

Museums & Galleries NSW

Computer Cataloguing

Advantages

There are many advantages to using computers and collections management software to care for your collection, including:

Easy	The information about objects in the collection is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• readily accessible - kept in a contained space• easily retrievable-easy searching for things you may want to know more about• easily added to.
Searching	Fast retrieval of information, eg: if you are looking for information on all chairs in a furniture collection, it won't just give a list of chairs with a cross reference to the card, it will provide any or all information required on all chairs in the collection.
Indexing	Allows you to know more about your collection and if duplicates exist – eg: you may not realise you have five copies of <i>War and Peace</i> when considering accepting a gift of another copy, but the system will help you obtain this kind of information quickly.
Space	Although you should still keep paper records, or object files on objects in your collection, the computer will remove the need for all those card files and catalogues.
Locations	of objects can be easily monitored whether they are in storage, on display or on loan to another organisation with fast retrieval of this information.
Safety	Saving the database onto a disk, allows you to have a couple of copies of the collection, one of which can be stored away from the museum in case of a disaster. This is good disaster preparedness.
Labels	Uniform labels can be easily produced for display. This adds to professionalism of your museum and the image.
Other Advantages	If you don't already have a computer, having a computer for cataloguing purposes will allow you to do other things in the museum, such as desktop publishing flyers/brochures, education information, newsletters, other correspondence, etc.

LIMITATIONS

Time	Computer cataloguing is very time consuming and you need to be certain you have people who are willing to do the work. The initial transference of information will take some time.
Validity	The information that comes out of a computer is only as good as the information entered into it.
Limited	The number of people able to access the information in the system at any

Fact Sheet

Access	one time is restricted to the number of computer terminals you have. So, if you have a lot of people working at one time, patience is absolutely necessary.
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THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE BUYING A COMPUTER

1. CATALOGUING SYSTEM

- **What type of computer do you have?** Is it a PC/IBM compatible computer or a Macintosh? This will affect the types of programs you can run on it. Some will only run on one type.
- **How new is it? And how much 'memory' space does it have?** It may not have enough memory to 'run' the program you are considering. You should check this and talk it through with your supplier before buying.
- **Do you have the people power to make it work?** If you are going to buy a computer cataloguing system, you should plan ahead and make sure that you have people who are going to enter the information into the computer. With no or very little information in it, a computer cataloguing system will not work to its full potential. You may decide to locate a new volunteer with good computer skills for a short-term project to get the system up and running. This is often a good project for the unemployed or students.
However, if you do go down this path, be sure that the skills and knowledge this person has is passed on to other members of the group before they leave. There are many cases where a person has come and done computer work and then left without having ever passed on their knowledge to other people and then no-one else knows how to use it. Don't let this happen to you.
- **REMEMBER: A computer cataloguing system and the information you get out of it, is only as good as the information that is entered into it!** If the information entered is incorrect, or has spelling mistakes or other errors, this will affect the validity of the information that comes out of it when you do searches and other work. Eg: if chair is spelt incorrectly for one entry (*chiar*) and you do a search looking for all the chairs in the collection, the *chiar* spelt incorrectly will not appear in your search.
- **What do you want it to do?** Are you interested in having a system that can search 20,000 entries in 3 seconds, or are you happy for it to take 8 seconds? Questions like this will help you decide which type of system to purchase. Do you want it to easily send information on your collection to AMOL? Do you want it to restrict access to only a few people? Different systems have different highlights, strengths, capabilities and weaknesses.

Fact Sheet

- **Do you want any other extras?** For example, do you want a printer (you will need one to print out your information) or a scanner? Look for a computer package that may include these things and work out a little cheaper for you. Printers can be purchased for under \$200 however they will not be as efficient as one that costs more. Scanners are getting cheaper to purchase all the time.
- **Support!** Will you get free (or any) back-up support from the company you are purchasing from? Back-up support is a great advantage in the early days of getting your system set up. It's good to know there is someone knowledgeable at the end of the phone line to help. Some are free, but some will charge you for the service.
- All of the above considerations will help decide which is the type of system for you. All the computer cataloguing or database systems do different things, so there is plenty to consider. Speak to the different product providers and make sure you have all the information you need before buying a product.

2. WHAT TYPE OF SOFTWARE?

There are many computer-cataloguing systems available out there on the market all of varying ranges of price. Some are created to specifically handle museum and gallery information and others are for generic purposes.

PURCHASE A PRE-DESIGNED PACKAGE

There are pre-designed collections management software packages available covering a range of prices and capabilities. These packages have been thoughtfully researched and developed using the knowledge of both museum sector and computer personnel. In other words, the wheel has been invented for you.

- These are already designed and ready for you to load onto your computer and start entering information into.
- Some of these systems are made with different types of people in mind. So, some are made for volunteers to use in remote parts of the country, and others are more directed at professional museum staff with computer experience and training. Be sure to purchase a package that suits your group. Spending more money does not necessarily mean a better product for your needs.
- Because it is all pre-designed, you must use the forms and systems created by someone else. This may mean changing the forms you already use in your museum or gallery. You should be aware that a gradual change like this may have to take place and be prepared for it.

DO IT YOURSELF

Fact Sheet

In this case, you will be reinventing the wheel as there are already systems designed for you. This is a path you may choose to go down, but there can be very big problems if it is not carried out correctly. *More than one person in the group needs to understand the computer system and be able to use it.* There are many cases where a person has come to the museum/gallery, set up a system and put it into use, and then left and nobody knows how to use it when the computer person has left. So don't allow one person to just come in, do the computer work and then leave. And be sure that it is simple enough for your group to use. Don't be sold on extras that you don't need and won't use.

- If you already own a computer that has Microsoft Access or FileMaker Pro included with it, you can create a database yourself. Use existing catalogue forms or cards used by the organisation to create the fields in your database.
- These programs come as a part of a package that you will usually receive when you buy a computer and you may already have a copy.
- These types of programs are used by all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons, eg: councils, business people, doctors surgeries
- You can also create the forms that will become a part of your overall collections management system, using a package like this. These include your object information or catalogue sheets, loan forms, deeds of gift and others.

3. THE AVAILABLE SOFTWARE

OFF-THE-SHELF PRODUCTS

- Microsoft Access is purchased as part of the Microsoft Office Professional system that also performs word processing, spreadsheets and publishing tasks. As Access is a relational system, several databases can be created to work together. This product costs around \$1000 and will only function on an IBM or 'PC' computer.
- FileMaker Pro is said to be the Apple Macintosh equal to Microsoft Access. This product is made for Macintosh computers and can be run on an IBM but you also need Windows. This is also a good package to create your own database and keep files on any subject. It is used by small business generally, for example by doctors to keep patients records, etc.

PRE-DESIGNED PRODUCTS

There are many different pre-designed products available, but here are the most common ones in use in smaller museums and galleries.

1. The Queensland Museum Historical Database

Fact Sheet

This package gives you the complete set of tools for accessioning objects for your collection. The database is essentially designed for objects but also has limited adaptations for use with photographs, paintings, numismatics and others. The database can be used with scanned images and other multimedia.

- The forms on the screen look like the paper forms you use.
- The Queensland Museum currently holds around 45,000 entries on the system.
- It is designed to be used by volunteers.
- The people who designed it are using it, so if anything goes wrong they need to fix it quickly, which means you get good service and attention.
- **You need to already have Microsoft Access on your computer.**
- Inbuilt classification system (Patricia Summerfield)
- Included in the purchase price is 12 months FREE phone support!! Extra is available, but you will need to pay extra.
- Current users include: Jewish Museum in Sydney, Casino Shire Council, Bega Historical Society, Lithgow Small Arms Museum.

COST: \$880 GST Inclusive

You can purchase a sample for \$100 but this is limited to 60 records.

CONTACT: Vernon Systems (New Zealand)
vsl@vernonsystems.com

Collection

Vernon 4.0 is supplied by Vernon Systems Ltd in Auckland. Vernon is a relational database with its strengths lying in the maintaining of cross-reference relationships, its thesaurus and authority facilities. The company will provide strong technical support by phone. They have a website: www.vernonsystems.com It is currently used by the Art Gallery of NSW, Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia Post for maintaining their history collection and The Historic Houses Trust of NSW.

COST: from \$5000

CONTACT: Vernon Systems Ltd
PO Box 6909
Auckland, NZ
Ph: 649-815 5599 or Fax: 649-815 5596
Website: <http://www.vernonsystems.com>

2. Collections MOSAiC Plus

Museums & Galleries NSW, 43-51 Cowper Wharf Road, Woolloomooloo NSW 2011
t: 02 9358 1760 | f: 02 9358 1852 | w: www.mgnsw.org.au | e: info@mgnsw.org.au

Fact Sheet

MOSAiC was developed in conjunction with the Mid-West Chapter of Museums Australia in Western Australia. MOSAiC has been designed to be used by small museums, galleries, historical societies and libraries. The main criteria for MOSAiC's design was that it be easy for people in remote areas to use without the need for lots of back-up support.

Fully searchable data, with built-in and user-definable reports and data export functions. Pre-loaded with industry standard validation lists, but fully customizable by yourself.

Collections MOSAiC Plus is a Collections Management system that is simple enough for anyone, affordable enough for everyone, sophisticated enough for the most discerning and flexible enough to suit collections of any size.

Free demonstration packs available.

- With MOSAiC there is no need to buy Microsoft Access separately as it comes with the system.
- Easily exports data to CAN (Collections Australia Network), which seeks to provide a centralised directory of Australian collections, big and small.
- Can be easily used to catalogue objects, photographs, documents, and artworks.
- Can store many types of subject data relating to the objects (e.g. the people and places that make the story behind the item.)
- Has an inbuilt classification system (Patricia Summerfield).
- Handles scanned images and multi-media with ease.
- *IST* provide unlimited FREE telephone and email support for small queries .
- Can limit access to certain people i.e. Visitors / Staff / Curators
- Will produce standard letters, labels, reports etc. PLUS letters and reports designed by yourself
- Transfers your data easily on to spreadsheets and word processing documents etc.
- Can store information not only about your collection but reference libraries, staff/membership, loans in and out and conservation
- Is used by over 350 organisations within Australia and New Zealand

COST: \$990 (GST incl)
\$495 (GST incl) for each additional computer licence sharing the same database.

CONTACT: Sally & Rew Whittington
Information Services and Technology

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2/30 Harrison Street Rockingham WA 6168

email: Sales@ISTechnology.com.au

<http://www.ISTechnology.com.au>

Tel/Fax: 08 9592 3149

Mobile: 0403 832 527

3. Maxus Australia Databases

Maxus Australia sell and support a versatile range of database and information management products by Inmagic Inc. Maxus has been selling Inmagic software in Australia and neighbouring countries for more than 20 years to a large number of satisfied organisations.

They provide personalised and integral service in areas such as installation, design and development, support, upgrades, consultancy services and training. Their products can be used for a range of applications including image management, catalogues for libraries, art galleries, museums and historical societies.

Some relevant products include:

3.1 Inmagic® TextWorks

TextWorks is textbase software that enables information professionals to index, manage and retrieve text, images and multimedia objects. With its fielded search engine, TextWorks delivers fast, precise results.

Known for its quick deployment, flexibility and ease of use, TextWorks has become the popular choice for managing all types of content – documents, images, knowledgebases, multi-media objects – by thousands of organisations worldwide.

Features include:

- Fast search speeds
- Unlimited length fields
- Sophisticated report writing capabilities

Fully functional evaluation versions are available. Download a 45 day trial version.

<http://www.maxus.net.au/download.htm>

DB/Textworks uses a proprietary Inmagic data store; CS/TextWorks uses Microsoft SQL technology as its data store. You can choose which of these options

Fact Sheet

suits your IT requirements. <http://www.maxus.net.au/textworks.htm>,
[http://www.maxus.net.au/platform brochure.pdf](http://www.maxus.net.au/platform%20brochure.pdf)

Also available is *WebPublisher PRO*, which gives you the ability to publish all your database content on the web or an intranet. <http://www.maxus.net.au/dbweb.htm>

3.2 Maxus Collections for Museums

Developed by Maxus Australia, Maxus Collections for Museums is a product specifically designed and tailored for museums. The database structure is based on the two worksheets supplied by Museums Australia (Victoria Branch). Its special pricing represents excellent value for the museum community.

It is based on the TextWorks platform, which means you can catalogue your collection quickly and easily while still conforming to Museums Australia standards. Almost 200 organisations have purchased Maxus Collections for Museums. [<http://www.maxus.net.au/museum.htm>]

3.3 Maxus ArtWorks

Maxus ArtWorks has been developed by Maxus Australia to make it easy for you to catalogue your collection of art works. User friendly screens make data entry fast and simple, while clear navigation enables you and your users to retrieve records accurately in an intuitive manner. Use Maxus ArtWorks to catalogue a physical collection, or a collection of digitised images, or both! Maxus ArtWorks is compatible with both DB/TextWorks and CS/TextWorks. [[http://www.maxus.net.au/maxus artworks logo.pdf](http://www.maxus.net.au/maxus%20artworks%20logo.pdf)]

- The latest versions of the Inmagic products run on Windows computers (Windows 2000, 2003, XP or Vista) and are not designed for use on Apple Macintosh hardware.
- Inmagic databases can hold an almost unlimited number of entries or records. The only limitation is the space on your hard drive or, in the case of CS/TextWorks Workgroup, the 4 GB limit on the SQL Express data store.
- Inmagic's export functionality means that data can easily be sent to AMOL (Australian Museums and Galleries On-Line).
- Inmagic products come with software maintenance and a free phone or email support component for the first 12 months following purchase. This service can be renewed after 12 months for an annual fee.
- TextWorks includes robust image management functionality.

Fact Sheet

CONTACT: Maxus Australia
Phone: (03) 9646 1988
Port Melbourne, VIC
maxus@maxus.net.au
<http://www.maxus.net.au>

COST: \$2,850 + GST to Museums Australia members.
This price is for single-user systems. Prices for multiple user systems are also available..

Fact Sheet

4. Other pre-designed products available

There are other pre-designed products available that are in use in museums and galleries around Australia. These are generally more expensive than the products previously mentioned. Their capabilities tend to be stronger and therefore are usually designed for use by professionally trained people in larger institutions.

7. Accession

This is a museum and gallery collections management system designed for Apple Mac. This system stores information about an object such as accessioning, cataloguing, donor information, storage, conservation, exhibition, loans and deaccessions as well as a note field for further remarks. Additional fields can be supplied for additional prices, these include insurance, valuation, author, site documentation, species and more.

COST: \$995 US for a single user licence
 From \$2000 US for a multi-user licence

There is an image template available that allows you to link multi-media material to the database. This costs an extra \$550 US to the \$995 base rate for this.

CONTACT: OakTree Software Specialists
 498 Palm Springs Drive
 Suite 100
 ALTAMONTE SPRINGS
 Florida 32701
 Ph: (047) 339 5855
 Fax: (407) 339 9188

8. ADLIB Museum

The ADLIB software has been designed especially for the management of data from libraries, museums, archives and similar institutions. ADLIB has an exceptionally flexible structure and able to manage large quantities of information in a structured manner.

Standard features include powerful search option, integrated display of text and images, interfaces to external applications such as Word, Excel and Web pages, printing/export/import wizard and thesaurus management.

The ADLIB software is developed for MS operating systems (ME, NT, 2000 and 2003) and supports Z39.50 and SQL server functions. Adlib can be used both on

Fact Sheet

stand-alone computers and as a multi-user system on LANs. Wide Area Networks is supported through thin client technology.

COST:

Prices increase according to the number of users
For one user: Starter \$1300, Standard \$3000, Plus \$4300
For five users: Starter \$5850, Standard 13500, Plus \$19350
Unlimited users: Starter \$25000, Standard \$60000, Plus
\$85000

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