

Collection management systems

M&G NSW has recently conducted research on the use of Collections Management Software (CMS) by organisations throughout NSW. The data, which was collected from across approximately 300 organisations, gave us feedback about the usage and popularity of different databases in use in NSW. At this stage, the most popular database is Mosaic; however the feedback we received indicated that Mosaic could be difficult for new users or for users unfamiliar with using relational databases. This has led to a significant number of organisations moving away from using Mosaic, either by discontinuing use of the database, switching to another database or moving to a simpler and more inexpensive alternative such as an Excel document. The research also indicated that there was growing interest in Vernon System's EHive, a cloud based database that allows users access via an online portal. The increasing popularity of EHive appears to be due to its ease of use, its ability to easily publish collections and object online, due to it being accessible on multiple computers via the online portal.

Our research has also shown a number of organisations moving away from using established collections management systems in favour of using custom built databases. This is not something that is recommended as it can result in issues that affect the relevance and uniformity of data being recorded, the sharing of data and the ongoing sustainability of the custom database after the original users leave the organisation.

As a result of this research we have compiled an updated fact sheet with a list of the most commonly used CMS programs and the key considerations in the purchase and use of CMS programs. The products outlined in this resource represent the software most commonly used by museums, galleries and heritage centres in NSW, and represent products with a range of prices, capabilities and requirements. In order to determine the best software for your organisation we recommend you consider a number of key factors:

Do you have staff capable of using this software?

What kind of training is required

Before considering the purchase of software, identify who needs to be involved in the selection process.

For paid organisations this could include the Collections Manager, the Executive Director, IT Manager, Head Curator, Head of Conservation and the Database Administrator.

For volunteer organisations this could include the President, the Treasurer, the Collections Manager, the Curator, and any other volunteers who will be trained in the use of the databases and will be using it on a regular basis.

Who will manage the database?

It can be useful to identify a project manager and establish a plan for the implementation of a new CMS. This will help keep the project on track and help your organisation meet key goals and milestones.

What does your organisation need from a CMS?

This can be determined by interviewing the organisation's key stakeholders and staff who will be using the database on a regular basis. Some of the questions you should ask include:

- How will a CMS help your organisation achieve its goals?
- What problem are you hoping to solve by using a new CMS?
- Do you want your collection to be available to the public online?
- Does your organisation require Digital Asset Management (DAM)?
- How much IT support will you need to implement a new system?
- What is your budget?

Research the different options and vendors available

- What software suits your collection? (i.e. collection size, type, etc.)
- Is the CMS compatible with the organisations hardware and software? Is your computer running the right operating system? Does the computer have enough storage space/RAM to handle the CMS software and the records you want to store?
- How well does the vendor understand the specific needs of your organisation and its collection?
- Does the vendor have experience in the type and size of your collection?
- What other clients use that software? Contacting these clients can help you compare the pros and cons of different systems.
- What service and support does the vendor provide?
- Do they offer ongoing service and training?

How much does your organisation have available to spend?

- What are the costs of implementation? Are there yearly costs, extra support costs, or costs for training, service packs or upgrades?
- How many people will be using the software simultaneously/how many machines do you want loaded with the software?
- How many software licenses will you require?

Important things to remember:

More than one staff member or volunteer needs to be trained in the use of the collections management software. The training of multiple and new staff members will ensure the sustainability of the software and ensure ongoing use and access to the collection records.

The databases forms and records should be designed in consultation with someone experienced in the use collections management software. This will ensure that essential information is captured in a useful and accessible way. Vendors will be able to assist in this and you can also contact similar organisations in order to establish what would work best for your collection and organisation.

Off-the-shelf Products

FileMaker Pro

Filemaker Pro is a relational database that works similarly to Microsoft Access but is usable on both PC and Mac. FileMaker Pro also allows a degree of customisation and is a suitable database for a wide range of uses. The software allows existing data to be imported from different files, including Excel documents.

Price: Prices start at AUD \$1312.30 per year for up to 5 users.

System Requirements: Mac, PC running Windows OS

Website: <http://www.filemaker.com/products/filemaker-pro/>

Microsoft Access

Microsoft Access is purchased as part of the Office 365 Home or Professional suite. As Access is a relational database system, distinct sets of information can be linked to work together and allows a degree of customisation based on organisational needs.

Price: AUD\$99-\$129

System Requirements: PC computer

Website: <https://products.office.com/en-au/access>

Custom products

This is a summary of the more popular Collections Management Software programs that are currently available for use by museums, galleries and heritage organisations.

eHive

eHive is a simple to use cataloguing system that is cloud based and allows you to publish your collection online. eHive has been specifically developed for small museums, heritage centres and councils looking for a professional low-cost solution for managing their collections.

eHive is hosted on a cloud based server which can be accessed via the eHive webpage. This means that the database can be accessed from any computer that has an internet connection. eHive is automatically updated and backed up by Vernon CMS.

Key Features:

- eHive provides separate pages for the cataloguing of Art, Photography and Multimedia, Archives, History, Natural Science, Archaeology and Library items.
- Publish collections online or keep them private eHive also allows web visitors to tag and comment on published records.
- Create communities to link collection items from different organisations. Communities can be geographic or theme based.
- eHive can be integrated with WordPress to build branded websites to present your collection.
- Data can be shared with Trove, the National Library of Australia's online resources website.

Users: Port Macquarie Historical Museum, Port Macquarie; Miss Porter's House, Newcastle; Eskbank House, Lithgow; Fleet Air Arm Museum, Nowra.

Price: Free up to 50MB of storage or up to 5000 objects. One year license US\$99-\$800 or a five year license US\$450-\$3,500 depending on required storage space (500MB to 25GB available).

System Requirements: Mac or PC with internet connection

Contact: vsl@vernonssystems.com

Website: <https://vernonssystems.com/products/ehive/>

Vernon CMS

Vernon CMS is typically used by medium to large organisations, including those with multiple sites and large scale collections with millions of objects.

Vernon CMS is comprised of modules that allow you to choose the features required for your organisation. Vernon CMS is a system that is capable of accommodating organisations with mixed collections, including social history, natural history, archives and library collections. The core module is Cataloguing and covers all the key features needed to manage a collection including accession and deaccessions, descriptive details (parts, measurements and physical aspects), location and movements, multimedia, places and sites, storage and handling requirements, valuation, curatorial research and many others. The Activities management module can be purchased as an optional extra and this module provides comprehensive workflow control for all collection management processes including the management of loans, exhibitions and conservation.

Vernon CMS also features a Browser module which can allow your collection to be published online. The Browser module can be used to build mobile-friendly websites with customised branding. It also allows you to control what collection data is published online.

Vernon also offers a high level of support for its users. This includes onsite and online training, customisation, consultation with their expert staff, online resources and system upgrades and updates.

Key Features:

- Only pay for the licenses you need.
- Allows multiple windows to be used concurrently.
- Manage user access and allocate rights.
- Create custom formatted reports.
- Manage workflows for activities such as outward loans, including the generation of reports and automated emails.
- Secure access to restricted information.
- Support via phone and email with Vernon's experts
- Built in reporting tool and export data to MS Word and Excel.
- Integrated multimedia, any number of images, sound files and videos can be linked to the relevant records.

Users: National Trust (NSW), Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Mosman Art Gallery

Price: For the baseline Cataloguing module there is an AUD \$7,000 purchase cost with an annual licensing fee of \$1,400. Extra modules and licenses can also be purchased at an extra cost.

Vernon can also assist with Data Migration with the cost based on the consistency of the data and the time taken to import it into Vernon CMS. The cost is \$1,250 a day and Vernon will provide a free and confidential quote based on their analysis of your collection data.

Installation includes onsite training over two days. The training costs \$1,600 per day with travel expenses charged depending on location of the organisation.

System Requirements: Mac or PC

Contact: vsl@vernonssystems.com

Website: <https://vernonssystems.com/products/vernoncms/>

Collections MOSAiC Plus

MOSAiC was initially developed in conjunction with Museums Australia (WA) in the 1990s and is currently in use by Over 650 sites throughout Australasia. MOSAiC is a database that is designed for use by museums, historical societies, galleries, libraries, and cultural heritage organisations and is capable of handling a wide variety of collection types.

MOSAiC was designed with usability in mind, however it is recommended that all staff be trained in its usage as our research suggests that organisations with MOSAiC are encounter difficulties when trained users leave and remaining staff members are unable to use or access the database.

MOSAiC is also capable of being used without access to the internet, which makes it a good option for organisations without a reliable internet connection. If connected to the internet MOSAiC can easily upload collection data to make it searchable by the public.

MOSAiC has fully searchable data with built in and user-definable reports and data export functions. It comes pre-loaded with industry standard validation lists and is fully customisable.

Key Features:

- Everything necessary is provided in one easy installation and can be delivered by either email or mail.
- Can be easily used to catalogue objects, photographs, documents, artworks, oral histories and more.
- Database is also capable of maintaining records on outgoing and incoming loans, valuations, conservation, membership and staff.
- Can store a large range of data related to objects, including the people and places related to the object's significance.
- Has an inbuilt classification system.
- Compatible with scanned images and other multimedia.
- Free telephone and email support for basic queries are provided for the first year, with the potential to maintain the service for a reasonable fee.
- Can grant and restrict permissions for users.
- Produces standard letters, labels, reports, as well as correspondence and report with organisational branding.
- Data can be exported to MS Word or Excel.
- Data can be easily uploaded to the internet using MOSAiC web.
- Is currently installed in over 650 institutions throughout Australasia
- Can sample MOSAiC using an Evaluation pack, which is limited to 50 records.

Users: Museum of the Riverina, Wagga Wagga

Price: Standalone Edition (single computer license): \$1,496

Networked Edition (2 licenses): \$1,936

SQL Server Edition (Includes 5 user licenses and Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Express Edition): \$4,620

Additional licenses can be purchased at an extra cost.

System Requirements: PC with Microsoft Windows XP minimum.

Contact: sales@ISTechnology.com.au

Website: <http://www.istechnology.com.au/vwCollections-Mosaic.aspx>

Axiell EMu

Previously developed by KE Software and known as KE EMu, EMu is now developed by Axiell. EMu is a sophisticated collections management system that is typically used by medium to large museums and is capable of handling a wide range of collection and institution types but is particularly suited to natural history collections.

EMu is capable of cataloguing to an international standard and can easily manage multimedia, text files and physical object data. EMu is also an effective tool for conducting in depth collections research and analysis.

The EMu database is object oriented and supports nested and multi valued fields. EMu has an excellent search function, with the capability to handle collections ranging in size from a few thousand into the millions. Over 692 million objects, specimens and artefacts are managed by EMu worldwide.

EMu can also assist in increasing access to collections with the ability to share and publish collection data online.

Key Features:

- Catalogue to international standards.
- Comprehensive museum management tools including: accessioning/deaccessioning, bibliography, conservation and condition check, event management, loans, internal and external movements, insurance and valuation, locations and rights and audit trails.
- Additional modules available included for natural history collections including taxonomic nomenclature, collection events, stratigraphy, sites and gazetteer.
- Manage multimedia, text files and physical object data in one central database.
- Can export data to MS Word and Excel.
- Create efficient workflows to manage conservation and digitisation processes.
- Easily conduct collections research and analysis.
- Manage user permissions, access to records and authority files.
- Manage exact physical locations using hierarchies of locations.
- Manage treatment schedules, condition checks.

- Monitor and track trap and pest information.
- Increase access by publishing collections online and making digitised files available online.
- Easily manage digital assets.
- Training offered for users in use of EMu.

Users: Australian Museum, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences

Price: Estimated at \$5000 for a single user license, will require a quote from Axiell.

EMu is licensed per concurrent user. The license covers all software, digital asset management and the web interface. Unlike Vernon and other systems the cost includes all museum/collections management modules. Axiell provides consultation, development and implementation services.

System Requirements: Linux/Unix is recommended for large scale implementations but Windows is also suitable for smaller implementations.

Contact: axlg@axiell.com

Website: <https://www.axiell.com/solutions/product/emu/>

Axiell Adlib

Adlib is a flexible and customisable option which can be used with a range of collections including simple collections, and right up to handling complex and high profile collections.

Adlib is favoured for its flexibility and its ability to be easily customised by the user. Adlib provides several specialised options, including Archive, Library and Museum, with the option for integration.

Key Features:

- Catalogue to international museum and archive standards.
- Manage a range of collection types.
- Easily manage multimedia, text files and physical object data.
- Excellent search function with the ability to find objects or groups of objects in a collection.
- Accurate location management and tracking of objects.
- Generate flexible and automated reports on the collection.

- Manage conservation processes and condition checks.
- Publish collections online via your website.
- Make digitised images, documents, video and audio files available online.
- Easily plan exhibitions and managed interpretation.

Users: Macquarie University, Sydney Jewish Museum, State Library of New South Wales.

Price: Estimated at \$3,000 - \$4,000 for a single license.

System Requirements: PC running Windows 7 or later

Contact: axlg@axiell.com

Website: <https://www.axiell.com/solutions/product/adlib/>

Axiell Mimsy XG

Mimsy XG offers an easy to use collections management software and has been popular with both small private collectors and large institutions. It is particularly suited to cultural history and multidisciplinary collections.

Mimsy XG has strong cross-platform capabilities which allow it to be used by computers running either Mac OSX or Windows.

Key Features:

- Catalogue to international standards.
- Manage multimedia, text files and physical objects data in one central database.
- Mimsy XG allows for consistency of authority terms by linking to external thesauri and people databases.
- Easy to use search function.
- Simple importing and exporting of data.
- Create efficient workflows to manage conservation, digitisation processes, etc.
- Manage user permissions and access to records and authority files.
- Manage exact physical locations using hierarchies of locations.
- Manage treatment schedules and condition checks.
- Create and access reports.

Users: Australian War Memorial

Price: Estimated to be between \$4,000 and \$5,000 for a single license.

System Requirements: PCs running Windows XP Professional, Windows Vista, Windows 7, Linux, Macintosh running OS X Jaguar or later.

Contact: axlg@axiell.com

Website: <https://www.axiell.com/solutions/product/mimsy-xg/>

Axiell Calm

Calm is a collections database that was developed by archivists and is designed to cater to the specific needs of organisations with archive and record based collections.

Calm is built on international standards for archival collections and offers a flexible and customisable solution for the management of archival, curatorial and records based collections.

Key Features:

- Catalogue to international standards.
- Flexible and highly customisable.
- Store, link and manage data using a sophisticated hierarchy based data structure.
- Create workflows to handle conservation, reading room requests, digitisation processes, etc.
- Easy management of user permissions.
- Flexible data entry model.

Price: Estimated to be between \$2,600 and \$3,000 for a single license. Quotes can be requested from Axiell.

System Requirements: Minimum requirement of PCs running Windows 2008 or 2012 64bit OS

Contact: axlg@axiell.com

Website: <https://www.axiell.com/uk/solutions/product/calm/>

Axiell Collections Cloud

A new product developed by Axiell for small and emerging museums and archives. This database is hosted in the cloud which allows it to be accessed from any computer with a browser and internet connection. The cloud-based server also allows collections to be easily published online. Axiell Collections is designed to be a simple database solution that can be used by users, such as volunteers, who haven't previously used collections management software.

Key Features:

- Catalogue to international museum and archival standards.
- Integrated cloud applications for museum, archive and special libraries.
- Publish collections online.
- Manage a range of collection types.
- Manage object locations, conservation process and condition checks.
- Plan exhibitions.
- Generate automated reports on the collection.
- Designed to be easy to use for first time users.

Price: Approximately \$2,000 AUD per user, with the 'per head' cost diminishing as the license size increases. Collections can be published on the web using Axiell Internet Server which can be purchased for \$5,400 (unlimited users). Installation cost is \$900 and data migration can be quoted on request.

System Requirements: Mac or PC with browser and internet access.

Contact: axlg@axiell.com

Website: <https://www.axiell.com/uk/solutions/product/axiell-collections-cloud-service/>

PastPerfect

PastPerfect is a US based software for collections archiving. It is designed to be primarily used by museums but can be used by a variety of collecting institutions including libraries and archives. PastPerfect is capable of handling a wide range of collections including archival, art, archaeological, historical, ethnographic, photographic collections and many more.

PastPerfect allows the user to effectively handle every aspect of collections management including

accessioning, exhibitions, condition reports, loans, and many others.

PastPerfect is made up of four catalogues that are designed to handle different collection areas. These modules include:

- Archive, for storing documents.
- Photographs, for storing visual materials.
- Objects, for artefact management.
- Library, for storing books kept within the collection.

PastPerfect allows for the standardisation of cataloguing, with the standard for naming artefacts, Nomenclature 3.0, preloaded into the PastPerfect Lexicon.

PastPerfect also allows users to attach multimedia to records, track acquisitions, store donor information, and generate standardised forms and letters.

Key Features:

- Features four separate catalogues designed to cover all major areas of collections management.
- Includes tools to handle accessions, exhibits, condition report, loans and more.
- Research and report functions.
- Pre-filled authority files and customisable drop down menus.
- Software preloaded with the standard for naming artefacts, Nomenclature 3.0.
- Track acquisitions from the time a donor approaches your organisations.
- Contacts database that tracks information about your contacts including membership renewals, pledges, financial gifts, and volunteer hours.
- Can produce standard forms and letters as well as create bulk mailings and email newsletters.

Users: Museum of Education (UNE), Saumarez Homestead (National Trust)

Price: USD \$870 for PastPerfect Basic. Users can purchase the optional Multimedia Upgrade which allows photos to be attached to records.

System Requirements: PC with Windows XP or higher.

Contact: sales@museumsoftware.com

Website: <http://museumsoftware.com/pp5.html>

Lucidea InMagic DB/TextWorks

InMagic DB/TextWorks is a database and text retrieval software that enables users to build 'textbases' (text/multi-media databases). Known for its ease of use, TextWorks is a popular choice for managing all types of content including bibliographic catalogues, documents, images, multimedia and many others. With its fielded search engine, TextWorks delivers fast, precise results. Two add on products, Maxus Collections and Maxus ArtWorks, are available for DB/TextWorks that are tailored specifically for galleries, museums and heritage centres.

Key Features:

- Easy to use and doesn't require any programming.
- Allows information to be published online.
- Powerful and fast search capabilities.
- Flexible and customisable. Users can specify the fields necessary for each individual record.
- Can import information from most third party databases. Text can also be imported from documents, including from Microsoft Office or PDFs.
- Simple Drag-and Drop Form Design- DB/Text Works' Report Writer gives users control over look and content of the reports.
- Excellent image management with the ability to store, retrieve, display and print images. DB/TextWorks supports 30 standard file formats and allows the user to easily attach images to an associated record.

Price: Quotes can be provided by Lucidea

System Requirements: PC with Windows OS

Contact: ntovey@lucidea.com

Website: <https://lucidea.com/inmagic-dbtextworks/>