



Australian
National
University



Classics Museum

Collections Management Plan

CENTRE FOR CLASSICAL STUDIES

SCHOOL OF LITERATURE, LANGUAGES & LINGUISTICS

RESEARCH SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND THE ARTS

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Updated August 2023

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CRICOS Provider No. 00120C

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Introduction

The ANU Classics Museum

The ANU Classics Museum was established in 1962 as a teaching collection to enhance the educational experience of university students.

Museum Collection: The collection displayed in the ANU Classics Museum comprises a little over 600 objects from the ancient Mediterranean world: examples of ceramics, metalwork, glassware, writing, and sculpture from the Ancient Greek and Roman worlds, extending from Britain to Cyprus, North Africa and the Near and Middle East.

Teaching Collection: In addition to the Museum Collection, in 2022 Emeritus Professor Graeme Clarke donated over 450 fragments and objects as a new hands-on teaching collection to enhance the educational outreach activities of the ANU Classics Museum. These items include those stemming from excavations conducted by Professor Clarke at Jebel Khalid in Syria, a Hellenistic site on the banks of the Euphrates River, undertaken between 1986 and 2010.

Collections Management Plan

The purpose of this management plan is to outline the contents and significance of the collection, and to provide a plan to ensure the Collection's long-term survival and research capability. This plan also articulates the Classics Museum's approach to engagement, activation, conservation, acquisition and repatriation.

The Collections Management Plan complies with the ANU Collections Policy (ANUP_000369). The Plan is written in line with *A Guide to Developing a Collection Management Plan for the Collections at the Australian National University* (Dunstan 2018) and *Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections* (Russell and Winkworth, 2009).

This plan is aligned with ANU Collection 2023 Strategic Priorities (for more information visit the [ANU Collections SharePoint site](#))

This plan was prepared by Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney, Friends' Lecturer and Curator, ANU Classics Museum.

This Plan will be reviewed and updated every 12 months.

Mission Statement

The aim of the ANU Classics Museum is to enhance the education, research and outreach activities of the Centre for Classical Studies, and the ANU more broadly. While the museum's activities are primarily connected to Classical Studies at ANU, it also serves as a valuable resource for other academic disciplines at ANU, such as archaeology, art history, museum studies, and the visual and performing arts. Its collections are also of value to the research of scholars from Australia and overseas. The collection and the museum space it occupies serves as a community hub for public outreach, supported by the activities of the Friends of the Classics Museum and the Volunteer Guides. The ANU Classics Museum is committed to managing and activating its collections to the highest possible ethical and curatorial standards, collaborating with community, representatives of foreign governments, staff and students, to ensure the museum fulfils its role as a standard bearer for collections at the Australia National University.

Organisational and Funding Structure

With support and guidance from the ANU Collections team (ANU Initiatives and Infrastructure Office), the Centre for Classical Studies in the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, College of Arts and Social Sciences, is responsible for the maintenance, storage, conservation, management, and activation of the Museum and Teaching Collection. The management of the collection and its teaching, research and outreach initiatives is managed by Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney, Curator, ANU Classics Museum, with reference to staff in ANU Collections and the Centre for Classical Studies.

Strategic Alignment

The management, activation and engagement of the ANU Classics Museum aligns with several ANU strategic priorities, including:

- “Create nationally and internationally significant research infrastructure and make it accessible to all” (ANU by 2025).
- “Translate and communicate our research and shape national and global debates” (ANU by 2025: Plan on a Page).
- “Support and incentivise all ANU staff to work innovatively and collaboratively in support of research excellence” (ANU by 2025: Plan on a Page).
- “Meet our responsibilities to the Asia-Pacific region with work informed by specialist knowledge and networks” (ANU by 2025: Plan on a Page).
- “Assist with the pooling of University resources to ensure that our infrastructure and collections remain world-class” (ANU by 2025: Research and Innovation Portfolio Strategic Intent).

Copyright

Except in cases where the items are on loan, which is clearly stipulated in loan documentation, the collections of the ANU Classics Museum are owned by the Australian National University.

Collection Staff

Collection Manager

The collections of the ANU Classics Museum are managed by:

Dr Georgia Pike-Rowney

The Friends’ Lecturer and Curator, ANU Classics Museum

Centre for Classical Studies, School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics

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Collection Stakeholders

The collection is managed in reference to the Senior Collections Advisor, the RSHA Collections Officer, the Head, Centre for Classical Studies, and the Head, School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics. Community stakeholders include the Friends of the Classics Museum, the Volunteer Guides, as well as schools and the wider community.

Statement of Significance

The Classics Museum collections have historical significance as an assemblage of artefacts that offer a perspective on the everyday life of the ancient Mediterranean world. Unlike other Australian-held classics collections, the ANU collection concentrates on the domestic items of the household (mixing bowls, sieves, tiny lamps and feeding vessels for babies). These illustrate the patterns of life in the ancient world in an authentic way. Each item in the ANU Classics Museum collections has a story to tell, about the person who made it, the person who used it, or the context in which it was used.

The Classics Museum Collection

The Classics Museum Collection has a number of areas of particular strength: its sequences of Greek and Roman coins provide an overview of the manufacture and design of coinage from the 6th century BC to the fourth century AD; on display are a number of items illustrating early examples of writing, including marble funerary inscriptions; a strong collection of items relating to burial and commemoration; and a fine collection of south Italian pottery, much of which comes from a single tomb. The collection is studied from a variety of perspectives by students in a number of academic areas, including Classical Studies, archaeology, art history, and the visual arts.

The collection's significance for art history and ancient technology is evident in the craftsmanship inherent in the items. The collection illustrates, for example, changes in metal-working practice from bronze metallurgy to iron in the 1st millennium BCE; evidence of changes in techniques in vase painting in 6th-century BCE Athens; evidence of different decorative practices across individual Greek centres and, later, across the expanse of the Roman Empire; new developments and techniques in glass-working across the centuries and especially at the turn of the millennium.

The artistic and creative significance of the collection is demonstrable through modern responses to the collection, such as a ceramic series of lekythoi and amphorae by Wendy Wood in the 1990s, decorated with modern scenes. More recently this significance is being demonstrated through the ARTefacts project (2023-2024), funded by the Friends of the Classics Museum, where artists and scholars undertaking higher degrees at the School of Art and Design choose an object and create a new creative or scholarly response.

The research significance of the collection is demonstrable in, for example, cross-disciplinary work on a fragment of cameo glass (CM 01.02). A number of other items in the collection have been the subject of scholarly study, for example a portrait head probably of the Roman emperor Licinius [CM 87.05], and an exhaustive study of five Roman nails [12.14].

As a collection, the items are representative of everyday life in the ancient Mediterranean world. A collection of such items is not in itself rare; but the care with which the collection has been assembled makes it distinctive amongst other collections in Australia and New Zealand.

The Graeme Clarke Teaching Collection

Named for Emeritus Professor Graeme Clarke AO FAHA (1934-2023), the Graeme Clarke Teaching Collection is significant due to its provenance in the Hellenistic site of Jebel Khalid on the banks of the Euphrates River in Syria. Jebel Khalid (literally 'Mount Khalid' – we do not know its ancient name) is significant as a truly Hellenistic site, founded in the early 3rd century BCE, when the Seleucid emperors were consolidating their hold on territories inherited from Alexander III of Macedon (commonly known as 'Alexander the Great'). The site was abandoned around 70 BCE, when the Seleucid Empire was collapsing. It was never resettled and so it preserves its Hellenistic character, unlike comparable sites such as Pella in Jordan, with its many layers of overbuilding after its Hellenistic existence.

The Australian Mission to Jebel Khalid in northern Syria was a joint project of the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne, beginning in 1986 and ceasing after 2010 due to the Syrian Civil War. The objects that make up the teaching collection are those that were approved for removal to Australia prior to 2010 by a panel of experts in Syria who examined each item. This process has ensured no items of significance or value left the country.

The approximately 450 items that make up this collection include ceramics (small vessels, amphora handles, fragments and sherds), metals (weapon heads, small domestic objects, and fragments), stone and plaster (sculptural fragments in marble, tesserae from mosaics), and glass (fragments and small vessels). While the individual items are of little financial value or consequence, their educational value is incalculable.

Highlights of the hands-on collection include: a Parian marble toe (a fragment of a larger than life-size sculpture); a fragment of a ceramic child's toy horse; a bronze lamp lid in the shape of a crocus; and fragments of fine Nabataean pottery.

The archaeological and conservational significance of the items from Jebel Khalid has increased due to subsequent damage inflicted by the Islamic State on the site and archaeological finds left in Syria after 2010.

Significance of the Collections as a Community Hub

The ANU Classics collection has strong interpretive capacity as one of the ANU's most valuable outreach resources. The museum is the focus of a large community interested in various aspects of the ancient world. The Friends of the Classics Museum was established in 1985, and continues to grow and support museum activities. This group hosts regular public lectures and talks in the museum space. The Volunteer Guides, established in 2010, have introduced several thousand people to the ancient world through regular museum tours and short courses for adults and students of all ages.

Collection Development Strategy

The Classics Museum aims to develop its collections through innovative programs, research and creative response in order to activate its existing collections. Due to new national and international standards concerning the export and sale of antiquities, and the increasing risks of engaging with illicit material with false provenance, in the rare event of any new acquisitions of ancient artefacts by donation or purchase, the objects will be held to the highest possible standard of assessment. This assessment will include a full provenance history check and an evaluation of the significance and value towards the educational and research goals of the museum. Any gaps or uncertainties in provenance history will not be acceptable. Any concerns as to the legality of an object in relation to Australian and International law, or the laws of the country of origin, will not be acceptable.

The ANU Classics Museum acknowledges the generosity and support of the Friends of the Classics Museum and others in its community who in the past have donated objects, or who have donated funds towards the purchase of objects. We also acknowledge our role in advising the community in the management of any antiquities they may possess, through earlier purchase, or through inheritance. Please contact the ANU Classics Museum if you have any questions concerning donation, acquisition and repatriation policies: classics.museum@anu.edu.au

Repatriation Strategy

The ANU Classics Museum is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards for its collections and acknowledges that objects that are found to have been illegally removed from their country of origin should be rightfully and unconditionally repatriated.

Repatriation of items from the ANU Classics Museum collections occur following a formal request through the Australian Office of the Arts or through another body such as a foreign embassy. Any requests for repatriation of collection material will be considered with guidance from the ANU Collections Advisory Group, the RSHA Collections Committee and ANU University Legal Office. In some circumstances this may mean that an object will physically return to the country of origin, and in other cases ownership of the object will be transferred to a foreign government and the object may remain in the collection on loan. This is determined in collaboration with the government or community in question. In the case of an object that is connected with a specific individual, donation, bequest, or that has been purchased in honour of a community member, relevant stakeholders and community members will be consulted and informed throughout the process in order to maintain transparency.

Deaccession and Disposal Strategy

Items will be deaccessioned if their condition has so deteriorated that they are no longer of value for teaching and learning, or if they are to be repatriated to a country of origin. The decision to deaccession will be taken by the Curator in consultation with ANU Collections staff, the Head, Centre for Classical Studies, and relevant collections committees. In the case of a deteriorated object, once they have been deaccessioned, items will be added to the teaching collection or stored for research purposes as appropriate.

Should items on loan to the Museum (see Loans Strategy below) deteriorate, or should the decision be made no longer to house them in the collection, they will be returned to their owners.

Risk Management and Conservation Plan

The principal concern of the Curator is the good condition of the objects in the collection. Conservation takes two forms: preventive conservation and remedial conservation.

Preventive conservation requires that the environment in which the collection is housed is controlled in terms of heat and humidity. This cannot be the case in the Classics Museum, as it is situated in a building which is not air-conditioned. The environment is, however, monitored; a thermo-hydrograph reading is taken every three years to ensure that conditions are acceptable. The level and quality of lighting is also monitored. Abundant storage for items not on display is available in the lower levels of the museum cases.

The Graeme Clarke Teaching Collection is housed in an Object Based Learning Room adjacent to the museum, including bespoke drawers fitted to contain the collection and make it easily accessible for teaching purposes.

The items in the collection are occasionally handled by Classics staff. On occasions when items are studied in the classroom, students are instructed in the correct methods of holding objects and are obliged to wear nitrile gloves provided.

In cases where advice on the condition of objects or when remedial conservation is needed, the Curator will facilitate suitable conservators for the work required.

Security and Disaster Preparedness

The University is responsible for overall security and Security Officers routinely patrol the Classics Museum after hours. Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday Centre for Classical Studies staff are frequently in the area.

The Classics Museum is covered by the RSHA Collections Disaster Management Plan which is updated annually and is lodged under the CASS Business Continuity Plan. In case of disaster, the prime requirement is that lives should not be lost while people attempt to save items from the collection. The best policy in the face of immediate danger, such as fire, is to leave the collection, taking, if possible, only the accessions registers (which are also preserved digitally – as are museum photographs).

Other risks that are faced by similar collections include:

1. Pest infestation: this is unlikely as the vast majority of objects in the museum (pottery, glass, metal) are not susceptible to pest damage. Additionally, the display cases are tightly secured and provide good protection from larger pests.
2. Inadequate security: now considerably improved with the purchase of new cases in 2010 and the installation of a security system including cameras
3. Poor handling and transport: this is the primary risk to the collection, as it is a teaching collection requiring objects to be actively handled. Risks can be limited with appropriate education in handling and packing for staff and students. Any items of particular delicacy or at higher risk will only be handled in exceptional circumstances, facilitated by the curator. All handling of any object in the museum must be approved by the Curator, the Head of the Centre for Classical Studies, or the Senior Collections Advisor.

Cataloguing Strategy

Documentation of items in the collection takes several forms: an accessions register (both hand-written in hard-copy and maintained electronically), and an online catalogue available through the ANU Classics Museum website.

When an item is accessioned it is given a unique number which comprises a prefix which indicates the year of purchase and a number which indicates the order of acquisition in that year. Recorded also are details of provenance, details of purchase (date, source, cost), and brief details of the item (material, size, identification) and its condition. In conjunction with this a photographic record is made: a series of black and white photographs (from 2008 this practice has not been maintained) and, since 2008, digital images. The images and the accessions catalogue are now cross-referenced electronically. Copies of the accessions register are held by members of the Centre for Classical Studies and Collections staff.

The online catalogue is designed to be an informative resource with both scholars and the public in mind. It describes the item and its condition in careful detail, and where possible sets the object in its cultural sphere. Each description is accompanied by one or more photographs.

The catalogue of the then Classics Department Museum, *Antiquities* (J.R. Green and Beryl Rawson) was published in 1981; it records objects acquired by the Museum up until 1978. Copies were sent to major museums and dealers as a security measure. The revised catalogue is accessible online.

An inventory of the collection is maintained by Collections staff and the Curator. The electronic inventory is centrally administered and is checked annually by the officer responsible.

Collection Access Strategy

The Museum is open to the public between 9am and 5pm Monday-Friday; only those who have access to the building in which it is housed may visit it at other times. The Classics Museum is also open to the public for special occasions: for example, for evening gatherings of the Friends of the Classics Museum and the Friends of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens, ANU Open Day, and for social events such as conference gatherings or book launches.

For students and scholars, access to items for study and research may be arranged with the Curator.

Curator-led tours for schools and academic staff can be arranged by contacting classics.museum@anu.edu.au or visiting: <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/classics-museum-curator-led-tours>

Public tours and community group visits are led by the Volunteer Guides: <https://slll.cass.anu.edu.au/classics-museum/volunteer-guides>

Interpretive signage in the museum area helps the casual visitor understand the collection. Also available for visitors are copies of the Museum catalogue, *Antiquities*; several shelves of booklets on ancient artefacts and related topics which may be consulted but not borrowed; and a trifold 'Classics Museum guide' brochure, which features a selection of items from the collection. Photographs may be taken in the Museum by members of the public after obtaining permission.

A record is kept of those who make bookings through the Curator and the Volunteer Guides. However, because of the location of the Classics Museum, in a public thoroughfare on the ANU campus, it is not possible to quantify all visitors to the collection.

Loans Strategy

The Museum will only accept an item for loan when it enhances the collection for teaching purposes and when the Museum can ensure its security and conservation requirements. The Museum includes in its display a number of items on long-term loan. A number of items are on loan from the National Gallery of Australia; others are on loan from the Parliament House Art Collection. Both the loans are covered by a formal loan agreement which is renewed at regular intervals. An inventory is carried out at that time. The curator of the Parliament House Collection inspects the items from that collection and their condition annually; a conservator or curator from the NGA carries out an inspection periodically.

A number of private collectors have deposited one or more items with the collection for an unspecified period. The Museum no longer accepts indefinite loan periods and only accepts the loan of objects for specific terms, with the option of renewal where suitable. All loan items on display are documented and photographed.

The Classics Museum is prepared to consider loans to other institutions should the items requested be seen to enhance an existing or a planned display in a significant way. A loan agreement is drawn up on condition that satisfactory arrangements are in place for the security and the safety of the items on loan. The Curator considers factors such as insurance; packing requirements at either end; transport; procedures to be followed when the items are in place in the receiving institution; documentation, including a photographic record.

The Classics Museum welcomes the opportunity to display some of its holdings in other institutions, provided that this can be done with the security and the safety of the items in mind.