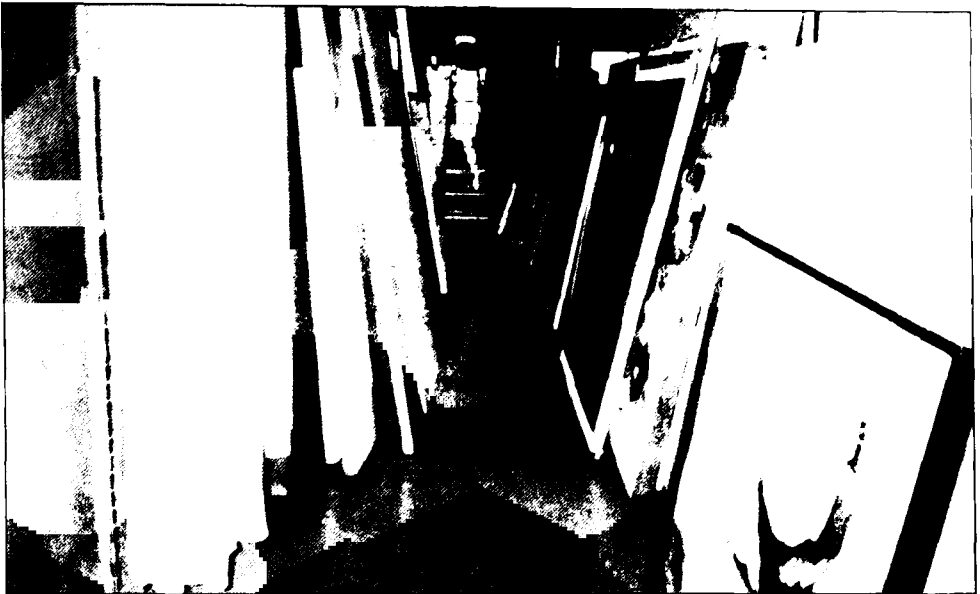
- ▶ it will provide the Gallery with about 2 800 square metres of storage space which is estimated to meet storage requirements for 20 years. However, an evaluation to support this estimate of storage requirements could not be provided to audit.
- ▶ the proximity of the carpark to the Gallery would enable connection of the new storage facility to the existing air-conditioning system thereby ensuring the required climatic control;
- ▶ its location would overcome the cost of providing additional security services needed if the new storage facilities were located off-site. In the event that only off-site storage can be obtained the Gallery has costed around the clock security at about \$200 000 a year; and
- ▶ the carpark conversion connects to the Gallery loading bay and as such would provide safe loading access.

6.55 The audit disclosed that the estimated project cost of \$975 000 only involves the conversion of the carparking spaces into a storage shell and excludes fit out costs. A detailed costing and evaluation of alternate storage proposals had not been undertaken.

6.56 Despite an obvious need for additional storage space, the Gallery has not undertaken a formal assessment of the current storage requirements of the collection, estimated future collection growth rates and corresponding additional storage requirements.

6.57 Given that the capacity of existing facilities has been exceeded and the safety of the collection is compromised, the Gallery should:

- ▶ Critically assess the future growth in the size of the collection; and
- ▶ Fully examine all options for the secure, safe and economical housing of the collection. In the event that the Gallery is unable to meet these requirements from with its own resources, this assessment should form part of a submission to Government with the objective of securing sufficient funding to ensure the safety of the State Collection.



Storage at the Gallery is at a premium.

REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Registration of artworks

6.58 The entire collection was registered late in 1991. Individual curators maintain the principal records regarding the collection, from which the central register is updated every 2-6 months. The audit of the artwork registration process disclosed that:

- ▶ decentralised catalogues containing all relevant information about the works of art are still maintained by individual curators; and
- ▶ a majority of the collection remains unvalued. Audit was advised that it is not intended to value the whole collection in the foreseeable future, which means the Gallery will not be able to obtain the full benefits of the registration process.

6.59 The maintenance of separate registers has persisted despite significant benefits that could be realised from a centralised catalogue of works, which include:

- ▶ standardised and more comprehensive levels of information regarding the Gallery's collection; and
- ▶ the facilitation of exhibition planning, arrangements for the loan of works and public access to information.

6.60 The argument for a centralised documentation system is further supported by the fact that other major State galleries in Australia all operate such systems. Accordingly, **the Gallery should critically evaluate the potential benefits that would accrue from a centralised catalogue and determine the resources required to establish such a catalogue.**

SECURITY AND DISASTER PLANNING

Security and disaster planning at the Gallery

6.61 Following the theft in August 1986, and subsequent return, of the "Weeping Woman", the then Government instituted a security evaluation of the Gallery. The evaluation resulted in:

- ▶ the installation of a closed circuit television system;
- ▶ the appointment of security group supervisors and training for security officers;
- ▶ the installation of infra-red intruder alarms;
- ▶ the fitting of alarms on all external doors which can only be opened from the inside; and
- ▶ upgrading of the security control room.

6.62 **The Gallery has always taken action to ensure that it qualifies for the Commonwealth indemnity of travelling exhibitions.** However, it does not have a formal policy covering all aspects of security over its collection. **The Gallery could improve its control over the collection by developing a formal security policy which specifies all procedures required to be undertaken to ensure the safety and security of the collection.** The policy should also incorporate a process of review whereby existing procedures can be assessed for their adequacy in addressing key areas of risk control over the collection.

6.63 In addition, the Gallery does not have a formal disaster plan. The Gallery's principal disaster response is for the evacuation of staff and visitors. The Gallery should develop a formal disaster plan which clearly articulates:

- ▶ emergency procedures in the event of fire, flood and other potential threats;
- ▶ emergency contact personnel;
- ▶ evacuation procedures; and
- ▶ recovery and treatment techniques of artworks.

■ *RESPONSE provided by the Secretary to the Council of Trustees*

I wish to advise that the recommendations and suggestions contained in the Report have been listed for consideration by the Council of Trustees at its meeting in February 1994 and a more detailed response will be available as soon as Trustees have had the opportunity to address all of the issues.