

Abstract:

Archives are critical to community identity. This is true at the local as well as the national level. Communities need resources to maintain their archives, particularly when public interest in archives and cultural heritage generally is increasing. Government funding schemes, whether through long-term programs or single project grants, have assisted in developing the capacity of communities to manage their cultural heritage locally. Yet in cost-cutting times, governments around the world have viewed cultural institutions as suitable targets for rationalisation and saving money, and in some cases, have withdrawn their financial support entirely.

For community archives, as for other archives, digitisation of analogue holdings is an avenue to improved accessibility of those holdings and to a higher profile for the organisation. Access to funds for digitisation and access to expertise on managing digital collections for community archives is variable. However, success by community archives in securing funds for digitisation may be an important first step in ensuring the preservation of community identity as the world moves towards a digital future.

Statement of findings:

This paper focuses on the history of government support for community archives in Australia, comparing this with experience in other countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom. It also looks at the role of professional associations in supporting community archives. It takes a broad view of the notion of support, including standards and accreditation schemes as well as funding in its investigation of how community archives can survive and continue to serve their communities effectively.