CAARA Policy 21

Guideline for CAARA Institutions on Online Media Participation

Status: Current

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1 Preamble

Advances in Internet based technologies are providing new ways of capturing, presenting, and communicating information in an online environment. This opens new opportunities for archives to engage with their audiences online and to enhance access to their collections in ways that were unimaginable a decade ago. New web based tools are constantly being developed with greater power and flexibility. Using these tools, archives can present existing online content in new ways that add meaning for users; they can make their collections increasingly accessible through their own and others' websites, through collaborative online portals and web browsers; they can communicate with thousands of users instantly and almost as directly as a face to face conversation with a researcher in the public reading room. Archives can act as communication hubs that allow users with common interests to talk to each other. Users of archives can become maintainers of archives by directly contributing their own knowledge of collection items and their context.

These new capabilities are often referred to under the general term of Web 2.0 which refers to a shift from presenting static text on the web to an interactive environment in which users themselves can create content.

The web tools and their possible applications to archives are ever expanding and it would be impossible to provide a prescriptive guideline on what tools archives should use and how they should use them. Each institution needs to make these decisions based on its own priorities, resources and audience. This guide contains some general guiding principles for the use of web based tools; suggests the ways archives might apply these; and discusses the issues archives need to consider in the management of these applications.

2 Statement of principles

The CAARA institutions:

1. Will make use of web based tools to enhance access to, and understanding and awareness of our collections and services.

2. Will make use of web based tools to facilitate engagement, communication and exchange of information with and between our users.

3. Recognise that our users are able to and wish to contribute in a meaningful way to our institutions and will use web based tools to enable users to contribute to the archives in ways which benefit them and the archives.

3 The application of web based tools in archives

3.1 To enhance access to and understanding and awareness of our collections and services

It is no longer sufficient for archives to present information about their collections and services through their own websites. Archives should aim to create a web presence that reaches beyond their own website. Archives need to develop active strategies that encompass strategic placement of information and links to their site on other sites that are likely to be visited by current or potential audiences. In this way archives will reach new audiences that might have an interest in the collection but not be aware of the existence of archives as institutions.

There are several ways in which an archive can project a presence beyond its own website as part of a strategy of online media participation. It may use existing communication platforms such as social networking sites to convey information or establish its own discussion forum or other online communication platform. The archives might:

- Provide information about its collection, services or events through social networking sites such as Facebook; staff members can disseminate information using twitter or blogs.

- Provide extended access directly to collection material by making collection material available in digital form through social networking sites which present material by format or topic e.g. photographs on Flickr.

- Use web based tools to present collection material and descriptive information existing in digital form in new ways e.g. using Google Maps to allow users to access digitised collection material by its association with particular locations.

- Contribute collection material or descriptive information to portals which aggregate information from numerous cultural institutions.

- Provide up to date information about events, opening hours or new accessions by using a wiki, blog, discussion board or pin board.

- Establish a blog through which an archivist working to preserve or arrange and describe a particular collection might post regular blogs describing for the public the progress of the project and highlighting aspects of special interest.

3.2 To facilitate engagement, communication and exchange of information with and between our users.

An archive can engage in online media participation by providing information or links in a static form on other sites, or it can engage in interactive online media participation. This might consist of real time interaction between archivists and users or between users.

The archives might use:

- Blogs and discussion forums that post information on various issues that are open to comment to promote active online engagement between archives staff and users on matters relating to the collection: these may discuss conservation or records management issues: this differs from email exchanges in that the online exchange can be viewed by all other users so that the audience can follow an online discussion between archivists and users or between archivists.

- A real time inquiry service along the lines of "ask an archivist" that allows real time online questions and answers between the public and a member of the archives.

- Online consultation with the community about the development of policies and programmes in the archives: for example the archives could create a consultation blog where it posts new proposals to improve public access to the collection in order to gain feedback and suggestions from users.

- Provide a platform hosting a discussion forum between users with interest in a common topic: the archives might provide a space for researchers interested in particular records (land registers, military service files, convict registers) to discuss their research and the records,

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or for people engaged in records conservation to discuss particular problems or new techniques.

This sort of engagement is potentially the most resource intensive and requires commitment from the archives. The archives cannot provide an "ask an archivist" service only intermittently as resources are available or shut down an existing service because a staff member is on leave. If the archives builds an expectation of an instant conversation with an archivist it needs to follow through consistently and so instigating such an activity requires careful consideration of expected benefits and resources that can be committed. Moderating the exchanges between users or between users and archivists can be resource intensive. Methods of moderation are discussed later in this guide.

3.3 To enable users to contribute to the archives in ways which benefit them and the archives

Archives recognise that their audiences wish to contribute to the archives and should use web based tools to enable user generated content (UGC).

UGC can be defined as content in the form of tags, text, video, images, or audio which:

- is submitted by the public for publication by the archives online.

- involves creation of content or adaptation of existing material by the submitter.

- is submitted without expectation of payment.

Over the coming years the archives might consider facilitating the following sorts of UGC:

- comments on exhibitions or individual records that reflect a personal reaction, reflection or anecdote or reminiscence if the person has some personal connection to the item or exhibition.

- information about an item: a person may contribute information about a record or image that assists understanding by others e.g. identifying an event, location or person in a photograph; historical information about the production or content of specific documents or a series of documents.

- invite the public to apply their own tags to photographs or other collection items described online: users can add tags (free text or selected from a thesaurus of terms) to photographs, or archival items with descriptive terms that reflect some feature of the item not apparent from its title.

- a brief article describing a group of records, their content, structure, provenance.

- a finding aid relating to a particular topic or an index of a group of records.

- a personal contribution combining user contributed images and text that brings together items of personal significance for the person related to items in the collection e.g. users may construct their own tribute page to a relative about whom records are available in the archives website.

The range of such contributions is very broad. Information obtained in this way may be suitable to be incorporated into the archives formal descriptive system, or the information, comments etc may be left outside the system but still available to assist all other users.

User generated content raises management issues around moderation, use, and preservation of the information provided and these are discussed later in this guide.

4   Issues and recommendations in implementing and managing online media participation

Having discussed the range of online media participation activities an archives might undertake, this section discusses the issues that need to be taken into consideration when undertaking online media participation. The aim is not to provide prescriptive solutions but to describe the issues and suggest possible management strategies.

4.1 Aims and benefits of online media participation

Archives should develop a clear overall strategy, together with statements of aims and expected benefits for online media participation to guide strategic placement of information about the collection or digitised collection material on different sites and the undertaking of various outreach activities. These should include:

- **Strategic approach to using emerging technologies**: in the environment of an ever expanding array of social media applications of greater power and sophistication, an archive needs an overall strategic framework within which to evaluate emerging technologies and their fit with the objectives and mandate of the archives. Archives should not adopt new technologies solely because they are the latest or because other institutions are using them. An overall strategy should set out what kinds of online applications with what features the archives will most seek to use in furtherance of its objectives. Within this framework new technologies can be evaluated on the basis of their ability to support priority objectives and not just how new or powerful they are.

- **The aims and expected benefits of online media participation**: the archives needs to be clear about its aims in using web based tools i.e. does it aim to raise its profile and public awareness or to target a specific new audience or to provide more information to an existing audience or facilitate greater access to the collection. The policy should inform decisions about the activities to be undertaken and resources to be allocated to these activities, taking into consideration the resources needed in creating, maintaining, and updating material on a number of different sites, or maintaining twitter or blog information, sustaining real time communications with users and moderating user generated content.

- **Measurable benchmarks and indicators of success for monitoring of new and ongoing online activities**: new social media applications may be trialled as pilot projects. Established benchmarks and indicators can be used to decide whether to end the pilot or incorporate the application into the core services and communication channels of the organisation. Likewise ongoing online media engagement should also be monitored to evaluate its continuing relevance and effectiveness.

4.2 Guidelines for staff engaging in outreach activities

The archive needs to develop guidelines to guide staff undertaking online media participation activities both in day-to-day activities and handling difficult situations. These should include:

- All online communication should be authorised: this does not mean every blog posting needs to be cleared by management but may involve certain

staff being authorised to represent the archives' views and policies in online dialogue with members of the public

- Staff participating in online media should make clear their position and status within the archives

- Staff must comply with relevant policies applying to the archives or the jurisdiction e.g. a public service code of conduct, policies about release of official information and use of government resources

- Communication should be accurate and clear, professional and courteous: communication in social media tends to be informal but staff need to remember that they are representing a government organisation and should be careful to express themselves clearly so that they do not unintentionally misrepresent the views or policies of the archives

- Guidelines on what the institution considers appropriate/inappropriate comment by staff e.g. the limits of "personal comment" for staff who are sending out messages on twitter or blogging on behalf of the organisation. Such guidelines are to protect staff and the organisation from the consequences of making inappropriate comments, for example comments that might be seen as critical of government policy

- Protocols where comments from users are deemed inappropriate or offensive or threatening: when an interaction with a user should be terminated by the staff member and how to do this; procedures in circumstances where comments from users implicitly or explicitly contain threats to the staff member or other users or constitute harassment

- Protocols for staff in giving out detailed personal information about themselves that might pose a risk

4.3 Management of user generated content

Engaging directly with the public online, providing platforms for users to engage with each other for the public to provide UGC raises a number of issues relating to the management and use of UGC. The archives should develop and formalise its policies and procedures on these issues before it invites the public to contribute online.

4.3.1 Moderation of user generated content

The archive needs to decide how and to what extent it will moderate UGC and to set up structures, responsibilities and resources to achieve this. Some of the issues to be considered are:

- Whether to implement a system of user authentication so that users who wish to contribute content must identify themselves and register as a condition of contributing: user authentication will act to discourage those whose only intention is to make malicious postings or vandalise the website.

- Whether UGC is to be published immediately live on the archives website as soon as it is submitted or only published after review by staff of the archives.

- If UGC undergoes prepublication review, whether all UGC will reviewed before publication or whether the archives will review only selected material relying on alerts from users about inappropriate content or relying on a content scanning system that provides warnings when certain terms are discovered.

- The section or manager to be responsible for reviewing UGC

- The person who makes the final decision to authorises active intervention to remove or reject material.

- The circumstances in which the archives will edit, remove or clarify UGC.

- The resources to be made available for review and monitoring UGC

- Assessment of the risk if inappropriate material is published live. This should be assessed in the context of the how the UGC is generated eg the risk is greater in hosting a live online forum which may raise contentious topics that result in offensive or inappropriate postings, than UGC which undergoes a prepublication review process.

4.3.2 Editorial policy on content

The archive needs to formulate a clear editorial policy on what will not be allowed in UGC. The policy should be made available to researchers to discourage the contribution of inappropriate material and to warn them that such

material will be edited out or taken off line by the archives. The policy should cover issues such as the archives policy in regard to:

- Terms and conditions of participation that include acceptable use policies and prohibiting the posting of offensive material with some indications of types of material prohibited

- Material which contains advertising or promotional material for commercial products or services or links to such material;

- Messages soliciting donations or promoting fund raising or charities

- Material which has evidently been contributed by children without. knowledge or consent of parents and contains inappropriate material or personal information.

- Links to other sites contained in UGC: the archives will need to review the relevance and appropriateness of the linked site and the legal implications for the archives in hosting the link on its site.

- Material in which copyright is not owned by the contributor.

- How the archives intends to use UGC for example for promotion, in print publications, on other websites.

- Long term disposal and retention policy and management of UGC: this should specify how long UGC should remain on line; how to assess the value of the UGC for long term retention by the archives and consequently what portion of UGC should be retained by the archives and how it should be preserved, managed and accessed in the long term.

- What sort of demarcation will be made on the archives' website between UGC and material produced by the archives: it's is very important that a clear distinction is made on the website between material produced and endorsed by the archives and material contributed by users which may contain inaccuracies and views not endorsed by the archives; web pages containing UGC should not resemble in colour, design etc pages produced by the archives. The archives must be able to continue to provide authoritative archival descriptions along with, but clearly distinguishable from, information provided by the public.

4.3.3 Copyright in UGC

There are a number of issues around copyright in UGC. It is important to formulate policies on these right from the start especially if the archives intends to republish any UGC in the future.

- **Material authored by the contributor**: the archives should consider possible future uses of UGC and how it might facilitate future use by for example making the grant of a royalty free licence to the archives by all contributors for material they have authored a condition of posting to the site. In this way the archives can use the material for promotional or any other purposes without having to seek permission. The archives may intend to incorporate some UGC in its organisational descriptive system and may need copyright permission to do so. If assigning a licence to the archives might inhibit contributions and it is unlikely the archives will want to extensively reuse UGC another strategy would be to seek permissions on those occasions the archive wants to republish UGC.

- **Material in which copyright is not owned by the contributor**: The archives needs to consider material submitted in which another party owns copyright and the legal implications for the archives if this is posted in UGC. A user may contribute photographs or published material obtained without copyright permission. The archives may consider stipulating that contributors must only contribute original material they have created themselves. The archives would reserve the right to delete any contributed material which has obviously been taken from another source.

4.4 Clear and accessible information for the public on online media participation policies

It is important in online media participation, particularly where user content is invited, for the archives to provide to the public clear and accessible information about its editorial and other policies relating to online media participation. The website should provide information including the following:

- A general statement about the aims of the archives in its online media participation, the extent of its outreach activities, the value it places on contributions from the public.

- Any terms or conditions imposed on the public for contributing UGC, taking part in online forums, providing comments: terms and conditions might include provisions relating to copyright, for example that contributors may not post material that infringes the intellectual property rights of others or that contributors may only post material they have authored: conditions relating to the inclusion in postings of advertising, donation appeals or links.

- A statement about unacceptable content, with a warning that contributions should be relevant and respectful and not include material that is insulting, obscene, abusive, harassing or defamatory.

- A statement explaining the policy and procedures on the moderation of UGC : how it is done, a statement of the editorial policy including that the archives reserves the right to remove posts that do not conform to its acceptable content policy.

- Information about the intended use of UGC, for example how comments on a new policy proposal will be used.

- The policy on copyright in UGC, for example, if contributors are required to assign copyright to the archives in their contributions as a condition of placing material online.

- A statement that the archives does not endorse views contained in UGC or guarantee the accuracy of factual statements in UGC

- How the demarcation between UGC and archives generated content is made on the website.

- Undertakings that staff of the archives will be courteous and respectful when they are interacting online with members of the public, and will treat with respect and sensitivity the contributions made by members of the public

4.5 Legal issues

4.5.1 Legal risks

Online media participation poses legal issues and risks to the organisation. The archives needs to articulate and to assess the likelihood and seriousness of the

legal risks and to then formulate and implement risk mitigation measures that are reasonable and proportionate to the assessed risks.

Legal risks that may arise include:

- **Infringing copyright**: the archives may be held legally responsible for authorising infringing activity of online contributors who upload to the archives website copyrighted material or links to material illegally displayed on another site

- **Publishing defamatory or offensive material**: the archives may be deemed as the publisher of user contributed defamatory or offensive material if the archive has provided space on its website for user comments, for example where it hosts blogs and forums where comments go live to the web. An archives hosting user generated content on its site, may be subject to State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation that regulates internet services and content.

- **Legal aspects of posting material to social media sites**: as a condition of posting material to a social media site it will be necessary to agree to the site's terms of use: these terms may include granting to the site and/or its users world wide rights to republish, reuse and modify the material. An archives needs to make sure it has full rights in material it posts or that that copyright has expired in the material.

- **Warranties and indemnities**: establishing a presence on or contributing material to a social media site may require agreeing to, among other things, indemnifying the site owner i.e. compensating the owner for any damages arising from your use of the site, for example if the archives infringes copyright by loading material to the site and the copyright owner takes legal action against the site. Agreeing to such terms involves the archives, or the government to which the archives belongs, in an unlimited financial liability to the site owner if the owner incurs any costs as a result of the archives using the site. The archive needs to be aware of any legislation, regulations or policy within their jurisdiction that concerns agencies entering agreements which bind the government to indemnify the other party.

Mitigation measures may include**:**

- Not allowing user generated material to go online before it has been moderated

- Place terms of use on the website that are displayed to each user before they contribute material (browse wrap agreement)

- Require each user to indicate they have read and accepted the terms of use by clicking a button (click wrap agreement)

- Apply a filter to all content which automatically deletes prohibited terms

- Record the destruction of material generated from online media participation

These measures are not mandatory, and may be unnecessary in many cases. It is a matter of assessing in each case the degree of risk arising from the content, audience and format of the interaction.

4.5.2 Legal obligations

Participation in social media may also entail legal obligations on the part of the archives, chief of these being in relation to the material generated by the archives and users. Use of online social media may generate material that is subject to legislation. Archives need to be aware of relevant legislation when deciding about keeping or destroying material generated by staff or the public. In very unlikely, but possible, circumstances the archives may have to make material available to a court or tribunal or to account for its destruction.

- **Creation of official records**: a government archives which participates in online media needs to be aware that the material generated by both archives staff and the public may be official government records. Especially if the user generated material is stored on the archives website, this material has been received by the government archives and may be deemed to be under the possession and control of the relevant government (State, Commonwealth or Territory). If these are deemed to be records of the government, they will be subject to the relevant legislation governing maintenance, destruction and public access to government records, including privacy legislation.

- **Legal orders**: staff and user generated material in possession and control of the archives will also be subject to other legal requirements such as discovery orders or subpoenas.

4.6 Organisational capability to support, manage and sustain online media participation

The archive needs to maintain its organisational capability to sustain online media participation activities. Organisational capability includes:

- allocated staff and equipment resources for online media participation;

- appropriate skills of staff directly engaging in online activities and of those tasked with technical maintenance of the applications;

- organisational structure that supports online media participation and provides clearly delineated responsibilities for various activities, including ongoing monitoring and management.

To sustain online media participation the following are important:

- **Approval and coordination of online media participation**: devolving decision making about the form and content of online media participation to individuals or work groups risks duplication and waste of effort. Decisions about where to place material and what material to place should be organisational decisions. To facilitate this there should be a central structure responsible for coordinating online media participation activities and for documenting them so the whole organisation is aware of what is being done by what areas.

- **Maintaining online media participation**: an archives should not rely on the enthusiasm of individual staff members to begin and maintain these activities; individuals in the organisation with a particular interest and expertise in web technology may at the first initiate and maintain online media participation activities, however if these activities are not brought within the recognised, resourced and managed core activities of the organisation they risk being abandoned if the initiators leave the organisation or the area.

- **Reporting on online media participation**: there should be a clear organisational line of responsibility for reporting on online media

participation activities and acting on the reports: reporting should be on the effectiveness of outreach, and any problems, including security and technical issues.

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