

# FutureNow.

## Museums, Galleries and Libraries

FutureNow is an independent body that provides industry informed advice to influence skills development strategies across the Creative, Leisure and Technologies sectors. Our work assists Western Australia to be prepared with the new order skills required by the evolving economy and our changing society.

WA's galleries, libraries, archives, heritage organisations and museums (GLAHM) are the guardians of Western Australia's stories and a place to explore shared identity. The standard of WA's cultural institutions and their work speaks to the state's maturity and sophistication, and the vibrancy and liveability of its cities and regions. Libraries, galleries, and cultural institutions serve a vital role in our communities, and as that role evolves in response to technological and social change these mostly free, shared spaces are greatly valued by the people they serve. As well as reflecting our own image back to us, cultural institutions project our narrative to the world, helping visitors to make sense of and engage with Western Australia. In 2022, as WA stands poised to re-engage with the world and reinvigorate our international education and tourism industries, the work of museums and galleries will be even more important.

### Current environment and emerging trends

#### Growing need for digital skills across the GLAHM sector

Technological change is adding to the upskilling needs of the GLAHM sector. On-site digital technologies are enhancing the visitor experience and digital interpretation (the text accompanying a work) and online exhibition allow for different staging of works and installations. These changes are supporting greater visitor access, giving a much wider audience an insight into the collections, including those with limited mobility, aged, remote, and international audiences. Opportunities to monetise collections are also enhanced, providing a potential avenue for increased sector sustainability.

The proliferation of digital content is having a considerable impact on the daily work of the GLAHM workforce, driving a need for new and more sophisticated collections practices and digitising and cataloguing skills for workers. Good data clean-up and cyber security practices are essential, and a high degree of digital literacy is required to manage collections, websites, social media accounts and customer relations management (CRM) software. Audience engagement is evolving in response to online activity, creating a need for training for existing workers across the sector.

A recent review of vocational training for the libraries and information services sectors sought to incorporate more sophisticated digital collections management skills in response to these changes.<sup>1</sup>

#### Greater demand for library services

In recent years libraries have changed to house a broader range of community services and this trend has surged in the wake of Covid-19. Libraries may host or provide legal services, career advice or digital support, and act as a hub for community groups such as craft or reading groups. They provide

support to the national literacy agenda through programs for all ages and skill levels, and offer training in areas including job preparedness, self-publishing and learning new technologies such as 3D printing or laser cutting.<sup>2</sup> Industry report an upsurge in demand for community services in line with pressures experienced in the community related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Libraries assisted local communities to access loan laptops, dongles and other technology to assist students to attend classes remotely. As libraries reopened, demand for equipment and assistance relating to job hunting grew, and book borrowing- which surged during quarantine via online order- continues to be higher than previously.

## **Covid-19 impacts**

Created with the input of over 50,000 Western Australians, the new, \$396 million WA Museum Boola Bardip, opened in November 2020, takes a 'People First' approach, placing access, inclusion, diversity, and the celebration of Aboriginal culture at the core of everything they do. The Museum celebrated its first anniversary in November 2021, and despite state borders being closed for most of the year, over 700,000 visitors passed through its doors in that time.

Much of the sector has shown such resilience over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite early indications of severe staff cutbacks across the galleries, museums, and libraries sectors,<sup>3</sup> and despite intermittent closures owing to quarantine measures, very little impact on services has been evident to the end users of these institutions, particularly in the metropolitan area.

However, regional organisations experienced additional pressures, with an ongoing impact on their mostly-volunteer workforce, many of whom were elderly and chose not to return to volunteering after lockdown. Cultural institutions are recognised as a key element of regional tourism strategy and as such, the federal government announced a \$3 million Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism (CHART) grants program.<sup>4</sup> The program funds are distributed via the Australian Museums and Galleries Association, and are intended to contribute to the reactivation and recovery of organisations from COVID-19, and to their ongoing sustainability.

Ongoing uncertainty with relation to border restrictions, potential sudden shutdowns, and capacity limits, are creating challenges for the sector which worsen as the pandemic crisis wears on. Launch events and artist talks have had to be postponed or cancelled owing to travel challenges or last-minute closures for instance.<sup>5</sup> As with much of the audience-facing creative sector, cultural institutions look forward to clarity around proposed measures related to the pandemic to allow greater certainty and forward planning.

## **Workforce development strategies**

### **Reconciliation Action Planning**

As awareness grows of the impact of Western and colonialist collections management practices on Indigenous cultures, Reconciliation Action Planning (RAP) is of growing importance across the sector, and brings with it an associated upskilling need. The WA Museum delivered Aboriginal Cultural Awareness training to all staff and has employed a number of Aboriginal emerging curators since introducing its RAP in 2015. In May 2019, AMAGA published *First Peoples: A Roadmap for Enhancing Indigenous Engagement in Museums and Galleries*.<sup>126</sup> The roadmap includes a workforce development strategy, advising:

“Opportunities to attend university and learn courses on art history and fine arts can provide for

a pipeline of Indigenous curators and arts professionals. However, other professional skills are needed in the future museum and gallery environment including technology, management, and communications. The creation of scholarships for Indigenous museum professionals should be established.

There should also be increased pathways via vocational education and training (VET). VET Courses should also be offered, including at TAFE, with a view to increasing Indigenous museum and gallery workers... there is a need for more relevant VET courses for Indigenous people to enter employment in museums and galleries.”

### **Art on the Move traineeship program**

Through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries' Regional Exhibition Touring Boost,<sup>7</sup> Art on the Move (AOTM) have funded a number of traineeships for trainees embedded in regional arts organisations such as the North Midlands Project<sup>8</sup> and the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery.<sup>9</sup> The traineeships form part of a capacity building program for WA's regional gallery and museum workers.

### **Establishing formal pathways into cultural sector careers**

AOTM and other sector representatives seek to achieve accessible, sustainable career opportunities for Western Australia, and have expressed an interest in growing traineeship pathways for the sector and trainees. The CUA Creative Arts and Culture training package was recently reviewed to include new specialist pathways for the GLAM sector, and industry support the Certificate IV in Arts and Cultural Administration, and the Diploma of Arts and Cultural Management being made available as traineeships. To date there are no WA providers with either of these qualifications on scope.

North Metropolitan and North Regional TAFEs have both committed to continuing delivery of the Certificate III Arts Administration with the capacity to tailor to these industries, and these training providers are involved in discussions with industry, the training council and the WA Academy of Performing Arts around building a formalised pathway that can take a student with relatively limited academic experience from the Certificate III through to WAAPA's Bachelor of Arts Management. An intention of developing the pathway is to give disadvantaged Western Australians better opportunities to access influential cultural roles within their own culture.

## **Please get in touch with FutureNow**

FutureNow is continually seeking broad input from stakeholders and representatives in the Western Australian GLAHM sector. If you would be interested in providing your perspective on this snapshot or related workforce matters for your sector, our Creative Industries Industry Manager would love to hear from you:

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## References

Note that unreferenced information in this snapshot is based on direct consultation by FutureNow with WA industry.

All references current as at 25.1.2022

- 1 <https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/BSB50520>
- 2 [https://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Public\\_Libraries\\_Our\\_Future\\_Background\\_Paper.pdf](https://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Public_Libraries_Our_Future_Background_Paper.pdf)
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- 5 <https://www.facebook.com/johncurtingallery> post 19.1.22
- 6 <https://www.amaga.org.au/shop/first-peoples-roadmap-enhancing-indigenous-engagement-museums-and-galleries-hardcopy-version>
- 7 <https://artonthemove.art/we-work-with/regional-exhibition-touring-boost/>
- 8 <https://www.northmidlands.org.au/>
- 9 <https://artgallery.cgg.wa.gov.au/>