

**“Evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us”: A case study of  
the policy, processes and responses of selected GLAM  
institutions to personal donations of collections and artifacts**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

*Research problem:* Donors are important contributors to collection development in GLAM institutions, yet interactions with potential donors and communication of procedures and policies is under researched. To address the gap this research project investigates the policies and processes of selected institutions to manage personal donations and examine the challenges and responses this has raised.

*Methodology:* A case study research design used two methods of data collection for each institution. Nine participants from five GLAM institutions were interviewed using semi-structured interviews, three each at the two larger institutions and all were conducted face-to-face. A donation webpage content analysis was performed for each of the five participating institutions.

*Results:* Collecting policies and principles were found to be critical components of all institutional appraisal processes, although there was evidence of some flexibility in implementation. Relationships with donors were based on collaboration and trust. Participants valued these relationships and invested time building them, facilitating respectful discussions over more challenging aspects of donation including restrictions and ownership. Institutional donation webpages were more diverse, demonstrating that institutions held different views over the value of this platform as a donor communication and information resource.

*Implications:* While the selected institutions have, from their perspective, developed positive donor relationships this research provides some recommendations regarding website presence to make webpages a more valuable resource for donors. Future research could focus on the donor perspective of gifting to the selected institutions, or investigating website use by donors and whether it is perceived as an important source of information.

*Keywords:* donation, collection policy, heritage collection, archival theory, personal information management, donor relationships

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## 1. Research rationale

Managing the donated personal collections within the arts sector is the domain of the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector. Personal collections may include family papers, various types of unpublished writings, paintings and electronic records and are significant for their contribution to cultural heritage and collective memory. Furthermore, personal collections are important communally and nationally for their historical and research value, thus enabling researchers to understand not only broader trends in society but the history of families, communities and organisations (Society of American Archivists (SAA), 2013).

Deciding what will become part of the enduring historical and cultural record is “arguably the most important and central aspect of an archivist’s work” (Pollard, 2001, p.149). However, preliminary research from Victoria University’s Hidden Heritage project on personal collection organisation has demonstrated that significant individuals, such as authors, and/or their family intending to donate to an institution have frequently discovered the processes are unclear and clarifying information difficult to locate (Krtalić, Dinneen, Liew & Goulding, 2020). This may impact substantially on the collection’s future and whether or not it is donated.

Despite this, how institutions approach personal collection management, including interactions with potential donors and communication of their procedures and policies, is under researched. According to Pollard (2001) personal papers and collections have been marginalised in archival theory development, the literature focusing primarily on government and company records. This has ramifications for policies like appraisal which Hobbs (2001) contended may not adequately recognise and reflect the value of personal collections. However, neither study examined in detail the implications for personal collection acquisition and management by institutions. Condrón (2019) found a similar disparity for personal digital archiving (PDA), identifying a gap between the PDA of individuals and the processes of libraries and archives. Both institutions and individuals can “gain context for their own processes by understanding the motivations of the other group” but Condrón (2019, p.35) did not explore how this relationship manifested itself in situ. Donor agency was examined by Fisher (2015), finding that donors and their influence are overlooked in professional literature with archivist and

donor experiences rarely researched. Archival literature on this subject are often unsubstantiated personal opinion papers. Dhuibhne (2012, p.161), a manuscripts archivist, claimed from her personal experience that the institutional acquisition system in place is not understood by “readers and writers” but did not explain if, and how, institutions dealt with this problem. The research gap concerning how the GLAM sector communicate their donation policies and processes to the public was emphasised by Empey (2017). Her webpage analysis focused on Canadian academic libraries, suggesting the need for further research across other GLAM institutions and locations.

It is these significant research gaps in the donation processes of institutions, especially around the dynamics of donor/archivist interactions and realities of personal collection management and archival theory, that forms the rationale underpinning this research.

## **2. Definitions**

The terms frequently used in this report are defined herein.

*Artifact:* A library or archival resource that has value as a physical object in addition to its informational value (SAA).

*Acquisition:* The process of seeking any materials from any source by transfer, donation or purchase (SAA).

*Appraisal:* The process of determining whether records and other materials have permanent (archival) value (SAA).

*Collecting policy:* A document defining the scope of existing collections and describing processes around deaccession, retention, preservation and storage, providing guidance for archival staff, organisations and individuals interested in donating. (SAA).

*Deaccession:* The process by which an archives, museum, or library permanently removes accessioned materials from its holdings (SAA).

*Donor:* An individual or organisation who gives property or money to another without reciprocal compensation (SAA).

*Preservation:* The protection of materials by minimising chemical and physical deterioration and damage to limit the loss of information and to extend the life of cultural property (SAA).

### **3. Literature review**

This research sits at the intersection of several areas of theory including archival principles, collection development policy and personal information management (PIM). These theories underpin the decision-making processes regarding the acceptability of a proffered donation for inclusion in an institution's collection. This literature review therefore presents a thematic discussion on how these theories and other factors can influence institutional donation processes and donor relationships.

#### **3.1 Archival principles and personal archives**

A key theme in the literature is the predominance of traditional archival principles and practice while personal archiving has been marginalised. "Under-theorised and oversimplified" is Douglas' (2018, p.29) view of archival provenance in the personal records domain. Archival theory expresses the viewpoint of those in national and institutional archives and has not yet "grasped the significance of what might be called the flotsam of individual life" (Hobbs, 2001, p.131). Accordingly, personal records require different concepts and treatment by archivists to fully document the subtleties of individual lives and personalities. Traditional archival theory posits that archives have a single creator (provenance) and are impartial as they have not been created for posterity. Yet Douglas' research on writer archives demonstrates the complexities of what constitutes a creator in PIM by revealing five different creation types for consideration when dealing with personal collections. Moreover, the concepts of multiple and parallel provenances with successive and simultaneous creators respectively (Hurley, 2005) indicate that limiting provenance to just one creator is inhibiting. Particularly pertinent to personal papers, Hurley serves to emphasise that archival principles could be more flexible to reflect the dynamic nature of records.

Likewise, the principle of original order does not address personal archiving realities or contextualise personal records (Meehan, 2010). How significant individuals choose to organise and sequence (or not) their collections is important as it reflects their personal



creatorship and contextualises how they engage in their work. Meehan (2010, p.44) suggests that original order is seen as a reference frame for dealing with “the complicated physical realities of records created by individuals and families” while retaining the principle’s core essence. This challenges the archival concept of impartiality as original order is affected when an archivist engages in the intellectual and physical arrangement of the personal collection to facilitate discovery (Douglas, 2018). Original order is also dynamic, changing over time and space as different archivists intervene in the order, thereby altering the meaning and authenticity of the records (MacNeil, 2008). The dilemma for archivists, it seems, is what practical action to take regarding donor collections knowing they are influencing the original order to integrate with archival systems.

### **3.2 Collection development policy**

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) advocates that collection development, management and donation policies are vital components of the gift process to inform potential donors what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable donations (Cassell et al., 2019). The literature in this field (Sauer, 2001; Grgic, 2011; Horava & Clark, 2016) support IFLA’s view, recommending that institutions should have policies in place to encourage offers of donations and expediate the process of appraising, acquiring and managing these materials. Moreover, written policies are viewed as valuable when interacting with donors with the predominant reason for donation rejection cited as being extraneous to the collection development policy (Sauer, 2001).

While written collection development policies are recommended it does not necessarily follow that institutions have embraced these documents. Research findings in this area differ, Horava and Levine-Clark (2016) found that 68.7 percent of surveyed North American academic libraries had collection development policies, while for specific donation (gift-in-kind) policies, 98 percent of surveyed New York State public and academic libraries had these in place (Williams, 2014). In surveyed Croatian libraries donation policies were much less in evidence, averaging 32 percent for public and academic libraries (Grgic, 2011). The differences are likely attributable to national and regional variances and possibly to Sauer’s (2001) view that some archivists remain unconvinced of the benefits of such policies.

In recent years, there has been notable shift from detailed and complex policies to more simplified ones (Horava & Levine-Clark, 2016). Policies that are clear with inbuilt flexibility and a broader objective (Vickery, 2004) are more easily understood by donors and facilitate archivist decision-making to shape collections that meet both organisational requirements and resourcing uncertainties. Making policies publicly available avoids donor misinterpretation of information communicated from institutions (Grgic, 2011) although this is still not standard practice across institutional websites (Sauer, 2001). Having simple and accessible collection development and donation policies is arguably an important part of the donation process. How this is manifested by institutions and what emphasis is placed on policy and/or flexibility will be explored in my research.

### **3.3 Archival theory, PIM and collaboration**

As well as being significant for the donor/archivist relationship, archival theory and PIM can be contentious, viewed either as incompatible or as areas for potential collaboration. Appraisal theory interpretations that are PIM-related highlight some of the evident areas of dispute in attempting to bridge this gap. Archivist decision-making is traditionally driven by use-based values and the collecting policy of the institution. Adopting a different approach, Pollard (2001) advocates the appraisal of personal papers should focus on the social context of record creation and the motivations of their creators, as archival appraisal theory does not account for the differences between personal papers and those of public and corporate organisations. While this view has merit, Pollard does not offer practical examples in support. Furthermore, concentrating on societal relationships and popularity to determine the value of personal papers could mean enduring value, the long-term usefulness of a collection, is overlooked in the appraisal (Cuervo, 2015).

A potential area of collaboration for archival principles and PIM is around value. Archival appraisal can inform PIM in terms of value assessment as people find disposal decisions difficult regarding their collections (Cushing, 2010). Conversely, PIM and archival value are arguably dissimilar because the continuing value of an artifact in PIM is defined by use, but archival value is shaped by an array of factors, for instance, compliance and making marginalised groups visible (Lee & Capra, 2011). The different strategies that underpin appraisal also challenge Cushing's view of value. PIM is focused

on saving and retention while in archival practice elimination is viewed as a positive strategy (Lee & Capra, 2011).

Another area of possible collaboration is the 'reproduce and reuse' PIM practice and the archival principle of long-term preservation (Lee & Capra, 2011). However, expecting users to change their personal management systems is unrealistic (Condrón, 2019), as "donors are a poor fit in overarching or universal theories of archives" which feature stable and organised processes in contrast to the dynamic and seemingly disordered world of PIM (Fisher, 2015, p.97). It seems these differences could mean institutions will implement their own structures and practices when dealing with donors and their PIM, indicating inflexibility.

Within archives and underpinning these various perspectives are two schools of thought; those who view personal papers as within the domain of the records continuum model to which structured recordkeeping practices can be applied, and those who believe alternative approaches should be taken that are tailored to personal archives. The latter view posits that archival theory should focus on exploring how and why an individual operates in a particular way and implement a framework that validates their perceptions of value and significance within their collection, rather than around institutional structures and functions (Hobbs, 2010). Whether this approach is a valid option for personal collections is open to question as Hobbs omits any practical examples. These varied theoretical considerations and challenges should be investigated further as there is little discussion in the literature regarding how these might appear in reality. Furthermore, I would suggest it is possible to have flexibility within an archival framework by implementing a much broader and simpler interpretation of archival principles to negotiate an individual donor's PIM. Consequently, the extent to which institutions take account of donors' personal systems and how this looks and works from a theoretical and practical archival perspective will be investigated in my research.

### **3.4 Donor agency and archivist responses**

Donor agency, a donor's capacity to initiate and direct actions in a particular situation, can affect the donor/archivist relationship dynamic and subsequently impact how the collection is managed by the institution. Donors are usually not passive, they have the

ability to “promote their interests and influence archival practice”, particularly if they acquire ‘archival consciousness’ and want to safeguard their collection for posterity (Fisher, 2015, p.94). Nevertheless, some individuals will have more leverage than others depending on their status, while some institutions will be keen to acquire certain personal collections. How and if donor agency is exercised will depend on the relationship with the archivist as trust can make the difference between collections being donated or dumped (Fisher, 2015).

Donor engagement is essential to developing a successful relationship, with archivists advised to combine “specialist knowledge with bedside manner” (Hilton et al., 2010, para. 24). A prerequisite of relationship building and developing trust in the archivist is imparting knowledge and understanding of archival processes to the donor (Belovari, 2018). Equally, other archivists may take a different view. Zastrow (2016) reduces the donor’s role to one of archival assistant with little acknowledgement that the donor might have an alternative perspective on value or recognition of the donor’s expert knowledge of their own collection. Nor are donors a homogenous group, requiring a variety of personal approaches. Institutions should exercise care and caution with certain donors but have sound donation and collection policies in place so staff can manage forceful donors effectively (Andrews & Richey, 2012). The literature evinces a range of archivist responses to donor agency, although these studies are based on personal experience and opinions. Producing evidence-based research of different institutional views and processes to broaden existing knowledge will be an important outcome of this study.

Another area of collection management that can potentially impact donor relations is the deaccessioning of collection items, including personal donations. Some institutions are governed by legislation to retain items in perpetuity, such as the National Library of New Zealand in the 2003 National Library Act. Other public and private institutions include deaccessioning in their collection management policies and prefer to transfer these artifacts to other institutions to increase the chance of reuse (Charlton, 2019).

Nonetheless, damaging relationships between institutions, donors, researchers and the public are cited as reasons for not deaccessioning material (Huggard & Jackson, 2019). Even if carried out carefully, deaccession could be perceived by donors as a breach of trust by the institution (Streit, 1997). Despite this, Huggard & Jackson noted very few

instances of a negative effect on donor relations after deaccessioning, pointing out that involving donors in the process can improve relationships through greater awareness and understanding. Loud's (2013) research on the reappraisal and deaccession processes at Wellington Museum found that the greatest benefits were relational, reconnecting with donors and building relationships with other institutions. Involving donors is, therefore, an essential part of the deaccession process, most donors appear content that their items are rehomed at another institution with a more germane collecting scope (Buehn, 2013). Explaining institutional policy from the outset to donors, involving them in the process and being transparent around process and decision-making are key concepts that would facilitate the development of more trusting donor relationships.

### **3.5 Privacy and intellectual property challenges**

Privacy raises ethical and legal challenges for institutions around promoting access to information while safeguarding the privacy of individuals featured in personal collections. Hodson (2004) examines this theoretical dichotomy, highlighting the challenges of confidentiality and privacy for institutions especially if the individual is still living. Privacy can be the "most forceful manifestation of donor agency that affects interaction with archives", in reference to well-known authors who deliberately shape their own archives by removing personal items prior to donation (Fisher, 2015, p.114). Proactive archivists should therefore institute donor discussions early to decide the necessary legal and privacy restrictions, although this may not always be as easy as Hodson suggests. Some donors may have ongoing privacy and security restriction requirements and it can become a significant institutional and archival challenge to balance the need for researcher access with those of the donor (Carroll et al., 2011).

Dealing with collaboratively authored works and intellectual property (IP) are other issues that face archivists. It is important to acknowledge that more than one author will need to act to facilitate donation, while recognising authors may have been employed at different organisations, with claims to intellectual property (Marshall, 2008). To forestall any potential problems, it is advised to implement well-defined and publicly accessible privacy and IP policies explaining what information may, or may not, be available to researchers (Kelly & Rosenbloom, 2019). While some literature advises institutions should set clear boundaries, it is likely that further discussion by the

archivist and perhaps compromise, depending on individual circumstances, would encourage more meaningful donor interactions.

### **3.6 Online provision of donation information**

One potential resource for donors seeking information about collection donation and contact details is the institution's website. Although perceived as an important communication channel, there is limited research on donation webpage content (Empey, 2017). The frequently asked question (FAQ) technique is used by some institutions who perceive it as an effective way to disseminate collection policy material (Andrews & Richey, 2012). However, FAQ is not universally endorsed as other institutions found it unsatisfactory for communicating educational information to donors, seeing it as too passive (Hilton et al., 2010). Consequently, different methods of webpage communication could be required depending on the type of information to be conveyed.

Content analysis formed the basis of Empey's (2017) research on donation-related webpages demonstrating the method's worth for this type of study. Although she concluded that libraries face comparable challenges and handle them using fairly similar approaches, there is more diversity than Empey acknowledges. Information presented on topics such as appraisal and valuation processes revealed a lack of unanimity or omission by some institutions. A 2014 survey of academic and public libraries also revealed differences in the provision of information on donation policies and practices (Williams, 2014). Both these studies suggest that while some basic information such as contact details are standard, institutional policies and procedures vary along with online availability. Overlooked by both Empey and Williams is social media provision which might be an important communication tool for donors. An in-depth analysis of the provision of donation information and the use of different online approaches, including social media, by the institutions seems warranted as part of my research.

Being able to access the right information quickly and in an easily readable format on a GLAM website are important considerations not just for potential donors but for other users. These "archival users all want efficient and effective ways of finding the material they are looking for" (Nimer & Daines, 2008 p.230). Nonetheless, finding the most

efficient pathway is not always obvious or may not suit the user's preferred search techniques (Walton, 2017). The clickability factor, the number of clicks required to reach the desired information, is arguably a good indicator as to how easily information can be located (Walton, 2017). Users frustrated by click inefficiencies may not complete their information searches. Click minimisation is advised to facilitate ease of access to the sought-after information. Other users may prefer keyword or subject searches over menu functionality (Schaffner, 2009). Being able to navigate an institution's search mechanisms for successful results generation is vital to promote a positive user interaction and will be investigated for each institution.

Another problem that could affect a donor's experience of institutional websites is the use of archival terminology in the information which may be unfamiliar (Daniels & Yakel, 2010). Furthermore, the use of archival terminology could be inconsistent across institutional websites which might impact on users (Freund & Toms, 2016). The use of archival terminology, which could be quite extensively applied online for donations, could also affect information accessibility and possibly the level of agency in the donor/archivist relationship if donors are not conversant with such language.

### **3.7 File management: Donor education**

Educating donors in file management is a reoccurring literature theme as personal archiving is usually seen as incidental. Marshall's (2008) theory of benign neglect, which contends a file's value is evident in how it is treated, has gained traction in the PIM sphere. Nonetheless, Becker and Nogues (2012) found writers valued their digital files even if their personal management indicated neglect. This disorganisation was attributed instead to a lack of file management skills, resulting in the suggestion that archivists should proactively educate writers in effective digital practice to increase file value and survival. To effectively educate donors the institution "must understand the practices of potential donors in a range of contexts" and how these practices can be specifically directed towards individuals and groups, such as writers or musicians (Kelly & Rosenbloom, 2019, p.249). Adding an incentive such as legacy planning could be persuasive, particularly for individuals wishing to preserve their legacy through donation. As the literature reviewed does not discuss the institutional motivations and practicalities of file management education this is an area for further research.

This review has highlighted some important areas for further investigation, including how institutions communicate, interact and convey information to donors through personal and online contact. Donors and their influence are seldom considered in the professional literature, while donor and archivist experiences in this area are researched infrequently (Fisher, 2015). There is also limited examination of the practical approaches taken by institutions to manage the intersection of archival theory and the PIM of donor collections. It is these gaps in the literature that the research questions will address.

#### **4. Research questions**

This research will aim to discover:

A. What policies, processes and communication methods are in place to manage the personal collections and artifacts of donors at the designated institutions?

1. What are the individual views and opinions of selected staff regarding their institutional donation procedures and are there differences?
2. What challenges do institutions/staff face when implementing policies and procedures and how do they frame their responses?
3. What assumptions do institutions/staff make regarding the prior knowledge and understanding of donors regarding the donation process?

#### **5. Research design**

##### **5.1 Methodology and methods**

To gain a thorough understanding of the research problem, a qualitative research approach was selected as qualitative methods depend on data gathered from words, experiences and observation affording deep insights (O'Leary, 2017). The nature of qualitative research is based on interpretation and understanding of the social truth (Kankam, 2019). Participant voices are critical elements in interpretivism enabling the researcher to make sense of the actions, interactions and behaviours that shape each participant's perspective of their world (Williamson et al., 2002). In this project, interpreting the donation experiences of information professionals and how they



communicated and constructed their own social and organisational reality at a point in time forms the core of research.

A case study research design was implemented to generate “an in-depth analysis of the phenomena in context” and guarantee “that the observed phenomena are authentic representations of reality” (Gagnon, 2009, p.3). Each institution was the subject of an individual case study and part of a multiple case study design enabling a cross-case comparison and analysis of the donor phenomenon in different settings. A multiple case study design offers more robustness than a single study by facilitating the use of multiple qualitative research methods (Yin, 2014). The case studies incorporated two methods of empirical data collection; content analysis and interview, as observations were unable to occur. Using different qualitative methods to gather evidence added depth to the case study, situated it in a real-world context and permitted interpretation of a range of perspectives and meanings (Yin, 2015).

## **5.2 Population and sample**

Five New Zealand heritage institutions, two libraries, one gallery and two museums were critically selected as the units of analysis for this case study as they:

- Accept personal collection donations
- Have staff experienced with handling donations
- Are Wellington-based for ease of access

Sampling for interviews was purposive to select information-rich participants who could most knowledgeably answer questions about donors and donation procedures. At the two larger institutions, a library and a museum, a homogenous sampling strategy helped to identify three staff involved with donors. At the remaining three institutions, one staff member with donation responsibilities was interviewed.

The content analysis sample comprised of the webpage(s), social media and internal collection development policies of each of the five institutions' websites that related specifically to personal donations.

### **5.3 Data collection**

Data collection consisted of empirical data collection through interviews with secondary data collection via a content analysis.

#### *Interviews*

Interviews are a major source of evidence for case study research (Yin, 2014) and were the primary method used to obtain the views and insights of nine participants who were interviewed at their place of work. The interviews were conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. A semi-structured question format (Appendix A) was designed to elicit answers to all the research questions and was sent to participants prior to the interview. This approach offered participants the flexibility to make their own contributions during the interviews, often occurring in areas of interest they wished to explain in more detail. Adopting an interpretive researcher role during the interview permitted respectful listening and enabled the views of the participant to be heard, while recognising that researcher presence and biases affected the data acquired (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interviews were recorded and fully transcribed by the researcher for the purpose of rigour and sent to participants for their comments. Two participants requested minor alterations to their transcripts which were made as a result of this verification process.

#### *Content analysis*

The particular research focus was the document as a resource for potential donors seeking out information, analysing “how the texts came to be, what they mean, what they can tell or do” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 266). The content of each institution’s webpage was examined using a framework based on the three categories of availability, accessibility and usability born out of the research questions. The codeframe employed a question format for the subcategories, applied to each institutional webpage (Appendix C) for data collection.

### **5.4 Ethical considerations**

As my research involved human participants approval was sought from the Human Ethics Committee (HEC, 2018) and received before data collection commenced. Individual consent forms, approved by the HEC, along with information explaining the

purpose of the research, were sent to each participant prior to the interview. Organisational consent forms were sent to the designated staff member at each institution for completion. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary.

There is the possibility in Wellington of identity transparency and participants were advised accordingly (Pickard, 2013). Reporting has preserved anonymity and the nine participants are coded from P1 to P9 while the institutions are referred to as Library A, Library B, Museum A, Museum B and the Gallery.

## **5.5 Limitations**

One limitation centred on sampling as participant selection was made by two institutions. A participant at one institution was discovered to be less involved with donors than the other participants. At another larger institution staff availability meant only one participant could be interviewed.

Owing to the timeframe and organisational difficulties observations of donor and staff meetings could not occur due to unfeasibility, including uncertainty around possible changing COVID levels.

The difficulties of generalising from case studies is a known methodological criticism (Yin, 2014). It is not possible to make generalisations given the small sample of Wellington institutions as the findings apply to the specific phenomenon, although comparable institutions would find the results to be of benefit (Walsham, 1995). A further limitation for results validation is that it is difficult for other researchers to replicate a case study (Gagnon, 2009).

Case study research is affected by reflexivity as data collection and analysis rely heavily on researcher interpretation, which is subject to personal bias, although this limitation is applicable to other qualitative methods (Darke et al., 1998). There may also be unknown factors present at each of institutions which could bias participant(s) responses.

## 5.6 Assumptions

In the interviews it was assumed that participants had sufficient knowledge and experience to respond in-depth to the questions and feel comfortable doing so. It was also presumed that participants agreed to take part in the research from sincere motives, not for other reasons, and that they spoke honestly and candidly about the topic.

Other assumptions included that the participants possessed a similar understanding of archival concepts, such as original order, and that participants all had some archival or museum qualifications. However, this latter assumption was disproved, as only one participant possessed such a qualification.

## 6. Data analysis

### 6.1 Interviews

Qualitative research is inductive as meaning and theory are generated by researchers from the data collected, in this instance from interviews. Data analysis was conducted in nVivo and was a combination of lean coding (researcher-generated) and in vivo coding (participant-generated). As more data became available codes were expanded and refined as patterns, trends and disparities emerged through the iterative process of interpretation and analysis (Boeije, 2010). This was followed by a code reduction process involving combining and renaming similar codes (axial coding) which generated the key themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016) and concepts unique to each institution. These themes (Appendix B) were used to develop theoretical propositions in response to the literature as the basis for answering the research questions and realising the project aims.

### 6.2 Content analysis

For the content analysis a codeframe of categories and sub-categories was developed using a combination of a theory-driven (inductive) and data-driven (deductive) approach. Some sub-categories were *a priori*, based on the literature review, while others were generated after a preliminary reading of the data. These were refined through the iterative analysis process following the emergence of new data. The

findings for each sub-category were coded on the frequency of occurrence across all institutions and for each individual institution as “code frequencies provide an important overview of the data landscape” (Guest et al., 2012, p.137). As part of the interpretation process the webpage contexts were reviewed to maintain an understanding how the findings related to the institutions. Where possible, findings from both data sources were aligned to expedite analysis of trends unique to each case and cross-case themes. All interview-generated coding and the codeframe processes were documented for reliability.

### **6.3 Validity and credibility**

To demonstrate the credibility of this case study research data collection, detailed notes were kept as evidence of the data collection and analysis processes to show the reliability of findings and that the project has been carried out in a transparent and ethical way (Yin, 2015). The use of archival theory demonstrates rigour through supporting or rebutting certain concepts and expedites discussion around adaptation (Gorman & Clayton, 2005).

#### Triangulation

Triangulation was used to validate the consistency of findings using the different data collection methods of interview and content analysis. Williamson et al. (2002, p.36) justifies using triangulation as “conclusions are likely to be more reliable if data are collected by more than one method and from the perspective of more than one source” as well as being able to counterbalance any method limitations. The findings from these data sources were used in conjunction to support themes and highlight differences.

## **7. Findings and discussion**

### **7.1 Case study: Individual institutions**

This section will discuss the policies and processes that are in place to manage potential donations and communication methods for each case study.

#### Library A

Library A is a research library and collections contain millions of artifacts of national significance in a range of formats, including manuscripts, oral histories and websites.

Library A also provides specialist research services in an array of different topics and the three participants (P1, P2, P3) are team leaders, responsible for managing acquisition and appraisal within their specialist areas.

Teams are structured by subject or format and each team has their own collecting plan, constituting part of the library collection development policy, which is the basis of donation appraisal procedure. Participants revealed that appraisal has undergone some changes with the introduction of a donation form and request for a full collection inventory. All participants believed that donors were the best qualified to define their collection, plus it has become too resource intensive for the staff to undertake the necessary research and arrangement.

Team leaders have the authority to accept or decline donations after discussions with their team or other specialists, including Māori and Pacifica team leaders, or if the donation is multi-format. Only if the donation involves sensitive material or has significant associated care costs would approval be required from the head of Library A. The same appraisal process is followed by each team and may include visits to the donor to appraise the collection or donors may be asked to bring the artifact into the library. There is flexibility in the system, determined on a case-by-case basis, if an item does not quite meet collecting plan priorities. Donors are asked to sign the Deed of Gift form to transfer the donation as the final part of the process.

Potential donors frequently use email to contact the Library which can be found on the Library's donations webpage, although other channels including phone and social media are used too. The Library has Twitter and Facebook accounts, accessible via the website, and donor communiques come via the Social Media team. Offers also arrive through the 'Ask a Librarian' web enquiry form, showing that the website is an important contact mode for donors. Conversely, email predominates for library staff to make donor correspondence easily locatable using the Library's tracking system, RefTracker. One participant saw this system as really "important for professionalism so you don't end up having the same conversation twice" (P3).

### Museum A

Museum A hosts their collections online and as physical exhibits including nature and artworks. Like Library A, collections are managed by teams who are specialists in their

respective collecting areas. During 2019-2020 Museum A was visited by over 1.1 million people with the website receiving over 3.4 million visits, demonstrating its popularity.

Three team leaders and members (P4, P5, P6) participated in the research and all gave identical descriptions of the rigorous donation appraisal process. After a team discussion the team leader completes an acquisition proposal form for each recommended donation. Convincing and persuasive arguments are required to explain the donation's significance and how it meets the collecting policy. The proposal was viewed by P4 as "quite a good test and because it takes a lot of work it really helps you as it is hard to say no". The final decision is made by the Collection Development Committee and if accepted, a Deed of Gift is signed by the donor. Despite the strict procedures and policies in place all participants agreed that there is some flexibility within the system, noting that "you are trusted as the expert" (P6) and artifacts can be accepted even if they do not quite fit the collecting policy.

Offers are communicated to Museum B using a range of channels. Favoured methods include using the Museum's general email, or one to specific staff, if known, and the website enquiry form. Participants pointed out that donor communication methods vary according to culture and demographic, the Pacifica community prefer the social media platform Facebook while elderly people often handwrite letters. Staff have to be across these different communication channels, however once the initial contact is made, like Library A, email becomes the preferred communication mode, thus allowing correspondence to be tracked. Face-to-face discussions and visits to donors to view the donation are also part of the staff remit.

### *The Gallery*

The Gallery's collection consists of over 230 works of art, primarily paintings, and annually hosts three to four art exhibitions, which also tour nationally, in its two gallery spaces. Much of the gallery's holdings are available to view online. The gallery also runs a local programme of public events and workshops throughout the year.

The Gallery participant (P7) asserted that the donation process and the collecting priorities are clearly set out in the gallery's comprehensive Collection Policy describing the process as "quite transparent". Donors complete a donation offer form which is sent to the Director, who, after consideration, may present it to the Programme and

Acquisitions Committee. This is a body of external experts, who have the authority to accept or reject donations. The donor signs a Deed of Gift if the donation is accepted. At present there is little flexibility as the donation process is affected by external factors, no storage space and lack of a conservation budget.

The participant explained that the Gallery's collecting policy has adapted to meet the circumstances. The collection was built up by a previous director through donations and purchases, quickly reaching the storage limit. Consequently, the Gallery is not "expanding the collection actively as we have nowhere to put it and we can't pay for off-site storage" (P7). To free space and reduce costs, the Gallery has introduced a new policy that long-term loans will no longer be accepted, and current loans will be returned to their owners or sent to another institution.

The main method of communication with donors is via email, although occasionally donors prefer to write letters. Phone calls are less frequent and although the Gallery has monitored social media platforms, this channel has not been used to offer donations or for communication, unlike Museum A and Library A.

### Museum B

Museum B has several site locations and collections are diverse, including ephemera and textiles, possessing some cultural and historical significance for the Wellington region. In 2019/2020 Museum B received over 420,000 visitors and 110,444 online visits were made to Museum B's website, showing it is a useful information resource.

The donation process at Museum B resembles the process at Museum A as donations are referred through a structured appraisal hierarchy. Upon receiving an offer, the Museum B participant (P8) confirmed they might visit the collection onsite, or the artifact may be brought into the Museum for an initial assessment. An Acquisition Proposal Form is completed, including a statement detailing why the artifact is significant and fits with the Collecting Principles. The Proposal is presented to the Acquisitions Group for discussion and the decision is agreed by the heads of each area, Content, Collections and Exhibitions, with the final approval from the Director. "Usually it is a democratic process, the majority wins" (P8) indicating that there is flexibility within the appraisal process. However, external factors were also highly influential, poor condition, size and storage requirements, could preclude acceptance even if the



artifact or collection was deemed significant. Once a donation has been approved donors sign a Donation Agreement. Like Museum A, the appraisal process is rigorous, requiring steps to be followed and the input of various staff members in the decision-making process.

In recent years, the collecting policy for Museum B has changed to one that reflects “the heritage and histories of tangata whenua and other people of Wellington” (P8). Subsequently, Museum B is perusing a more active policy of seeking donations rather than passively waiting for donors to offer items, through “having a very distinct sense of what we want to do, what we should be acquiring and what the gaps are” (P8).

Communication with donors on a day-to-basis by Museum B is primarily by email, though for the initial donor contact, P8 commented, “we get anything”. People bring items into front-of-house or occasionally telephone. Donors occasionally used Museum B’s Facebook page to offer donations or made an enquiry through the website enquiry form.

### Library B

Library B holds the special collections of a University Library including a Literary Archives and the collections of significant individuals. The collections are available for onsite use only although material can be searched and requested online. The participant (P9) is solely responsible for the appraisal and acquisition of donated collections for Library B. The preference is for donations from academics with a significant international reputation while the Literary Archive contains current and past New Zealand writers with a University connection.

The appraisal process at Library B is fairly flexible with each donation treated on a case-by-case basis. When an offer is made the participant will often work with other Library staff when conducting the appraisal, which usually occur onsite as collections are large. However, Library B actively encourages donors to self-appraise their collections, because of their personal knowledge and staff time constraints. Although Fisher (2015) sees this as the deliberate shaping of personal archives it may mean the difference between rejection and acceptance. Donors’ diverse interpretations of value are evident, ranging from “a lidded box of stuff, really significant stuff” to another who “vastly understated the number of boxes” (P9), indicating the self-appraisal approach is

problematic. Appraisal is also influenced by external factors, the need to preserve good relations not only with donors but with the University, as “sometimes it can be a pure collection decision, sometimes there can be relationships and politics involved” (P9). Maintaining and preserving these relationships is a critical aspect of the donation process and collections will be accepted “as they come” particularly when “it would normally be very unwise of us not to have the papers” (P9). The agency of donors is therefore directly related to their international reputation, even to the point of initially accepting unwanted material to secure the donation. Once a donation is accepted a Library B donation form for unpublished material is completed and signed as the online form is for published material only.

Donors communicate mostly by email in the first instance, but also by telephone and by personal visits to Library B. Social media is not utilised by donors and a web enquiry facility is not available.

## **7.2 Cross-case study findings and discussion**

This section will discuss the findings from a thematic perspective, drawn from the data analysis and literature review, to answer the research questions.

### *Principles and process*

#### ***Collection policies***

All the institutions have collection policies which are available online. This belies Grgic’s (2011) contention that institutions do not necessarily have these documents in place, instead demonstrating the institutions viewed collection policies as vital components of the donation process, aligning with Cassel et al., (2019).

Collecting policies and principles are at the core of the appraisal process across the institutions. Some, like Museum A, with broad collecting principles, have a structured, rigorous process and hierarchical decision-making. Others, like Library B, with a narrower collecting scope and less process had greater administrative autonomy. While donations were usually rejected if they did not meet collecting policy criteria, future resourcing, including costs of preservation, size and storage capacity were also critical considerations. Nonetheless all institutions confirmed if there was an out-of-scope

collection or artifact they wished to acquire there was flexibility within their processes to be able to accept it.

If a donation is rejected, the participants would suggest alternative institutions to a donor, Library A (P1) stating, “we are still quite big on that part of the donor discussion, have you thought about this repository?” This preserves the budding donor relationship for the future and develops connections with other GLAM institutions. Accordingly, Libraries A and B have implemented a Memorandum of Understanding, sending the other potential donors whose collection might be more in scope.

Although institutions exhibited a traditional archival approach to appraisal based on the collecting policy, institutional type and purpose means some factors are more relevant than others. Libraries A and B are research-focused and consider not only the current research and heritage value, but also the enduring value of a collection and possible future research directions.

*Sometimes you can make a judgement of value based on known research interests, there is already ongoing work ... In other cases, you are making a judgement that it will be of interest in the future if it isn't now active. (Library A, P1)*

### ***Original order and PIM***

At Museum A, how original order is managed varies depending on donor wishes, the particular collecting area and accepted best practice. For the Museum’s insect collection, accepted international entomological practice is to classify according to species. In only one case has original order been retained for a donated insect collection as part of acceptance conditions. However, in another collecting area a large cache of receipts dating from 1860s-1870s are kept faithfully in their original three bundles (but not chronological) order. This emphasises the value and significance of institutions knowing how collections are ordered by creators and how this supports and contextualises the creator’s work. A philatelic collection coming to Museum A will have a biography written of the donor “so people can understand in the way he has interpreted the collection” (P4) in terms of the philatelic practices of his generation.

Library A “respects original order as much as is practical” (P1) only intervening when necessary. Documented changes may be made to improve researcher accessibility, if,

for instance, there is no apparent original order. For some formats storage requirements might require physical separation for preservation purposes. Therefore, the collection will be kept together intellectually enabling researchers to understand how the creator conceived of their work. Library A recognises that retaining original order is integral “as a form of information that is contained in a collection. It reflects how the donor thought about their collection” (P1).

Sitting alongside original order the opinions and views of the institutions emphasise flexibility when faced with a donor’s PIM, commenting “we don’t try and impose any system of our own on their holdings” (Library A, P3) and “I wouldn’t mess with their personal system if they had that” (Library B, P9). This suggests institutions set considerable store around retaining an individual’s PIM, interpreting archival theory in a broader and adaptable, rather than structured, way.

These findings support Meehan’s (2010) view that original order should be seen as a contextual framework, while also reflecting the donor’s perceptions of the value and significance of their collection (Hobbs, 2010).

### ***Provenance***

The concept of provenance regarding creatorship and what constitutes a creator for personal archives is an area of debate in the literature (Hurley, 2005, Douglas, 2018). However, this is not apparent in the donation process as context is just as important as creatorship. For Museum B, ascertaining the context of an artifact or collection, or “chatty objects” (P4) is a significant part of the appraisal. Establishing provenance of how the donor connects to the collection or artifact to produce a narrative is “a big thing for us” (P4) and was evident in all the institutions. If this proves challenging then institutions will undertake research to fill in any gaps in the donor’s records, for instance with a deceased estate. The depth of research varies depending on available resources, ranging from “efficient and economic” (The Gallery, P7) to more in-depth enquiries, including consulting the family and wider connections.

### ***Māori donation protocols***

Donations from Māori or of Māori-related material may require different procedures and protocol, which is driven by donor choice. This only occurred at some of the institutions, others, Library B and the Gallery, had not received such donations. At the

larger institutions, Library A and Museum B, Māori specialists are involved in the appraisal process for Māori taonga. Library A made the key point that every case is unique and is treated accordingly. One particular protocol that takes place is a ceremony for the artifact to be formally transferred to the care of the institution, often including a pōwhiri.

### *Institutional assumptions*

#### ***Donor knowledge and relationship development***

Even though all institutional websites have accessible collecting policies, the institutions did not expect donors to know about the process. Library A commented they “don’t assume any prior knowledge” (P3) while Museum B summed up the prevailing view saying they did not “think any would be expected to understand the process, to be quite honest, it is not an everyday thing for anybody” (P8).

Consequently, all participants spend time with donors explaining the donation process to them, seeing this as a valuable and essential part of the procedure. This evidence supports Belovari’s (2018) view that imparting of knowledge and information on archival procedures plays a vital role in building trust with donors. Trust is an integral part of the relationship as donors have to have confidence in staff and the process itself. At Library A, this might,

*start when they initially come in to talk about a collection and we talk about how we give them a deposit form, how we take the material in, how it goes through this process, we appraise the material based on all these criteria. (P3)*

Museum B outlines the process to donors explaining they,

*have to write a proposal, this is what it contains, it gets circulated, then it goes to this committee for final approval and this will take two to three months. If it is approved we will send you a Deed of Gift and then we can arrange to pick up your things. (P4)*

Part of this process might involve the donor coming into the institution to meet with staff. Such visits are encouraged to help donors “understand what our Library does, our values, the care we take of things and the scale of operations for timeframes” (Library A,

P1). Nevertheless, donor's lack of prior knowledge regarding the donation process creates a power imbalance in the donor/archivist relationship which could be to the donor's detriment during discussions.

A different situation arises with serial donors, such as writers donating literary papers who regularly contribute over a long time period. Participants appreciate these donors already possess an understanding of the process and act accordingly, "those donors that come to us regularly, they often know what we need and what we want" (Museum B, P8). The ongoing relationship has evolved into one of mutual trust and understanding to the point where "if there is one thing amongst it that doesn't fit the scope then we are honest and explain it and hope that future offers will still come in" (Museum A, P6). Such engagement with donors is critical to building a successful relationship as Hilton et al., (2010) observed. Library B found honesty and trust were attributes donors respected, having "built reasonably good relationships with them so that I can sometimes be pleasantly blunt" (P9). Other participants gave examples of how pleased donors were with the efforts made on their behalf, one collection at Museum B which had condition complications was made "into a nice education display, and that woman was so pleased" (P6). Another Museum B participant described donors as generally "pretty lovely, we have good relationships" (P4).

### ***Donor collection care***

Donors are frequently assumed to lack collection care knowledge. Observations made by participants during an onsite visit will result in advice being offered if, for instance, current storage puts the collection at risk of deterioration. All participants confirmed they would offer such advice if the situation arose. Nonetheless, only Library A and Museum A have online resources available on collection care. Library A offers face-to-face monthly preservation workshops and Museum B sporadically runs free public workshops on protection and preservation of artifacts and taonga. Contrary to Becker and Nogues' (2012) suggestions, file management is not covered by the online resources or workshops as this was not assumed to be of interest. Participants confirmed preservation, rather than organisation, is the chief concern of donors and collectors as they frequently receive requests for help and advice on the preservation of physical and digital artifacts. This aspect of personal collection management fits well with the archival principle of long-term preservation, the evidence demonstrating collaboration

between the two. These enquiries are valued by institutional staff, supporting the Kelly and Rosenbloom (2019) argument that institutions should understand the needs and practices of their donors. Museum B, P6 commented, "I always reply personally to emails then I add some prepared stuff but I make it very personal". Personalised attachments, links to articles, guides and websites are also provided in these emails. Some collectors are presumed to be legacy planning, contemplating making a future donation when enquiring about preservation and storage. Therefore, institutions proactively tailor their online resources and workshops to meet the expressed need of donors and collectors around preservation, both digital and physical. Moreover, as institutions retain the original order of collections whenever possible, this is unlikely to change.

### *Institutional challenges*

#### ***Donors use restrictions***

One topic that could feature in discussions to a greater or lesser degree is the imposition of use restrictions by some donors on parts or all of their collection. As recommended by Hodson (2004) these important conversations occur early in the process as "privacy is getting stricter and stricter... all that personal information, society is getting more and more aware of it, so we are more aware of it" (P2). Libraries A and B said they discuss various options, such as review periods and release times for privacy restrictions on how the collection is accessed and used.

Donors have agency at all the institutions to make conditions and as Fisher (2015) rightly argues, influence archival and institutional practices for their benefit. Library A maintained that it is "really working out what is appropriate on a case-by-case basis in terms of the collection, its significance, what the issue is, what the risk is" (P1). Library B commented that usually "we would just accept the restrictions unless they were so draconian we thought they needed to be negotiated" (P9).

An important aspect of the donor conversation is finding the balance between respecting donor wishes and making material accessible for researchers. One Library A participant commented that the "donor always has control of the access and use restrictions. I think that is paramount as intellectually it is their material... We do try and balance it with researcher access and the value to researchers" (P3). A Museum A

participant stated that “in my view I don’t think we are particularly restrictive. I rather hope we are being perceived as very accessible and approachable” (P4). This is the prevailing perception among the institutions, who seem quite willing to accommodate reasonable donor use conditions, attesting to the success of developing positive donor relationships which, in turn, helps facilitate collection access for researchers. This evidence contradicts Carroll et al., (2011) who argued that institutions could find it a significant challenge to balance donor restrictions with those of the researcher.

### ***Deaccession of donations***

Deaccession of an artifact or collection could prove challenging for donors and impact on the trust relationship (Streit, 1997). All institutional collecting policies (aside from Library A) refer to deaccession designating that a process has to be followed. In most cases deaccession follows on from another institution’s request for the collection or artifact, according with Charlton’s (2019) findings that transfer to another institution was the most common outcome. Museum A believed that,

*It is very important if we deaccession, especially something that was gifted by someone in particular, that we go through the process to contact any descendants of the donors because we have to offer it back to them or ask what they want to do just to make sure there are no surprises. (P6)*

Maintaining good donor relations is perceived as a critical part of deaccession. Donors are involved in the process to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their wishes, thereby preserving rather than damaging the relationship. This finding supports Buehn’s (2013) views that donors are content if their items are sent to another institution, and disputes Streit’s argument that relations could be harmed.

### ***Ownership transfer***

Collection ownership and transference, overlooked in the literature, is an area where misunderstandings can and do occur. Evidence of donor ownership, for instance through inheritance documents, is established during the appraisal process. This can be more challenging if the donor is a part-owner, such as of a family collection, or if it is part of a loan. All institutions require confirmation that every owner has consented to the donation which may raise complications. Another area of possible confusion is



when donors or their descendants do not realise that their donated collection is now the institution's legal property. Library A summed up the situation, "it is like people think that the ownership doesn't transfer and they can pop in in five years' time if they need it and take it back" (P2). Ownership transference is therefore a vital conversation topic for institutions to discuss the full implications with donors. Due diligence to verify ownership is another key response of institutions to prevent any possible ownership issues.

### ***Copyright***

Another area that can be challenging for institutions are donors and copyright, although under-researched in the literature. The institutions all include copyright on their Deed of Gift forms for owners who are the copyright holders and the different options form part of the donor conversation. However, the owner is not necessarily the copyright holder meaning a copyright assessment may need to be conducted. Music donations to Library A can have layers of copyright in a single recording and each copyright holder would need to be identified and contacted for permission to use the recording. Donations by scholars to Library B often include photocopied articles for research use only by that person. The response is to keep only the front page of unannotated articles, thereby retaining the integrity and authenticity of the collection whilst abiding by the 1994 Copyright Act. Artworks can also be problematic as Museum B Pointed out, "we can own something but not have the right to reproduce it" (P8). All institutions therefore manage and negotiate copyright on case-by-case basis depending on how they intend to use it.

A related issue is third party copyright and privacy, for instance in a photograph, and permission to use the artifact has to be obtained. All institutions used due diligence-based procedures to try and obtain permission from third parties in the collection or image. Library A has the authority, made clear in the Deed of Gift, to be able to respond to third-party concerns. If the item has been displayed it will be removed and made unavailable for public use. The other institutions implement similar procedures.

### **7.3 Webpage content analysis**

One of the most obvious ways of communicating donation information is through the institution's website, more specifically through a dedicated webpage. Challenges centre

around institutions appreciating the value of this method of communicating information. Diversity in accessibility, availability and useability across institutional webpage information was a key finding, supporting Williams (2014) who reached similar conclusions in his study regarding online information provision to donors.

Although all five institutions provided donation information on their website the analysis revealed there were a number of differences between them. Only three (Library A, Museum A and the Gallery) had a dedicated donation webpage, Museum B did not have one at all while Library B had a donation section on one of the institutional webpages. None of the webpages used FAQs, a method not favoured by Hilton et al., (2010).

### *Information accessibility*

Information accessibility, or information that is easily reachable or obtainable, differed across the different institutions. It was measured using Walton's (2017) 'clickability factor', the number of clicks to reach the donor webpage. Museum A was hard to access at four clicks, while Library B required five which may dissuade or frustrate potential donors seeking information. For the remaining three, the information was either accessible on the homepage or was one click away, although for Museum B this material was located in a sidebar.

Accessing information using the search term 'donation' proved harder. For Museums A and B, the search generated the financial donations webpage while for Library B the parent library policy page was the result. For Library A and the Gallery, the in-kind donation webpage was much more accessible, featuring near the top of the results list. For donors who prefer using the search box, the mechanisms of Museum B and the Gallery would be unlikely to yield a positive outcome for these donors.

Contact details for four institutions are easily accessible, three are located on the webpage, while Museum B's are in the homepage footer. However, Library B's contact information is not accessible in the donation section but located elsewhere on the webpage. Both Empey (2017) and Williams (2014) found that supplying contact details for donation purposes was standard for institutions which is also indicated in this study. Nonetheless, the preferred webpage contact methods varied across the five institutions. Two had a web enquiry form, one offered a phone number while the remaining two

institutions provided email addresses. Social media platforms are accessible on webpage footers for contacting four institutions; Library B does not have social media. The platforms are reportedly used occasionally to offer donations but is not seen by institutions as an important method of communication.

All five institutions had their collections policy obtainable online. In contrast to Museum B, the other institutions linked these policies to the donations webpage making them more easily accessible to donors.

#### *Information availability and suitability*

All institutional policies included information about collecting priorities and donations. However, none of the institutions provided any suitable guidance regarding how the collection was to be presented for appraisal, although lists were asked for during donor discussions. Empey (2017) found in her study that the donation webpages of most institutions included an inventory request. Only three of the five institutions, Library A, Museum A and the Gallery mentioned an appraisal or approval process on their donation webpage but provided few details. This finding accords to some extent with Empey (2017) who found that approval process information was available on the majority of webpages in her study. Providing appraisal information is therefore advised for Museum B and Library B.

Only Libraries A and B referred to digital collection donation, B requested no obsolete formats, such as floppy discs, as the Library does not have the technology available to manage these formats. Library A had collection care information available including links to related resources for physical and digital collections. The other institution offering a range of collection care materials, including preservation, is Museum A. Links to such resources would benefit donors of the other institutions who wish to offer their collections.

Policies or statements on privacy and copyright available online for these institutions are less suitable as they are user rather than donor-focused, while transfer of ownership information is only available in the collecting policy. Empey (2017) found that most organisations placed ownership information on the webpage as well as in the policy. This not only increases donor awareness but offers a clearer understanding of the process to help avert future misunderstandings.

### Information useability

While Museum B lacked a specific donation webpage, ones for Libraries A and B, Museum A and the Gallery were easy to use (useability). Based on Walton's (2017) interface criteria and my perceptions the fonts and colours selected made the layouts visually pleasing and easy to read. Navigation around each of the four donation webpages was also straightforward with working links to policy documents. Webpages used plain English, although this vernacular was not reflected in the collecting policies for Library A, Museums A and B and the Gallery which featured more complex language and archival terminology. Library B's parent library policies reflected a simpler language style. The level of complexity and use of archival terminology in policies could be an access barrier, rendering them less user-friendly as Daniels and Yakel (2010) pointed out donors may not be conversant with such language. All institutions commented that understanding among donors was limited regarding donating, "mostly they don't know anything about the process" (Museum B, P8). If donors do use online policies it seems doubtful they grasp their meaning, countering Grgic's (2011) view that making policies available online helps improve donor understanding.

## **8. Conclusion**

The research findings and discussion have answered all the questions posed in this report, resulting in several research implications and recommendations.

### **8.1 Implications**

These findings make an important contribution to the literature by offering rich insights into five institutions' perspectives, processes and practices towards personal donations. They have shown that the institutions have appraisal procedures in place for donations, some more rigorous than others, and that meeting collecting priorities is a vital component of the appraisal process. Moreover, all institutions made policies available on their websites.

Relationships with donors were characterised by collaboration and staff at all the institutions were seen to highly value donors and respect their views. This research will therefore benefit the donors of personal collections by fostering an understanding of what to expect when approaching institutions.

This research will also enable the institutions to judge whether any aspect of their processes, policy and communication should be reviewed in light of the findings to facilitate ease-of-use for potential donors and afford more flexibility. Collections once lost are lost forever, therefore, promoting institutional communication and policy approaches that offer a constructive outcome, resulting in the preservation of cultural heritage and contributing to the collective memory, would be of significant value. Furthermore, it will afford a deeper understanding of the institutional perspective in the donor/archivist relationship and the process of “evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us” (McKemmish, 2011, p.143).

## **8.2 Recommendations**

The research found there are inconsistencies between the donation webpages highlighting some institutions provided access to better information and resources than others. It is recommended that Library B and Museum B create dedicated webpages for in-kind donation information including contact details and direct links to policies and that Museum B places all donation-related policies online to increase transparency.

It is advised that Library B develops its own collecting policy and places it online along with the Library B donation form.

While some information on the appraisal process is available in institutional policies it is recommended that a checklist for donors is provided on donation webpages in plain English. This should include the need for a collection inventory or list, conducting a self-appraisal of documents and alerting donors to possible privacy and third-party issues. Clarity on transfer of ownership should be stipulated as this has proved somewhat problematic. To help alleviate possible donor confusion over archival terminology and address relationship power imbalances, it is advised to simplify policy language and upload a plain English description of the appraisal process on all the donation webpages to increase transparency and donor understanding,

## **8.3 Future research**

Due to time and organisational constraints, it was not possible to conduct meeting observations between staff and donors. This would be useful in the future not only to

confirm or challenge the findings of this research but to provide further insights into the donor/archivist relationship and ways this might be improved.

A further area of research would be to investigate the views and opinions of donors who have offered collections and artifacts to the selected institutions on their experiences of the donation process.

Conducting similar research in other New Zealand locations such as Dunedin or Auckland, or on a national scale, would provide further perspectives and understandings of the donation process from a city, region or national point of view.

Another suggested research avenue would be to examine institutional website use by potential donors, including if it constitutes an important information resource about donation and whether this could be improved to meet donor needs.

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## **Appendix A: Interview questions**

### **Donors and decisions**

1. Can you tell me your name and some information about your role at [name of institution]? (How long have they worked in the role and at the institution).
2. How do you proceed from an initial contact by a donor?
3. Do you actively target particular donors / donations you would like to acquire or let potential donors approach you?  
(Do you visit them to look at their collection and discuss it or do they come into the institution?)
4. Who is authorised to make the decision to accept donations?
5. How do you communicate with donors and potential donors? What mediums do you use? (Twitter, Facebook, phone, f2f, email, texts).
6. Are there any specific processes / procedures in place for Māori or Pacifica donors and donations?

### **Policy and archival principles**

7. Do you have a donation policy and or a collection development policy? How does this fit with your donation process?
8. What factors influence your decision to initially accept or reject a personal collection donation? Do you use an appraisal?
9. Do you have a donation offer or deposit form?
10. Do you have a process if a collection is offered but does not fit with collection development policy?
11. How much do you abide by archival principles when considering a personal collection?  
(Original order, provenance).
12. Do you deaccession donated collections/items? What happens to these?

### **Donor relationships**

13. What do you do to manage donor interactions.
14. Do you have any longer relationships with donors and how are these managed?

### **Potential challenges**

15. What kind of agency do donors have when donating their collection – how to do you balance promoting access to information for researchers and the privacy of individuals and those who are mentioned in the collection.
16. Who has ownership of collection? Is it the archives or the donor?
17. How do you manage the personal information systems of donors with your systems?
18. How do you approach subjects such as privacy? Copyright? Intellectual property?
19. How do you deal with collaborative authorship and intellectual property in the personal collections of academics for example?
20. What are some of the other issues you encounter when interacting with donors?  
(Also, the issues with their (donors) collections if they do not touch on this)
21. How do you mitigate these?

### **Prior knowledge and education**

22. What assumptions do you make about the prior knowledge of donors about the donation processes and policy?
23. Do you offer any archival education for potential donors (or anyone interested) on managing a personal collection?  
(Online, f2f etc)

## Appendix B: Interview coding and themes

Themes	Sub-Themes	Description
<b>Appraisal process and considerations</b>	Use of self-appraisal, inventories, donation forms Decision process – flexibility? Donor referrals to other institutions Reactive and/or passive collecting	Institutional accounts of the appraisal process, including proposals, decision-making procedures, donation forms. Evidence of flexibility and differences between institutions.
<b>Archival principles and process</b>	Collection policy - direction and flexibility Original order, PIM, and original order Provenance	How collecting policy is implemented. If and how original order and provenance are viewed and applied. How PIM is managed by institutions.
<b>Communication channels with donors</b>	Communication tracking systems - internal Methods of communication, including social media	How donor communications are managed internally and how donors communicate with the institutions, including differences.
<b>Donor agency</b>	Donor conditions Use restrictions by donors	How donors placing conditions and restrictions on use are viewed and managed by institutions and whether donors have agency in the relationship.
<b>Challenges</b>	Copyright and complexities Ownership and transfer Privacy Third party in collection, intellectual property	How the institutions deal with the issues presented by copyright within personal collections, privacy, third parties in collections. Ways in which the institutions respond to these challenges.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-Themes</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Institutional assumptions of donors</b>	Prior knowledge of donors regarding donation process Donor education – preservation of physical and digital collections	What institutions assume about donor knowledge for the appraisal process. What institutions presume donor want to know regarding collection care and education.
<b>Donor/ institutional relationships</b>	Discussion of donation process with new donors Serial donors and relationship differences Deaccession – relationship consequences	Different ways of establishing a relationship with donors and long-term relationship development. How deaccession is worked through by institutions and effect on donor relationships.
<b>Future research direction</b>	Balance between donor and researcher interests	How institutions balance access and use with donor conditions and how this works in practice.
<b>Māori donors and donations</b>	Māori donation components as part of a larger collection	How institutions manage Māori donations and donors if there are protocols and if they are donor driven.



**Appendix C: Webpage analysis codeframe**

(First three sections)

Category	Subcategory questions	Coding frequency
<b>Accessibility</b>	Is there a dedicated webpage for donations on the website or is part of the main site?	3: dedicated 2: main site
	How easy is it to find information about making an in-kind donation - # of clicks?	2: 4-5 clicks 3: 0-1 clicks
	Where is the information on donations located?	3: homepage 2: dropdown menu options and links
	How easy is it to find donation information via the search box using the term 'donation'?	2: financial results 2: gift donation results 1: collection policy
	Contact details – are these accessible on the webpage for potential donors?	4: yes 1: no
	Is social media accessible?	4: yes 1: no
<b>Availability/ Suitability</b>	Is information provided about making an in-kind donation?	5: yes
	Are the collection development policies of the institution available online?	5: yes
	Is a standalone donation policy available, or is it contained within the collecting policy (CP), or none?	1: standalone 1: on request 3: within CP

Category	Subcategory questions	Coding frequency
	Are the collecting priorities of the institution provided either on the webpage or in the policy?	5: yes, in CP
	Is a deaccession policy / information available?	1: not applicable 4: yes, in CP
	Is there information available regarding how the donation is to be presented to the institution, if accepted?	5: no
	Is information provided about donating digital collections?	3: no 2: yes
	Is information provided to donors explaining ownership transfer / privacy / IP /copyright?	4: ownership in CP 1: no information
	Are there educational resources on collection care available for potential donors?	2: yes 3: no
<b>Useability</b>	Is the information on the donation webpage visually and navigationally easy to use?	4: yes 1: no webpage
	What type of language is used on the webpage? Is it plain English and/ or archival terminology?	4: plain English 1: no webpage
	What type of language is used in the collection policies? Is it plain English / complex English and/ or archival terminology?	3: use of archival terminology 5: fairly complex English
	Is a screening/ acquisition process mentioned or explained on the webpage and/ or in the policy in a user-friendly way?	5: mentioned, no explanation 1: details in CP

## Appendix D: Information sheet for interview participants



### **“Evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us”: A case study of the policy, processes and responses of selected GLAMR institutions to personal collection donation.**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

You are invited to take part in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Alison Day and I am a Masters student in *Information Studies programme* at Victoria University of Wellington. This research is work towards my final report.

#### **What is the aim of the project?**

This project will explore the processes, views and responses of five (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums and Records) GLAM institutions to potential personal collection donations of significant individuals. Your participation will support this research by offering valuable institutional insights to the donation process and interactions with potential donors. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee ID 29048.

#### **How can you help?**

You have been invited to participate because your role involves dealing with donors and their personal collections. If you agree to take part, I will interview you at your place of work. I will ask you questions about your interactions with donors and how you implement policy. The interview will take around 30 minutes. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later. You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time up to two weeks after this interview. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

### **What will happen to the information you give?**

This research is confidential. This means that the researcher named below will be aware of your identity, but the research data will be combined and your identity will not be revealed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. However, you should be aware that in small projects your identity might be obvious to others in your community and your organisation will be named (if the organisation agrees).

Only my supervisor and myself will read the notes or transcript of the interview. The interview transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

### **What will the project produce?**

The information from my research will be used in my Masters report and academic publications and conferences.

### **If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?**

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview
- withdraw from the study up to two weeks after your interview
- ask any questions about the study at any time
- receive a copy of your interview recording
- receive a copy of your interview transcript
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

### **If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

#### **Student:**

Name: Alison Day

University email address:

[dayalis@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:dayalis@myvuw.ac.nz)

#### **Supervisor:**

Name: Maja Krtalic

Role: Senior Lecturer

School: Information Management

Phone: 04 463 6915

[maja.krtalic@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:maja.krtalic@vuw.ac.nz)

### **Human Ethics Committee information**

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University of Wellington HEC Convenor: Associate Professor Judith Loveridge. Email [hec@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hec@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

## Appendix E: Consent form for interview participants



### **“Evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us”: A case study of the policy, processes and responses of selected GLAMR institutions to personal collection donation.**

#### **CONSENT TO INTERVIEW**

This consent form will be held for five years.

Researcher: Alison Day, *School of Information Management*, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio recorded interview.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from this study at any point up to two weeks after the interview has taken place, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- I understand that the findings may be used for a Masters report and academic publications and/or presented to conferences].
- I understand that the observation notes/recordings will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.

- I understand that organisational consent has been provided and the organisation will be named in any of the reports.
- **Either**, I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research: Yes  No
- **Or**, my name will not be used in reports and utmost care will be taken not to disclose any information that would identify me. However, you should be aware that in small projects your identity might be obvious to others in your community. Yes  No
- I would like a copy of the transcript of my interview: Yes  No
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. Yes  No

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Information sheet for organisations



### **“Evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us”: A case study of the policy, processes and responses of selected GLAM institutions to personal collection donation.**

#### **INFORMATION SHEET FOR ORGANISATIONS**

Thank you for your interest in this project. Please read this information before deciding whether or not your organisation will take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to take part, thank you for considering my request.

#### **Who am I?**

My name is Alison Day and I am a Masters student in Information Studies programme at Victoria University of Wellington. This research is work towards my final report.

#### **What is the aim of the project?**

This project will explore the processes, views and responses of five GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums) institutions to potential personal collection donations of significant individuals. Your organisation’s participation will support this research by offering valuable institutional insights to the donation process and interactions with potential donors and enable institutions to judge whether any aspect of their donation procedures should be reviewed in light of the findings. This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee ID 29048.

#### **How can you help?**

If you agree to take part, I will *interview* your employees. I will ask them questions about donation process and policy and donor interactions. The interviews will take about 30 minutes. Employees will complete the interviews during work time, with your permission. The interviews will take place at your organisation. Each individual participant will be asked to provide consent before their involvement in the research. I will audio record the interview with the permission of the participants and write it up later. The interviews will be confidential, meaning that myself and my supervisor will know who participated, but the identities of the participants will be protected.

If you agree to take part, I will also (if possible) *observe* your employees. I will be observing them only as they conduct a meeting with a potential donor. The observations will occur only if such a donor meeting is arranged at the institution and I would observe the entire meeting. The observations will not have an impact on your employees' work. Each individual participant will be asked to provide consent before their involvement in the research. I will audio record the meeting observation(s) with the permission of the participants and will transcribe it later. The observations will be confidential, meaning that myself and my supervisor will know who participated, but the identities of the participants will be protected.

**What will happen to the information the participants give?**

Participation in this research is confidential. Participants will not be named in the final report but your organisation will be named.

Only my supervisor and I will read the notes or transcript of the interview/ observation. The interview/observation transcripts, summaries and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

**What will the project produce?**

The information from my research will be used in my Masters report and/or academic publications and conferences.

**If you accept this invitation, what are the rights of your organisation?**

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide that your organisation will participate, you have the right to:

- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- withdraw your organisation's participation from the study before the interviews take place, however, individual participants retain the right to decide if their data will be withdrawn
- be able to read a report of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy

**If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?**

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

**Student:**

Name: Alison Day

University email address:

[dayalis@myvuw.ac.nz](mailto:dayalis@myvuw.ac.nz)

**Supervisor:**

Name: Maja Krtalic

Role: Senior Lecturer

School: Information Management

Phone: 04 463 6915

[maja.krtalic@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:maja.krtalic@vuw.ac.nz)



**Human Ethics Committee information**

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Convenor of the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee: Associate Professor Judith Loveridge, email [hec@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:hec@vuw.ac.nz) or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

## Appendix G: Consent form for organisations



### **“Evidence of me” becoming “evidence of us”: A case study of the policy, processes and responses of selected GLAM institutions to personal collection donation.**

#### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE (ORGANISATION)**

This consent form will be held for five years.

Researcher: Alison Day, *School of Information Management*, Victoria University of Wellington.

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree that my organisation will take part.

I understand that:

- I may withdraw this organisation from this study at any point before the first interview/observation takes place and the information provided by members of the organisation will be returned to them/or destroyed.
- Any information the participants provide will be included in a final report but the transcripts/observation notes/recordings will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor.
- The identities of the participants will remain confidential to the researcher(s).
- I understand that the results will be used for a Masters report and academic publications and/or presented to conferences.

I consent to information or opinions which are given by the participants being attributed to the organisation in any reports on this research and have the authority to agree to this on behalf of the organisation. Yes  No

- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. Yes  No

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

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