

Online content and participation policy

POL-C-040

Version 1.0 7 June 2010

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ID	POL-C-040
Version	1.0
Version date	18 May 2010
Type	General operational
AD approval date	24 May 2010
File	
Availability	Public & all staff
Keywords	Website, online content, online outreach, online programs, social media participation
Responsible officer	Manager, Multimedia and Web
History	n/a
Review date	June 2012
Related documents	IT use policy, IT security policy, Intellectual property policy, Communication policy, Privacy policy, Audience development policy, Outreach policy
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Document control

Version	Date	Author	Distribution	Action
0.a	17 March 2010	Tikka Wilson Manager, Multimedia & Web	Louise Douglas, Assistant Director, Audience, Programs & Partnerships Mat Trinca, Assistant Director, Collections & Content	Review
0.b	18 March 2010	Tikka Wilson	As above	Review; approve for stakeholder consultations
0.c	5 May 2010	Tikka Wilson	Senior Managers	Review
0.d	18 May 2010	Tikka Wilson	Executive	Approved with minor corrections
1.0	24 May 2010	Tikka Wilson	Louise Douglas	For registration and distribution

1. Title

Online content and participation policy

2. Introduction

The National Museum of Australia (the Museum) is a major cultural institution charged with researching, collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical material of the Australian nation. The Museum focuses on the three interrelated areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture, Australia's history and society since European settlement in 1788 and the interaction of people with the environment.

Established in 1980, the Museum is a publicly funded institution governed as a statutory authority in the Commonwealth Arts portfolio. The Museum's building on Acton Peninsula, Canberra opened in March 2001.

3. Scope

3.1 Description

This policy provides a framework for the Museum's websites and its engagement with audiences through participation in online social media. The Museum's public web spaces include:

- Corporate website (nma.gov.au)
- Feature websites (eg indigenoustrights.net.au, forgottenaustralianshistory.gov.au)
- Mobile website (nma.gov.au/mobile/)
- Social media spaces (eg Museum accounts on Facebook, Twitter)
- Photo and video sharing spaces (eg Museum accounts on Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo)
- Online databases with external access (eg Collection search and Library catalogue)
- Online applications with external access (eg Quartz)
- Portals in which the Museum posts information about itself (eg Collections Australia Network, Visit Canberra website)
- Other public online platforms that may emerge in the future.

This policy applies to Museum staff official activities in all of these web spaces. The section on the use of social media also applies to professional and private activities of Museum staff in online social media spaces.

This policy does not apply to the browser-based interfaces of internal business applications or interactives developed for use exclusively on Museum premises, including within travelling exhibitions (eg exhibitions, galleries or venues).

3.2 Purpose

To ensure that the Museum's public online activities follow best practice and that the Museum maintains a highly professional, trusted, engaging and innovative online presence that showcases the Museum's collections, exhibitions, programs and research. The policy also provides a framework for building ongoing virtual relationships with national and international online audiences and national and international museum professionals..

3.3 Rationale

The Australian Government has mandated that government agencies make their publications, information and services available and accessible via the Internet. In 2009 the government embraced the use of social media technologies by government agencies. The

Museum has had a website since 1998 and includes the development of the website, online content and online audiences in its strategic plans and business priorities.

As the Museum is a national institution located in Canberra, the World Wide Web is an important medium for reaching national audiences and ensuring that the content developed by the Museum for its exhibitions, collections and programs has permanent national and international reach. Increasingly, the web may be the only contact people have with the Museum. With the emergence of government support for online social media, web-based interaction is increasingly central to the duties and professional development of Museum staff.

4. Principles or guidelines

The following principles guide the approach of the Museum to its online spaces and interactions.

4.1 Visitor focus

The Museum's web spaces are visitor and audience focused.

4.1.1 User-centred design

The Museum's online spaces follow user-centric design and development principles.

4.1.2 Accessibility

The Museum follows the World Wide Web Consortium guidelines and Australian Government guidelines on web accessibility.

4.1.3 Engagement

The Museum values and supports online engagement with communities of interest; it supports and facilitates user-generated content, online consultation with stakeholders and online programs.

4.1.4 Online social media

In accordance with the Government's Response to the Government 2.0 Taskforce Report and the Australian Public Service Commission's 2009 Protocol on the use of online social media by public servants, the Museum supports and encourages its staff to participate in online social media.

4.1.5 User-generated content

The Museum values and seeks user-generated content when appropriate.

4.1.6 Trust, diversity and inclusion

The Museum recognises that participation in online social media spaces requires a significant level of trust in both its staff and in online communities. The Museum's approach balances an assessment of risk, prudent moderation and appreciation of inclusion and diversity.

4.1.7 Transparency

The moderation of online communities requires transparency in respect of community guidelines and decision-making. The Museum should maintain a neutral position if disputes between community members arise and should aim to fairly represent the views of all

participants. It is also important for the Museum to be transparent about who is speaking on behalf of the Museum and for Museum staff to have 'individual' as opposed to 'institutional' voices.

4.1.8 On-demand multiplatform publishing

Users increasingly expect to be able to access content from their desktops and mobile devices. Whenever possible, the Museum uses its web spaces to meet visitor expectations for on-demand access. Content developed for exhibitions, about the collection or created during programs should be repurposed and distributed to online visitors via the Museum's website.

4.1.9 Plain and accessible language

Online writing and editorial style is reader-centred and optimised for legibility onscreen.

4.1.10 Recognising particular needs of schools

Students, teachers and parents are a key audience for the Museum's website. Website content should provide for the particular needs of this audience and editorial decisions should take account of the fact that some school networks restrict access to sites with inappropriate content.

4.1.11 Indigenous warning

The Museum is aware that some Indigenous people may choose to avoid seeing content about Indigenous people who are deceased. Any content with this potential includes a prominent warning.

4.1.12 Disturbing content warning

From time to time the Museum may publish online content that some visitors may find disturbing. Such content will be preceded by a warning that enables visitors to choose not to view it.

4.1.13 Strong language content and warning

From time to time the Museum may publish online content that contains strong language. Such content should be confined to images rather than published as HTML text and should be preceded by a strong language warning. In some cases the language will be indicated by the first letter only. The publication of strong language online requires the approval of an assistant director.

4.1.14 Libel and defamation

The Museum will take care not to publish content online that incurs a risk of litigation for libel or defamation. This applies to staff-generated content and user-generated content.

4.1.15 Content removal

From time to time, someone featured in Museum online content (eg community projects) may ask to have content about themselves removed from the web space. The Museum will make every effort to comply with such requests. Content may also be removed at the discretion of a social media space moderator in accordance with the community guidelines posted in the space.

4.1.16 Commons and reuse

Where possible the Museum supports the Government 2.0 recommendations in respect of visitor access to government data and visitor reuse of online content, particularly for use within the education sector.

4.1.17 Access and interoperability

Where possible the Museum will ensure that its content is delivered in formats that can be harvested by aggregators to increase access by diverse online audiences (eg Picture Australia, Collections Australia Network, iTunes).

4.1.18 Links to or from other websites

The World Wide Web is an interlinked medium where the best web spaces are nodes with many links to and from particular sites.

In general, the Museum's web spaces may link to the web sites of other government agencies (Australian or overseas), other cultural institutions including public access media, and academic and research institutions. In general the Museum's web spaces will not link to commercial websites except in the case of Museum-controlled spaces on commercial social media sites (eg Facebook) or sites of Museum sponsors.

The Museum encourages and actively solicits links from sites managed by institutions within the government/education/cultural sections and acknowledges that it has no control over the sites that link to its sites.

4.2 Innovation

The Museum is an institution that values innovation. Some of its online projects will be 'pilots' or 'experimental' and use new and unproven technologies or applications. The Museum embraces the learning opportunities these provide.

4.3 Whole of Museum collaboration

The Museum's web spaces represent the whole Museum and collectively many staff members contribute to its ongoing growth and are therefore stakeholders in its development.

4.3.1 Content

Most of the material on the Museum's web spaces is considered 'content'. Some of the material is considered 'external communication' and is therefore governed by the Communication policy.

4.3.2 Distributed authoring

The Museum has a distributed authoring model for its online content. Many, if not all, Museum business units contribute online content.

4.3.3 Balance between centralised and decentralised production

In most cases the production and publication of online content is the responsibility of the Multimedia & Web team, including access to Museum accounts for online social media sites such as Flickr and Facebook. Content in all of these contexts is sent live in accordance with the online publishing procedures.

Some business units such as ER&PD, Public Affairs and Publishing, use the corporate website's content management system to send content live in accordance with the business unit's publishing procedures. Some business units operate stand-alone systems that have public web interfaces (eg Opal, Quartz, Libero). These systems follow the system owner's procedures for sending new content live.

4.3.4 Museum brand

The Museum's corporate website and other web spaces are developed in consultation with Marketing to ensure compliance with the Museum's brand.

4.3.5 Training and support

The Museum offers training and support to develop staff professional online skills.

4.4 Accountability and transparency

The Museum's web spaces promote accountability and transparency.

4.4.1 Corporate documents

The Museum publishes a range of corporate and professional documents on its website, including policies, strategic and vision papers. The Museum is mandated to publish its file lists, annual report and other papers tabled in Parliament on its website in an accessible format.

4.4.2 Privacy

The website follows the Australian Government's Privacy Principles and complies with the *Privacy Act 1988*. Museum websites will include a Privacy Statement.

4.4.3 Copyright

The website adheres to the Museum's Intellectual property policy. Museum websites will include a Copyright notice.

4.4.4 Moral rights and cultural clearance

The Museum fully supports moral rights and cultural clearance. Insofar as it is practicable, the Museum obtains cultural clearance for all Indigenous content published on its web spaces.

4.5 Architecture

4.5.1 Flexible modular approach to application development

The Museum's architecture is modular and flexible using specific applications for specific purposes. This enables rapid change and improvement in particular modules without affecting other modules. The content management system is the core application. Other applications may be used for specialised functions such as the calendar, search or shop. Or specialised content features such as *Cook's Pacific Encounters*, *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights* or *Forgotten Australians*. Some specialised modules may be cloud-based.

4.5.2 Open source

The Museum seeks the best value for money in application development and supports both proprietary and open source code.

4.5.3 Cloud-based services and applications

Increasingly online services and applications are located in the 'cloud' – that is, applications are not located on the Museum's servers, but the Museum has its own space within the cloud (eg Flickr, Facebook etc). When appropriate, the Museum's web spaces may exist in the cloud.

4.5.4 Mobile devices

The Museum recognises that access to the web is increasingly via mobile devices where users expect individualised content that augments their particular reality. As appropriate and practical online content should be accessible through mobile devices.

4.5.5 Hosting

Mostly the Museum's web spaces are hosted on servers located at and maintained by the Museum. When appropriate, the Museum may host its web spaces through external commercial service providers.

4.5.6 Domains

The Museum's primary corporate domain is nma.gov.au. The majority of web content should sit within this domain. When necessary the Museum will register alternative domain names in accordance with Australian Government domain name guidelines.

4.5.7 Security

Website security is maintained in accordance with the IT security policy.

4.5.8 Statistics

The primary statistical unit for capturing web usage is the 'visit' or session. The primary attributes of the visit are duration and number of pages visited during the session. For certain types of files (eg PDFs, MP3s, MPEG4s etc) the download is the primary metric.

5. Definition of terms

Aggregators – online platforms that index the Museum's online content and provide a user interface for discovering the Museum's content.

Application – the software that supports the Museum's website, including content management systems.

Architecture – the hardware infrastructure that supports the Museum's website, including servers, firewall, network administration etc.

Cloud-based – servers and services, including applications and storage, that are owned and controlled by third-party suppliers and accessed via the Internet.

Commons – online spaces where content is available for reuse by visitors with an appropriate acknowledgment of the source.

Commercial internet service provider – a third-party hosting service that provides and maintains the hardware infrastructure that enables access to Museum-owned domains and content.

Domain – the online name or address of an online space assigned by a domain name administrator (eg nma.gov.au)

Internet – the infrastructure network of interconnected servers through which users have access to the World Wide Web or other services.

Open source – software with source code that is available for modification by end users, normally supported by a developer community.

Portal – an online space that provides access to a number of online resources. The Collections Australia Network is a portal to content about collecting institutions.

Social media – online participatory spaces where visitors can contribute content in a variety of formats including text, images, audio and video.

Website – a collection of web pages within a common domain name

Web space – online content controlled and owned by the Museum that sits within a shared space (eg the Museum's online space within Flickr or Facebook).

Web visit – also called a 'session', the visit is a metric that refers to a user's interaction with a website over a period of time and accessing a number of pages and or types of content.

World Wide Web – the collection of websites and web spaces available via the Internet and overseen by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

6. Definition of responsibilities

Oversight. The Museum's web spaces are overseen by the Digital Media Steering Committee.

Operation. The operation and development of the Museum's websites and spaces and the publication of online content are the responsibility of the Manager, Multimedia and Web. The operation and development of stand-alone business systems with public web interfaces are the responsibility of the business system owner.

Infrastructure. Supply and support of online infrastructure, including hardware, software, security, disaster preparedness, internet service provider, back-up and data storage is the responsibility of the Manager, Information Technology and Services.

7. References

Australian Government Web Publishing Guide (<http://webpublishing.agimo.gov.au/>)

Australian Public Service Commission, Circular No 2009/6 – Protocols for Online Media Participation (<http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular096.htm>)

Government 2.0 Taskforce Report (<http://gov2.net.au/report/>)

Response to the Government 2.0 Taskforce Report (<http://agimo.govspace.gov.au/2010/05/03/response-to-the-government-2-0-report/>)

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>)

8. Implementation

This policy is implemented through the Museum's budget and planning processes and through the delivery of the Museum's work programs.

8.1 Coverage

All activities in the Museum that use the World Wide Web are covered by this policy.

8.2 Other related policies

Audience development policy

Code of Conduct

Communications policy

Intellectual property policy

IT security policy

IT use policy

Outreach policy

Privacy policy

Staff circular – Staff participation in online social media

8.3 Exclusions

This policy does not cover internal web-based applications (eg Opal, Finance 1, Museum Central) or interactives and other web-based applications used in exhibitions, galleries or in travelling exhibitions.

8.4 Superseded policies

This is a new policy:

8.5 Monitoring

This policy may be reviewed annually if technology change requires. It shall be reviewed every two years.