

Aboriginal Heritage Unit Workshop 2003: Evaluation Report

Two studies were undertaken by AMARC as part of the Aboriginal Heritage Unit (AHU) annual community workshop held in September 2003. The first sought feedback about the *Indigenous Australians* exhibition to feed into future exhibition development. The second was an analysis of the concept of e-learning and potential use of the Internet by community groups. This latter study was undertaken in conjunction with a University of Sydney Museums Studies student placement.

Executive Summary

1. *Indigenous Australians* Exhibition

Generally participants felt that the exhibition was comprehensive and a good tool for education. It was identified that the following need to be emphasised/further developed in the exhibition:

- Language as the most important issue to cover
- Ownership, especially issues related to intellectual property and copyright, Native Title and land ownership
- Community issues including family, kinship and identity

Specific feedback looked at aspects of comfort and design; content; interpretation and overall messages, and is detailed in Section 1.2 of this report. The top aspects of the exhibition were:

- Talking heads and videos
- Cave and rock theme throughout
- Being able to see whole object
- Seeing peoples' faces adds emotion and identity to the exhibition
- Freedom Bus
- Church – what it represents, role of missionaries both positive and negative
- Computer interactives
- Photos and paintings
- Maze
- Personal stories
- Gaol cell (if photographs were added)
- Turnover of displays – like photo exhibit

The least liked aspects were:

- Comfort - distance from objects; too much space; lighting; directional signage
- Content - church too big; religious overload; too many objects
- Interpretation – bus; paintings; inclusion of non-Indigenous implements

2. Internet/websites and e-learning

There was generally low awareness and use of the Internet among workshop participants. However, most participants appreciated the opportunity to try out the Internet in a supportive and informal environment.

Generally people liked websites that:

- are attractive and easy to navigate

- have text large enough to read comfortably
- contain documents that are easy to download and print
 - pdf files that are not too large
- are clearly laid out
- contain comprehensive FAQs that are easy to scroll through
- had plenty of photographs of people – positive images
- use colours that represent Australia and Indigenous people
- clear and easy to use search function

They disliked websites where:

- the typeface of text was too small
- downloading was too complex and slow
- layout was dull and boring
- there was no ‘Australian’ flavour
- instructions on how to search was not clear

3. Recommendations

- A. E-learning as a way for communities to access AHU/Museum services is not recommended at this time, however this should be re-visited in two years time given advances in technology and increasing access by communities.
- B. Establish a Keeping Place website that acts as a portal to direct users to other online resources, with downloadable information sheets (see suggested structure at Attachment 1).
- C. Evaluate the Keeping Place website each year/workshop to look at:
 - a. likes, dislikes
 - b. suggestions of new pages, information sheets and web links/resources.
- D. Allocate time at future workshops for Internet access/training that is set-up for groups of two-three people to use together.
- E. Evaluate the *Keeping Culture* CDROM at the next community workshop (with the CD and feedback forms sent to participants prior) if still required.

Part 1. Indigenous Australians Exhibition Review

A review was undertaken of the *Indigenous Australians* exhibition as a starting point for planned updates over the next few years and to provide participants with an insight into exhibition development. In order to do this, an initial discussion was held with the group to outline what aspects of Indigenous culture they felt was essential for the Museum to be covering in an exhibition. After this the group visited the exhibition and gave feedback via a form (see Attachment 2) followed by a facilitated discussion covering: content; interpretation; comfort and design and overall messages. In addition to this they were asked to list the top five aspects of the exhibition and the top five that needed to change.

1.1 Issues Pre-visit

Participants raised several issues that they thought were important for the exhibition under the headings of language, ownership and community. As a starting point all felt that the exhibition needs to show respect for sites and people.

Language is a key issue to cover as it is a means of keeping the culture alive. The relationship of language as underpinning the people, their diversity and rich culture needs to be highlighted. There was a strong belief that it is critical to show how important language is, as well as how there were, and are, a vast array of languages. It is important to emphasise that the loss of language diversity reflects the loss of Aboriginal culture and identity. Different traditions in managing language, including teaching and research, particularly of local language, could be looked at. Questions such as should language only be taught by traditional people and who should be taught (including pre-school children, for example) could also be addressed. Issues surrounding meaning were also considered important. It was felt that a national institution such as the Australian Museum should look at both the national and international meaning of words and how to portray the intended meaning. For example, the word *Koori* can be interpreted in a number of ways, and as some may find it offensive, the intended meaning should be made clear. This is not only the case with language, but also sacred objects, rites and ceremonies.

Ownership as a concept was considered important. Issues related to intellectual property and copyright need to be addressed, including how Indigenous 'politics' works through using intellectual property as an example. The conflict between Western ideas and concepts of 'traditional ownership' and Aboriginal understandings should also be explored. Native Title needs to be covered to include land ownership, history, context, and how it affects and influences contemporary and past Aboriginal culture.

Issues to do with **community** were raised including family relationships and genealogy, kinship and extended family. Incorporated in this topic is identity. It was felt that identity is a major issue for Aboriginal communities (for example in La Perouse/Armidale). It was stated that even children within Aboriginal communities don't understand or know who's who in their own community. Kinship systems clearly showed and protected blood lines but due to loss of identity and culture confusion now exists. The Australian Museum could have a role in developing personal identity through exhibiting/providing access to family histories, photographs and objects.

1.2 Issues Post-visit

Participants were given time to look through the exhibition in detail (some had already done this) and were given a feedback form to complete (see Attachment 2) which formed the basis for later discussion. Written comments on the forms were also analysed.

1.2.1 Comfort and Design

Negative aspects/suggestions:

- Way of getting around became unclear towards the end of the exhibition
- 'Talking heads' (oral history videos) became hard to hear when the exhibition had a number of people moving around
- Labels on the glass cases were too small, hard to read and easy to miss
- Plinths were a bit hard to see/read and get close to
- Lighting in places caused glare, reflected and made things hard to read, hindering instead of helping
- Not enough time to read everything - dot points could be a more effective way of communicating the message
- Do the artefacts that are showcased together, such as baskets, shields etc, need to be segregated? Artefacts and objects from the same region could be showcased together instead of grouping all shields together, for example

Positive aspects:

- Changing content such as the photo section (current temporary exhibition) seen as a positive thing

1.2.2 Content

Most felt that the content is broad enough, however, there was an overall consensus that there should be a greater representation of different mobs and diversity within Aboriginal culture, such as languages. Also defining areas, such as spirituality, need to be clearer so the message is made stronger and understandable. Other suggestions/comments were:

- More needed on past history, such as poisoned waterholes, dog tags, genocide and Aboriginal resistance
- A time line could be included covering events such as the vote, recognition of Aboriginal peoples, referendum of 1967 and a progression of history, for example, fighting against the whites for freedom/rights and recognition and fighting alongside them in wars, role in military
- Fewer issues needed but with a greater impact
- Not enough representation of youth. It was felt that this would be a way of getting young people involved with the Museum/exhibition
- There is a need for further acknowledgment of Aboriginal heroes such as a 'Hall of Fame' concept, need to represent past and present achievers and pioneers of Aboriginal rights. The 'Hall of Fame' could be continually updated, and represent heroes from all areas
- More information surrounding missions, such as what they were like, what housing and everyday living was like shown through photos, archival material and accounts, both positive and negative aspects need to be included
- Not enough about the Stolen Generations – this issue needs to be explored further and impact made stronger

- Include the concept that all Aboriginal peoples were affected by the taking away of Mother Earth
- Further explain issues such as housing, looking at traditional and contemporary housing and why it was destroyed
- More about language - use, loss and change, as well as contemporary Aboriginal life and revival of culture

1.2.3 Interpretation

- Like the idea of a turnover of displays
- Need to display a greater variety of mobs in Cultural Heritage section to give a greater sense of the diverse nature of Aboriginal culture
- More maps to show where artefacts came from – suggest that a map of Australia with corresponding numbers of artefacts identifying their location and region of origin be used
- Some objects are together that shouldn't be, such as in the shield case where shields of different tribes are all together - perhaps a regrouping could be looked at?
- The descriptions of some objects were lacking, such as the basketry and stone artefacts
- Maze was a positive inclusion as there is *"Nowhere else to go, it makes you look and you are confronted by the real issues."*
- The videos of people/talking heads are good:
 - *"One of our people talking to us."*
 - they *"Grab you and make issues real."*
- Bus, goal cell and church give a sense of involvement, found these very good and easy for the general public to access and understand
- The word 'Indigenous' refers to the first peoples and encompasses all groups around the world - is there another name that could better suit and represent the community?
- The photographs used were too contemporary - need more original photos to show history that we can't see today instead of things we can see for ourselves. Additionally, art/paintings can be bought throughout Australia, why not show something that isn't readily available?
- Some language groups are not allowed to look at certain poles and language sticks so sensitivity is needed in some of the signage

1.2.4 Overall Message

Overall the exhibition was positive, comprehensive and very good. However, it was felt that there was an overall feeling of sadness prevailing. It was the group's view that visitors needed to feel happy about being able to see the display and portraying more positive messages would help, as well as a mix of contemporary and traditional life. Some also felt that the exhibition was too broad, and that a concentration on fewer issues would make a stronger impact. More confrontational content was desired, such as black/white conflicts and wars.

1.2.5 Top and Bottom Aspects of Exhibition

Top	Bottom
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Talking heads and videos✓ Cave and rock theme throughout✓ Being able to see whole object✓ Seeing peoples' faces adds emotion and identity to the exhibition✓ Freedom Bus✓ Church – what it represents, role of missionaries both positive and negative✓ Computer interactives✓ Photos and paintings✓ Maze✓ Personal stories✓ Gaol cell (if photos were added)✓ Turnover of displays – like photo exhibit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Distance from objects▪ Too much space▪ Church – takes up too much space and too much, does it have to be a physical building?▪ How many objects are needed to show and illustrate something?▪ Religious overload – things weren't clearly defined▪ Bus▪ Paintings▪ Non-Indigenous implements▪ Personal photos▪ Lighting▪ Direction

Part 2. Internet/websites and e-learning

The second part of AMARC's involvement in the workshop looked at e-learning issues and the use of the Internet. To prepare for this a parallel project was undertaken by Alison Grant, a University of Sydney Museum Studies intern. As the AHU is seeking to upgrade their online and physical services, the aim of this was to examine some of the models of online educational services provided by a range of organisations in order to make recommendations about how the AHU could best maximise their service provision using web technologies.

This project was undertaken in three stages. The first was an examination of numerous websites looking at the services they provided with a selection of several that were considered best practice for further study and critique. Also, definitions and issues surrounding the provision of e-learning were researched. The second stage was the workshop with community representatives to identify needs and critique websites. The third involved writing up case studies of some of the websites that provided the best online services. A listing of organisations and websites for inclusion in a database was also prepared¹.

It was also anticipated that the *Keeping Culture* CDROM be evaluated by the group, however this was not undertaken due to time constraints and, therefore, should be followed up at a later workshop if still required.

2.1 Definition of Terms

As there are many definitions of e-learning it was critical to identify one that would be commonly used and understood. For purposes of this project **e-learning** (also known as **online learning** or **web-based learning**) means *the process through which learning or education is conducted using a computer network, such as the Internet*. A number of advantages to e-learning were identified as:

- users being able to directly access a large range of international resources on a variety of topics
- access to learning not being limited to scheduled classroom times
- enabling facilitation of group discussion and collaborative projects
- allowing a forum for expression and discussion of different belief and attitudes
- higher levels of access
- a greater amount of content, which can be relevant to more people
- a faster distribution and rapid product innovation
- more efficient, convenient and empowering by putting people in charge of their own education and learning

In contrast to this **online courses** are defined as educational courses put on the Internet for the purpose of educating a wider range of people who may not have access to traditional educational programs. People are able to learn what and when it suits them. To be effective, online courses must be accessible and flexible, with the ability to appeal and cater to a wide variety of individuals.

¹ This report outlines results from the workshop and makes recommendations based on these, as well as information sourced by Alison Grant (Museum Studies intern). Alison prepared a separate report as well as two A4 Resource folders that contain further information about specific websites. These have been given to the Aboriginal Heritage Unit with this workshop report.

Other terms defined include **flexible learning**, which gives individuals the choice of what, when, where and how they learn, with e-learning an important component. **Distance learning/education** is when the education provider is someone at a different location to the student. **Blended learning** is a method of education which combines online and face-to-face education, or, as is more common now, it involves a combination of distribution of educational programs. For example, a blended learning program could involve an educational CDROM, online learning and face-to-face education. There are many advantages to this type of learning, due to its flexibility and ability to cater for a range of learning styles and levels. **Distributed learning** is a learner-centred approach to education, integrating a number of technologies, blending elements of open learning and distance education.

2.2 Needs Analysis

Prior to evaluating websites participants were asked about the main information needs for their Keeping Places as follows.

- Management:
 - accessing CDEP and other programs according to different community needs
 - training staff for further employment
 - training in tourism, computer and Internet use
- Collection management:
 - general curation and care of artefacts
 - showcases, drawers, other storage issues
 - security
 - lighting
 - cataloguing using Access software
 - object loans
 - preparing databases to include information on areas and objects
 - accessing and assessing information and images
- Conservation
 - different ways of looking after materials
 - object handling
 - humidity
 - insect and pest control
- Resources:
 - accessing information
 - accessing material from a range of museums
 - finding out about holdings in other institutions in Australia and overseas, as well as private collections
- Exhibitions/display:
 - understanding how to use sound
 - use 'electronic eye'/beams
 - using audio-visual
 - making decisions about what to display
 - keeping visitors interested
- Tourism:
 - advertising and promotion
 - exhibitions targeted for tourists' interests

- Consultation:
 - understanding about what training is already available
 - face-to-face meetings and discussions

2.3 Website Feedback

An enormous variety of websites were found that dealt with issues identified by communities. Eight websites, selected after discussion with AHU staff, covered collection management; conservation; museums and online forums were analysed by workshop participants. Feedback was sought about usability, accessibility and interest. The sites were:

- Online collections database (Imperial War Museum, UK)
- 3D animation/manipulation of objects (Canadian Museum of Nature)
- Photo archives (Powerhouse Museum Tyrrell Photographic Collection)
- Conservation manuals (reCollections, Conserve-o-gram, US National Parks Service)
- Conservation FAQs (Australian Museum Conservation Branch)
- Community Museum (Alutitq Museum and Archaeological Repository, Alaska, US)
- Online forums (ABC Online, Australia)

Generally people liked websites that:

- are attractive and easy to navigate
- have text large enough to read comfortably
- contain documents that are easy to download and print
 - pdf files that are not too large
- are clearly laid out
- contain comprehensive FAQs that are easy to scroll through
- had plenty of photographs of people and places – positive images
- use colours that represent Australia and Indigenous people
- clear and easy to use search function

They disliked websites where:

- the typeface of text was too small
- downloading was too complex and slow
- layout was dull and boring
- there was no ‘Australian’ flavour
- instructions on how to search was not clear

Overall, participants liked the Alutitq Museum and Archaeological Repository website (<http://www.alutitqmuseum.com/>) the best for the following reasons:

- content highly relevant to them
- comprehensive and interesting content
- interesting layout and design
- personalised with photos of people and places
- design has an ‘Indigenous’ feel
- easy to navigate and access information
- interesting programs (especially the ‘word of the week’)

It was felt that this was a good model for a community museum website.

Other websites that were highly praised were *reCollections*, and AMOL generally (<http://amol.org.au/recollections/>), and the Australian Museum Materials Conservation website (http://www.amonline.net.au/materials_conservation/) as the content was relevant, easy to access and read.

Specific feedback about each website is contained in the following table.

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Collection Management Online Collection: Imperial War Museum Website (UK) http://www.iwm.org.uk/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear menu • clear tabs, but too small • able to download images • attractive • user-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very small type • info too detailed • couldn't listen to sound • can you view images? • could have a section about images • no Aboriginal information • slow • can't search easily • not enough information
Collection Management Object Viewer: 3D Dino – Canadian Museum of Nature http://www.nature.ca/nature_e.cfm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • able to download images of different sizes • good pictures and information which come up quickly • lots of images and good text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes too long • downloading software difficult • small print • doesn't have information of interest • hard to work out where you are and what you are viewing • not enough information
Collection Management Photo Archive: Powerhouse Museum http://www.phm.gov.au/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • photos load well • great images all the way • easy, not too much wording • interesting to see glass negatives • were able to locate photos of sacred tree with a clear picture of site, but not enough info on where it was found 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small writing • dull site, boring layout • dull photo contrast • not clear how to access info • couldn't do search on Ingenious people and does not recognise 'Aboriginal' in search • La Perouse collection already known • not child-orientated and is uninviting/unappealing • looks non-Aussie
Conservation Online Manual: re-Collections http://amol.org/recollections/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very detailed – had all info needed • good headings • straight forward • good simple instructions on care of collections and how to handle objects • easy to access and print • very informative & user friendly • plenty of useful info 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perhaps too detailed? • too much info per page • info needs to be more accessible to different communities and use less technical language • could have images of good/bad conditions • doesn't recognise some Aboriginal words for things
Conservation FAQs: Materials Conservation Australian Museum (FAQs) http://www.amonline.net	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well received • clearly laid out • lots of useful and good info • user friendly • lots of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language could be simplified • slow download • small writing • could re-do front page and have more images

.au/materials_conservation/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good idea for FAQ • links to other sites work well 	
Conservation Online Manual: Conserve-O- Gram (Publications) http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/index.htm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and helpful info 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generally this site was a headache • software difficult to use • not able to easily open pdf files • doesn't show people how to get to the next page • images and text too small • Americanised
Online Forums: ABC Online http://www2b.abc.net.au/communities/forums_subject.shtm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • question/answer format • happy to ask questions • simple menu • interesting ways of generating info • useful ways to share views and comments on a more regular basis • message stick and recipes were good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a lot of forums were closed • small writing • not enough images
Community Museums: Alutitq Museum, Alaska http://www.alutitqmuseum.com/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language aspect great • word of the week is a great idea • colourful and looks good • photos of people made it personalised, a face to communicate with • calendar and events • impressed with layout and straight forward content of the shop section • clear and visual • contemporary art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • couldn't hear sound • downloading issues, some areas slow and difficult • difficulty in enlarging some images

Following from this workshop it is recommended that the AHU develop a website/portal that directs communities and individuals to currently available online information sources as an efficient use of current resources rather than focussing on e-learning at this point. It was also found that there was generally a low awareness of and use of the Internet among participants, however, most appreciated the opportunity to try out the Internet in a supportive and informal environment, especially those with limited experience.

It was also found that sites requiring use of video or multimedia were often frustrating, difficult and slow to use. It was suggested that topics, such as caring for objects, should use 2D images to accompany a step-by-step text explanations. It should be recognised, however, that this will change over time as better technology becomes more widely available, cost-effective and user-friendly.

Part 3. *Recommendations*

Five recommendations have emerged from these studies dealing with the e-learning/online aspect of this report:

- A. E-learning as a way for communities to access AHU/Museum services is not recommended at this time, however this should be re-visited in two years given advances in technology and increasing access by communities.
- B. Establish a Keeping Place website that acts as a portal to direct users to other online resources, with downloadable information sheets (see suggested structure at Attachment 1).
- C. Evaluate the Keeping Place website each year/workshop to look at:
 - a. likes, dislikes
 - b. suggestions of new pages, information sheets and web links/resources.
- D. At future workshops allocate time for Internet access/training that is set-up for access by small groups of two-three people to use together.
- E. Evaluate the *Keeping Culture* CDROM at the next community workshop (with the CD and feedback forms sent to participants prior) if still required.

The exhibition feedback section of this report should be dealt with separately when the Museum reviews all exhibition spaces sometime in the next two years.

**Report prepared by Lynda Kelly, Head, AMARC, with input by Alison Grant,
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15 December 2003**

Attachment 1: Suggested website structure

The following figures outline a suggested structure for a Keeping Place 'portal' website based on feedback and discussions from the AHU community workshop. Most of the website links suggested have been sourced by Alison Grant and more information is contained in the Resource folders and database. Other sites, such as tourism, can be supplied by AMARC if required.

It is also suggested that a set of downloadable information sheets be developed for topics that don't have online resources. The Needs Analysis (Section 2.2 of this report) is a good place to start to gain an idea of topics/areas to cover, as is the listing of sheets contained in *Museum Methods*, published by Museums Australia Inc (see http://sector.amol.org.au/publications_archive/museum_management/museum_methods). Each sheet should be no longer than two pages and contain references to other resources (for an example see the AMARC website http://www.amonline.net.au/amarc/resources/info_sheets.htm, or the Find a Fish section of the AM Fish site <http://www.amonline.net.au/fishes/fishfacts/index.htm>). These could include topics specifically related to Keeping Places, such as tourism; advertising and promotion; developing exhibitions; developing education programs. Note, however, that further searches may uncover websites containing this information.

Figure 1. NSW Keeping Place Portal: suggested structure

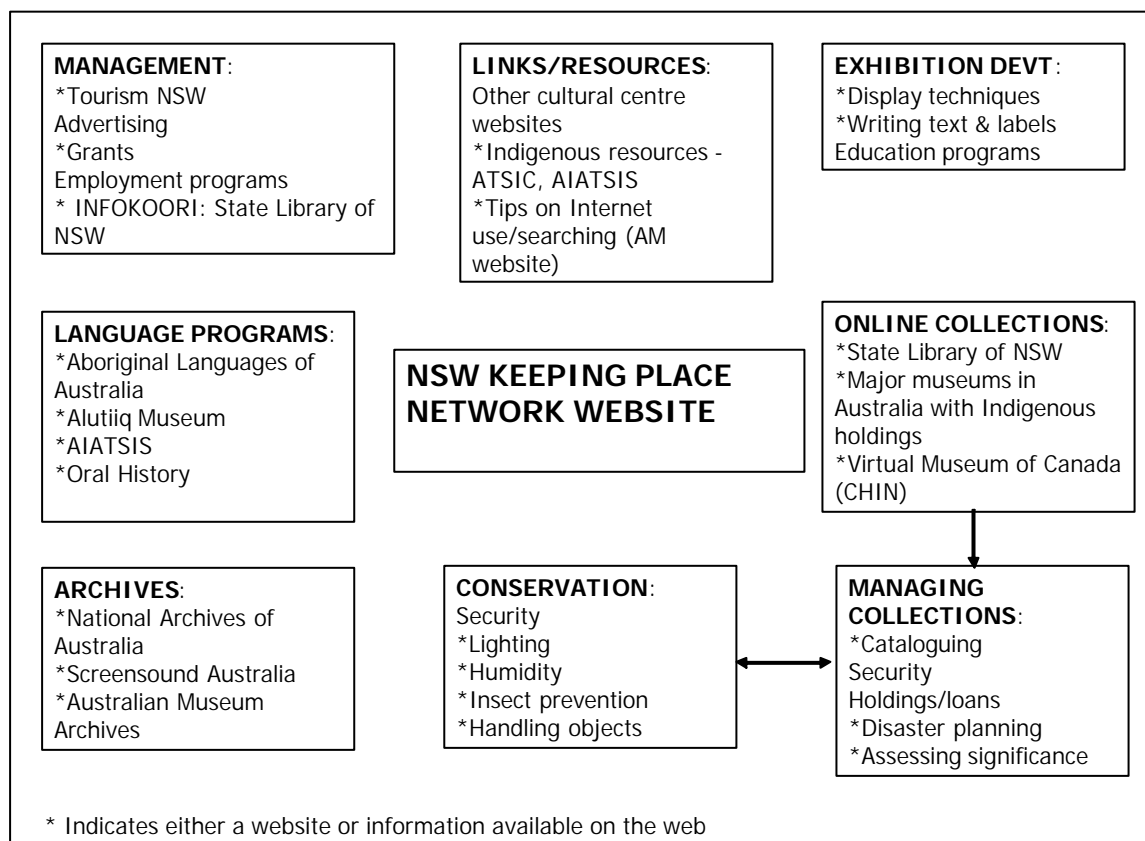
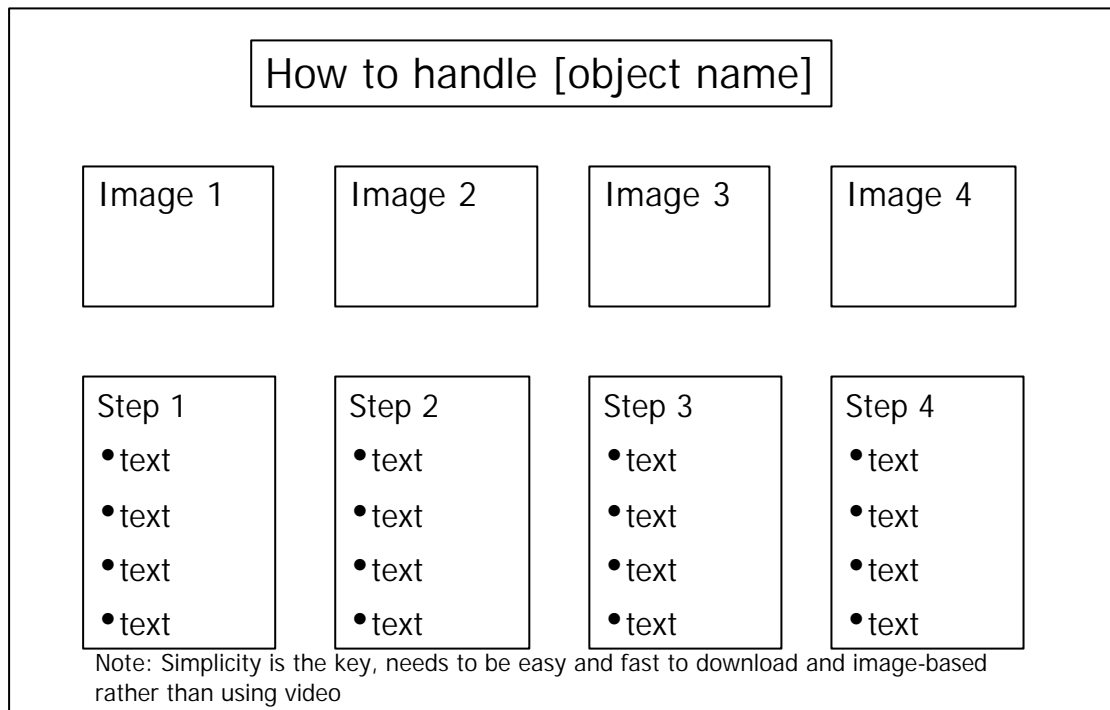


Figure 2. 'How to' guides: suggested format



Attachment 2: Indigenous Australians Exhibition Feedback form

**Australian Museum Aboriginal Heritage Unit Outreach Program
2003 Workshop for Cultural Centres and Keeping Places**

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS EXHIBITION FEEDBACK FORM

The Museum will be undertaking work on all exhibitions over the next five years. In order to assist with planned changes to the Indigenous Australians Exhibition we are seeking your input and feedback in the following areas.

1. Content: is it broad enough? Are there issues/themes/content areas that are missing? New issues that need to be addressed?

2. Interpretation: feedback about text; objects; computer interactives; videos; experiences (Mission, Church, caves, Freedom Bus, Dock, Gaol cell)

3. Comfort and design: can you read/see everything? Amount of information? Use of colour? Navigation?

4. Overall messages: What are they? What should they be?

5. Changes/updates

THINGS TO KEEP

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

THINGS TO CHANGE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____