

## **Indigenous Collections: From Facilitation to Collaboration**

The promotion of, and the facilitation of access to, historical collections for Indigenous communities has increased - across Australia - over recent years. Such activities have been integrated into the practices of archives and libraries seeking to reunite Indigenous people with materials that document their past and can assist in informing their future. Yet, there are ever-present challenges in regards to accessing these collections. For example information is difficult to find, or it is buried or dispersed in multiple collections. Once you are able to locate information, it is often confronting as you may locate information that is derogatory or offensive in today's contexts. For many of these collections present double meanings. They are extremely valuable for their informational content, yet they can also be intrusive and racist, and they frequently position Indigenous people as the observed - *the other* or the *subject* - objects of curiosity or surveillance. This paper argues that a move to facilitate access to these collections, to a more active process of collaboration - which sees information services professionals, researchers and members of Indigenous communities working together - has the potential to overcome many of these double meanings. Moreover, that such collaboration can contribute to redressing some of the damage created out of past wrongs committed in this space: the taking of knowledge and the generation of unauthorised histories. Critically, any collaborative efforts need to ensure that these research-led, theoretically informed endeavours around repatriating knowledge to traditional owners, and sharing such knowledge with a broader community, needs to occur within a clearly constructed framework. This paper explores, what the authors believe to be, essential elements of these types of collaborations, namely: governance structures; ethical practices; taking risks; and how to define, and subsequently, measure success. Furthermore the production of trusting - and trusted - environments will realise how experienced researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, can partner with Indigenous communities across the country to produce community inspired and community driven research projects. Thus, repositioning the researcher as an authority on scholarly activity to researcher as an equal partner. Certainly researchers have significant expertise to offer but such expertise, as well as experience, have the potential to be perceived as being privileged. In the type of collaboration promoted here such privileging needs to be re-examined and re-imagined to support the building of bridges between Indigenous communities and their own histories and stories. This paper wants to celebrate the importance of the information services profession to build research projects, in partnership with Indigenous communities, and the benefits of developing research questions that are based on community identified needs. Archives, libraries and other collecting institutions can play a crucial role in not perpetuating trauma in addition to setting an example for the sensitive and respectful handling of information from, and of, Indigenous people in both physical and digital formats. A considered and structured move, from facilitation to collaboration, in this field can radically change how Indigenous people can interact with their past. This approach will also demonstrate how non-Indigenous people can make a meaningful contribution to the generation of positive outcomes in the researching of the many histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as work towards the sharing of these stories. In this way, 'expanding horizons' for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.