

Preserving Australian Sport History - a guide for sport organisations

Introduction

The story of Australian sport is held by its sport organisations – large and small. It is tied to the many artefacts and documents that together comprise Australia's sporting heritage.

Australian sport heritage items can include realia (trophies, sport equipment, uniforms etc.), ephemera (advertisements, tickets, posters, programmes etc.) as well as books, journals, diaries, letters, photographs, audio recordings, film and video recordings and scrapbooks. It can also include the general organisational records that are created as part of day to day business.

History has a vital presence in sport, as every new sporting result is judged against a past result. This means that if sporting results are not kept then improved performance cannot be proven. It is the same for sports organisations that do not retain their records, their growth cannot be adequately measured or success shown.

Retaining sport history is important as part of the nation's heritage, but it is primarily of benefit to the individual organisation. By maintaining a strong historical identity a sport organisation can benefit from:

- a greater sense of pride, loyalty and inclusion that will assist in retaining current members and in attracting new members
- a strong marketing asset to attract support, funding and sponsorship
- inspiration for current and future athletes to seek to emulate past success
- knowledge that the athletic struggle for today's sporting success will not be forgotten but will become part of an ongoing history
- identifying heritage assets and organisational IP that may be commercially realized.

This guide is intended to provide a starting point on identifying and managing sport heritage items in small to medium sized sport organisations. The guide is divided into nine sections showing the process of successfully managing the heritage process.

Note that the guide is only for moveable (i.e. small) heritage items and does not provide advice on buildings or other large infrastructure.

1 Identify

Before any other activity takes place an organisation needs to determine exactly what it holds.

To find this out, a stocktake or audit should be conducted across all of its premises to discover all potential heritage and memorabilia items held by the organisation. Additionally, information should be sought on any of the organisation's items that may be held elsewhere by individuals or other organisations.

2 Select

Once it is established what items exist within the organisation, decisions will need to be made on their relevance and value to the organisation. No organisation has the capacity to retain everything and so decisions will have to be made on what items are considered worth keeping and which items may be disposed of.

A selection committee should be formed that contains organisational staff and volunteers who have a good knowledge of the history of the sport and of the organisation. The role of the committee will be to decide the heritage value of each item, this will include determining:

- Does the organisation own the item?
- Does the item assist in telling the story of the organisation or of its athletes?
- Is the item important to a particular group, locality or to Australia?
- Is the item original or unique?
- Does the organisation need to keep the item?

The guide below provides some examples to assist in selection of items.

Criteria for Judging Heritage Significance

Significance values	Example	Consequence of loss
Is the item one of a kind?	Something where there are no other known versions in existence	Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Can the item be reproduced or are there multiple versions?	The item is a framed photograph, but other copies of the original photograph exist	Minor
Does the item have any major political significance?	An item connected to a Prime Minister, Sports Minister, Viceroyalty or Royalty	Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Is the item linked to a particular major sporting event?	An official flag from an Empire, Commonwealth, Olympic or Paralympic games	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Is the item a gift from another nation?	A commemorative bowl gifted from an international organisation	Potential loss of organisation's assets
Is the item valuable aside from its potential significance?	A sport medal made out of gold or silver	Potential loss of organisation's assets
Is the item highly decorative or of artistic value?	An original oil painting of an athlete	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting or artistic heritage

Is the item older than 30 years?	A programme from the 1956 Melbourne Olympic games	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Does the item show technical development?	A prototype of a racing bicycle developed by your organisation	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Does the item show scientific development?	A measuring device developed by your organisation	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Does the item have any connection to Indigenous Australians or athletes?	An artwork or design created by an Australian Indigenous artist for your organisation	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of Indigenous heritage Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Does the item have any connection to Australia's multicultural heritage?	A jersey from a migrant community association football club from the 1960s	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage Potential loss of multicultural heritage

Does the item have any connection to Australian women's sport heritage?	An Australian women's cricket cup from the 1970s	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage
Does the item originate with the organization?	A sport uniform from the 1980s	Potential loss of organisation's heritage
Does the item have particular resonance with a distinct local community?	A plaque from a local sporting organisation	Potential loss to local community heritage
Is the item linked to a notable Australian athlete?	A scrapbook containing press cuttings and ephemera on an athlete	Potential loss of organisation's assets
Is the item linked to an Australian athlete who is also notable in another field?	A letter from Sir Hubert Opperman	Potential loss of organisation's assets Potential loss of national sporting heritage

Note that even if an item falls into a single category it still may not be significant. If the item falls into 2 or more categories then it is probably significant. The first 2 values that determine an item's uniqueness or rarity are the most important significance factors.

For example, a signed shirt worn by a notable Australian athlete is at first glance considered to be significant. However, research shows that there are many shirts signed by this athlete which make it not one of a kind. Additionally, this athlete is still alive so the item could be reproduced by having them sign a similar shirt. Therefore this item is not significant.

Valuers

Where an organisation is unsure of the heritage or commercial value of items, then an expert valuer may be employed. An approved list of valuers is maintained by the Australian government - including valuers of sporting heritage items at: <https://www.arts.gov.au/documents/list-approved-valuers-cultural-gifts-program>.

3 Register

After deciding what items an organisation wishes to retain, a Heritage Register should be created that records that information.

The Heritage Register is a list of records containing details of every item held. Each record for an item should have the following information as a minimum:

- A unique Register number
- Name/Title
- Owner
- Copyright Owner (Note that some items, such as photographs or film, can have multiple copyright owners)
- Location
- Description
- Age
- Condition (is it fragile, damaged, etc.)

Below are examples of records of heritage items in major collections for guidance purposes. Note that organisations should not seek to follow these examples exactly, but to create records useable primarily by and for their own organisations.

- Sydney 2000 Olympic Games torch used by Cathy Freeman <https://collection.maas.museum/object/10767>
- Australian flag signed by the Australian netball team, 1991 <http://collectionsearch.nma.gov.au/object/120018>
- Football Medal, Victoria, Australia, 1886 <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/54296>
- Photograph of Shane Warne, 2006 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/48185982>

4 Manage

Once an organisation has established its Register, it can start to plan how it will manage the items listed.

It is recommended that organisations create a Policy that will provide advice to all their staff and volunteers on how they wish to manage their heritage items.

This policy should include statements on:

- Ongoing selection – deciding what the organisation will collect or keep in future
- Ownership – clearly stating the organisation's rights and entitlements
- Sale, Loan or Gifting of items – set out the conditions on which items may be dispersed
- Maintenance of the Heritage Register – deciding by whom and how the Register will be maintained
- Maintenance – determining the procedures for the regular examination of the condition of the collection and to prevent loss and theft
- Preservation and copying – deciding by whom and how the collection will be preserved
- Disposal – creation of guidelines for the authorised removal/sale/destruction of items from your organization

5 Preserve

Developing a preservation plan

Maintaining or preserving items in the long term can be a costly process and consideration should be given to whether the benefit will outweigh the cost on each item to be preserved.

If an organisation is hoping to preserve its own heritage items, it will need to determine what the potential threats are and how to prevent or minimise their impacts.

This can involve:

- Stabilising and repairing damage that may have already occurred

- Ensuring appropriate storage for items, for example using PET sleeves for photographs
- Ensuring appropriate environmental conditions with recommended levels of temperature, humidity, light exposure, air quality and pest control
- Providing security measures that ensure collection materials are protected from theft or damage (including by flood/fire etc.)

Copying

Preserving many types of item can be expensive and will often require facilities and skills which most sporting organisations do not have. A cheaper solution is often to preserve digital copies or surrogates of your collection items.

Preservation copying of collection items is undertaken to provide a suitably faithful backup surrogate. It reduces the risks of permanent loss of vulnerable or particularly significant materials. Copying could include:

- Making digital (scanned) copies of your important documents and photographs
- Taking digital photographs of your important objects (clothing, cups, flags etc.)
- Creating descriptions (metadata) to go with the digital images – this can be done most easily by naming the image files correctly, and by editing the properties of the image file adding a full description of the item
- Transferring analogue audio and video collections to digital formats
- Transferring digital materials in older storage formats (such as Floppy discs) to future accessible storage
- Creating multiple copies of a digital collection to be held in multiple locations in case of a disaster event at one location. Storing copies in an online cloud service should also be considered.

Websites

Organisations should also consider how to preserve the history retained in their websites. The National Library of Australia's [PANDORA](#) Archive collects online publications and websites of state or national significance. As of 2016 over 270 Australian sports organisations have had their websites [archived](#).

Preservation and Collection Management Guides

There are a number of useful guides available that provide information on different aspects of preservation.

- Heritage Collections Council - reCollections: Caring for Collections Across Australia (2005) - <https://aiccm.org.au/conservation/collection-care/>
- Library of Congress - Digital preservation Guides - <http://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/>
- National Archives of Australia - Preserving paper files - <https://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/store-and-preserve-information/preserving-information/preserving-paper-files>
- National Film and Sound Archive - Care for audio-visual materials - <http://www.nfsa.gov.au/preservation/care/>
- National Gallery of Australia - Paintings - <http://nga.gov.au/Conservation/prevention/painting.cfm>
- National Library of Australia – Preserving Australia’s Documentary Heritage a Starter Kit for Community Groups - <http://www.nla.gov.au/sites/default/files/starterkitcommunity.pdf>
- Powerhouse Museum – How to store a fragile garment or textile - https://maas.museum/app/uploads/2017/02/how_to_store_a_fragile_garment_or_textile.pdf
- State Library of Queensland – Caring for your collections - <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/>

6 Records

An organisation’s general administrative records can also be considered of heritage value. Good recordkeeping over time can also enhance an organisation’s capabilities, improve efficiency and reduce costs.

By having a controlled records management system organisations will ensure:

- records are maintained to support and enhance an ongoing business, and maintain the athlete, parent, coach and supporter base
- records are managed efficiently and can be easily accessed and used for as long as they are required

- records are stored as cost-effectively as possible and when no longer required they are disposed of in a timely and efficient manner
- the organisation complies with all the governance requirements, and meets accountability and community expectations (such as Privacy)
- records of long term heritage value are identified and protected

Organisations should also be aware of the requirements from the Australian Tax Office in keeping financial records for a specified length of time (e.g. 5 years as a minimum).

Organisational records which an organisation considers may be of long term heritage value and that are no longer required, may be offered to an organisation's local Territory or State Records Office or State Library.

7 Dispersal

It is recognised that sporting organisation's primary objective is to provide access to sport and not to manage heritage collections. There are cultural collecting bodies whose role is to preserve Australia's heritage in the long term. These organisations have the facilities and capabilities to preserve and manage heritage items in the long term.

If an organisation is considering giving or loaning its heritage items to a cultural organisation it should first think locally. It is best practice, where possible, to retain local heritage within the local community, therefore for small or local sporting organisations the first point of contact should be the local public library or the local council. Organisations may also like to contact their State or Territory Library and/or State Records Office.

If a collection has items that are considered of national significance (e.g. from a national sporting organisation), these items could also be offered to one of Australia's national cultural collections. Such as:

- National Museum of Australia
- National Archives of Australia
- National Library of Australia
- National Film and Sound Archive

Alternatively the Australian Sport Museum (<https://www.australiansportmuseum.org.au/>) may be interested in your collection items. Their Collection Policy is at: https://australiansportmuseum.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ASM-Collection-Policy_APPROVED.pdf

There are also many specialised sports collections, halls of fame and local museums who may be interested in your items. (see for example https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sports_museums_and_halls_of_fame_in_Australia).

8 Disposal

An organised system of disposal should be established for the items that an organisation does not need or wish to retain. In this way an auditable record is kept of actions.

Reducing the collection of items that are not required will save on storage and maintenance costs to an organisation. It will also free up resources for items that an organisation does wish to retain.

The following criteria may be used as a guide to organisational disposal practices.

Criteria for managing disposal						
Item	Example	Refer to your executive or external body for appraisal	Action	Retain in storage	Disposal	Permission required before disposal
Item of any value owned by a staff member or volunteer that is kept on organisation premises	A piece of Olympic memorabilia bought and mounted by a staff member	No	No action required Item is kept at owners risk -	No	By owner only	No

			organisation is not responsible for maintenance, loss or damage			
Item of negligible economic** or heritage value*** gifted to individual staff member in the course of their organisational duties	A pen received as a gift at a conference	No	No action required	No	Staff member may keep or discard	No
Item of value* gifted to individual staff member in the course of their organisational duties	An Olympic flag signed by athletes	Yes	Determination to be made of ownership and value. If item is individually owned take no further action. If organisation owned and of heritage value add to organisation Heritage Register	Yes, if organisation owned	May be disposed of with permission only	Yes by organisation executive
Item of any value gifted to individual staff member not in the course of their organisational duties – for example while attending a Paralympic games	An Australian flag signed by athletes	No	No action required	No	By owner only	No
Item of negligible economic** or heritage value*** gifted to the	A pendant gifted by a sports organisation	No	No action required	No	Organisation staff may keep on site or discard	No

organisation						
Item of heritage value*** with no apparent ownership held within the organisation	A football signed by a professional footballer	No	No action required	No	Organisation staff may keep on site or discard	No
Item of value* with no apparent ownership held within the organisation	An artwork	Yes	Add to organisation Heritage Register if determined to be of heritage value***	Yes	May be disposed of with permission only	Yes by organisation executive
Item of value* gifted to the organisation	A commemorative bowl gifted from an international sporting organisation	Yes	Add to organisation Heritage Register if determined to be of heritage value***	Yes	May be disposed of with permission only	Yes by organisation executive
Item of any value that is held in documentary form within the organisation	Membership records from the 1970s	Yes	Add to organisation Heritage Register if determined to be of heritage value***	Yes	May be disposed of with permission only	Yes by organisation executive

*item of value = more than \$100

**item of negligible economic value = less than \$100

***heritage value is as defined by the Criteria for Judging Heritage Significance (above).

9 Further assistance

Assistance, advice and potentially grant funding can be sought by contacting the Cultural Heritage Officer in an organisation's state or territory.

ACT <http://www.environment.act.gov.au>

NSW <https://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au>

NT <https://nt.gov.au/leisure/arts-culture-heritage>

QLD <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/heritage>

SA <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au>

TAS <https://libraries.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/Pages/default.aspx>

VIC <https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au>

WA <https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/>

Edgar Crook

2020