

National Library of Australia

National Library of Australia Supplementary Style Guide

Communications & Marketing Section

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Contents

Introduction	5
Content and feedback	5
Writing about the National Library	6
Using our name	6
Think about audience	7
Avoid the acronym	7
Aim for inclusivity	7
General words and phrases	7
Titles of services and sections	7
Events and exhibitions	8
Describing collections	8
Writing about Library spaces	9
Audience	9
Referring to our audience	10
Current audience	10
Potential audience	11
Writing for a wider audience	11
People working or presenting at the Library	12
Tone of voice	12
Our tone of voice elements	12
Open and approachable	12
Reliable and resourceful	13
Surprising	13
First Australians	14
Approved terminology	14
Diversity of First Australians	15
Punctuation and style	15
Considerations for using archival material	15
Further reading	16
Culturally and linguistically diverse groups	16
Using constitutional definitions	16
Inclusive language	16
Writing about sensitive topics	17
What is considered a sensitive topic	17
General suggestions	17
When to seek advice	18
Disclaimer to use	18
Support services	19
Image credits and citations	19

Image credits	19
Image available online (link to Trove).....	19
Crediting images from books, newspapers etc.	21
Crediting internal images	21
In-text citations and reference lists	22
Hyperlinks and in-text citations.....	22
Reference lists.....	22
Formatting for titles	23
General formatting for titles of works.....	23
Formatting for subtitles	23
Dates in titles	23
Italics in series or collection titles	24
Titles on web pages.....	24
Further reading	24
Web page layout.....	24
Page layout vs content	24
Headings.....	25
Hierarchy of web page heading levels	25
Heading examples.....	26
Paragraphs and spacing.....	26
Lists	26
Images	26
Hyperlinks	27
Call-out boxes.....	27
Alt text for images	27
When to use alt text.....	27
Alt text versus image credits.....	28
Alt text for different image types	28
Decorative images.....	28
Images from our collections	28
Logos.....	29
Functional images	29
Other formats.....	29
Temporary signs	30
Temporary sign types	30
Physical signs	30
Digital signs	31
Glossary.....	32
Other information sources	33

Version History

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Introduction

Writing in plain language and having a consistent approach to referring to organisation specific services and activities helps us to communicate clearly with our audiences. Use this guide, alongside the [Australian Government Style Manual](#), when writing for:

- National Library websites (nla.gov.au and bookplate.com.au)
- the [MyNLA](#) staff intranet
- printed brochures, reports and guides
- social media channels and email newsletters
- event listings and advertising material on external digital channels
- information signs and wayfinding signs in our building and on any digital platforms
- formal letters
- selected printed documents such as our Annual Report.

This includes documents intended to be uploaded and shared on any of the above websites and platforms.

There are individual standards and guides that cover:

- catalogue entries for the Library
- books by National Library of Australia Publishing
- exhibition labels
- [Trove brand guidelines](#), including guidance on the Trove tone of voice.

If you would like training on how to for write blogs, guides are available on [MyNLA](#) or in-person training sessions can be received by sending a request to the nlawebsite@nla.gov.au inbox.

This style guide covers:

- writing for our audience/s
- writing about the National Library
- our tone of voice
- avoiding Library jargon.

If you can't find something in this style guide, check the [glossary](#). If it's not there, it's likely to be covered by the [Australian Government Style Manual](#), the [Macquarie Dictionary](#) or other references mentioned in the text.

Content and feedback

The National Library Style Guide is intended to be updated regularly. If you have suggestions for edits and additions to be considered for future updates, please send them to marketing@nla.gov.au

Writing about the National Library

This section covers how to refer to us in your writing and when to use different versions of our organisation's name. It also covers how to describe locations in the building, services, events, formed collections and more.

Using our name

This table covers how to use our organisation's name in different written formats:

No.	Written format	Name to use
1	Letters	Use 'National Library of Australia' in the first instance and 'the National Library' subsequently.
2	Printed documents	Use 'National Library of Australia' in the first instance and 'the National Library' subsequently.
3	Website text, blogs and channels that belong to us (intranet, physical/digital signs in our building, etc).	<p>As our audience is already on our channels and we would like them to feel welcome, there is no need to use our full name. Use 'we', 'our' and 'us'. In instances where this will cause confusion, use 'the Library'.</p> <p>The logo includes the words, National Library of Australia, if written content will appear in close proximity to the logo there is no need to repeat the organisation's name.</p> <p>The exception to this rule is when a printed document is being uploaded to the website, these should be reproduced as they appear in the original document. As fewer printed documents are produced, this different application of the style will disappear over time.</p>
4	Responses to online enquiries (i.e., Ask a Librarian)	<p>Our audience has already sent in a question and know they are communicating with us, there is no need to use the National Library of Australia or the National Library in text. Use 'we', 'our' and 'us'.</p> <p>In instances where this will cause confusion, use 'the National Library'.</p>
5	Social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)	<p>If the National Library of Australia logo is appearing there is no need to use 'the National Library of Australia' in the text. Use 'we', 'our', 'us'.</p> <p>In instances where this will cause confusion (such as joint announcements with other organisations), use 'the National Library'.</p> <p>Social media channels are owned by third-party companies, so we need to be more specific in these cases, as compared to our websites.</p>
6	Writing for channels that aren't ours (i.e., conference papers, promotional articles)	<p>Use 'National Library of Australia' in the first instance and 'the National Library' subsequently.</p> <p>It may be appropriate, depending on the context, to use 'we', 'our' or 'us' in some of your writing. In instances where this will cause confusion, use 'the National Library'.</p>
7	Referring to Trove	Advice on how to write about Trove is covered in the Trove Brand Guidelines .

Think about audience

The above table is a guide to referring to our organisation but won't cover every situation. When you're writing, think about your intended readers. If it's a Minister or for government, you'll need to be more formal and use 'National Library of Australia' and 'the National Library' – even if the content will appear on the website.

Printed documents for the public, on the other hand, can occasionally use 'we', 'our' and 'us' where the context makes sense and don't have to use only formal language. There is more information about writing for different audiences in the following chapters.

Avoid the acronym

Avoid using the acronym 'NLA' in content intended to be read by people other than staff. Acronyms are confusing for people who have not heard of the National Library, or who speak English as a second language. In general, most people who are not familiar with our work are unlikely to know immediately what the acronym stands for and this makes your writing more difficult to understand.

An exception is where NLA forms part of a trademarked name, like NLA Publishing (which is used in conjunction with National Library of Australia Publishing branding).

Aim for inclusivity

Avoid language that creates a sense of exclusivity, we want people to feel a sense of inclusion and belonging.

There will be times when you'll need to use words like 'our', meaning belonging to the Library rather than belonging to everyone, for example, 'our digital strategy'. You can also use phrases like 'our stories' meaning all of Australia's stories, or 'our journey' meaning us as a nation.

When referring to the collection, you can use 'our collections', 'the collection' or the name of the [formed collection](#). That is unavoidable especially when writing letters and responding to complaints and compliments. It will differ depending on the circumstances and the audience.

General words and phrases

Use all lower case for general terms that describe our services. These include:

- research guides
- free guided tours
- collection delivery service
- legal deposit
- digital collections
- government publications.

Titles of services and sections

When using the full title of a Library service or section, use initial capital letters for key words. Some examples of this are:

- Council of the National Library of Australia
- Service Charter
- Community Heritage Grants
- Ask a Librarian
- Asia Study Grants
- Office of the Director-General
- National Library of Australia Fellowships
- Digitisation on Demand
- Collaboration Branch.

Events and exhibitions

If you are creating a title for an exhibition or event, the aim is to reach the right audience by writing a clear description that lets people know what to expect. People scan our What's On listings and quickly decide what is relevant to them.

Keep your title length under 60 characters, as shorter titles display better in promotions and are easier to read. Include essential information – is the event launching a book about Australian theme parks, or is it a public talk about Indonesian horror movies? Some examples that do this well are:

- Viewfinder: Photography from the 1970s to Now
- Online Learning: Chinese-Australian Family History
- The Life of a Spy: Rod Barton in conversation
- A Night in the National Library of Australia with Tim Ross
- School Holiday Diorama workshops.

Use initial capitals for key words in the title of a series or a specific program, for instance 'Winter Tales presents Meredith Hinchcliffe' or 'Story Time: Australian Children's Literature'. If the title has a subheading, we use a colon to separate the two and always use an initial capital for the word following the colon.

Describing collections

A significant number of Library items have been acquired as part of a collection. Some were built up by individual collectors, families, and organisations over time (formed collections). These formed collections have official names, and we use initial capitals when writing the name of the collection, such as the:

- Joseph Banks Collection
- Loke Wan Tho Collection
- Drovers Oral History Collection
- Manning and Dymphna Clark Collection.

However, as described above, you do not need an initial capital for 'collection' if you are writing about collections more generally, for example:

- find out more about the collections of Australian and British museums

- the book has been borrowed from the collection of the deBergs
- paintings were donated from her private collection.

Writing about Library spaces

This follows a similar rule to collections. We use initial capitals when using the full name of a specific area, like:

- Petherick Reading Room
- Special Collections Reading Room
- Treasures Gallery
- Friends Lounge
- Conference Room
- Theatre
- Bookplate
- 'National Library of Australia Bookshop' in the first instance and 'Bookshop' following.

Use the full name of locations when writing anywhere except on temporary signage. For example, use 'Level 1', not 'L1'. But when writing about spaces in the plural, or more generally, we should use lower case:

- the reading rooms offer a comfortable place to study
- free tours of our exhibition galleries are offered daily.

The following is a list of the names of public spaces in our building, by floor. The list is not exhaustive and may be added to or changed over time:

- **Lower Ground 1:** Theatre, Paperplate
- **Ground Level:** Main Entrance, Information Desk, National Library Foyer, Bookshop, Bookplate, Treasures Gallery, Exhibition Gallery, Main Reading Room
- **Level 1:** Special Collections Reading Room, Petherick Reading Room, Ferguson Room, Council Room, Executive Suite.
- **Level 2:** Friends Lounge, Nan Kivell Room
- **Level 4:** Conference Room

Since all the names are proper nouns, use initial capitals unless referring to spaces generally or in the plural, as described in the paragraph above.

Audience

This is a general term for people who receive information from and about us. This information could be received through our correspondence, websites, social media, newsletters, promotions by other organisations or visits to the building.

Referring to our audience

When referring to people who use our services, some options are ‘visitors’, ‘patrons’ or ‘customers’. You can also add ‘our/Library’, i.e. ‘our visitors’, our café customers or ‘Library patrons’, if you need to be specific.

Try to avoid ‘users’, even though this is a popular term in IT and design spaces. Many people don’t like being referred to directly as users as it has negative meanings as well as generic ones. When you’re deciding which words to use, think about how you might like to be described.

No.	Option	Examples
1	Visitors	Visitors to the Treasures Gallery... Our visitors are welcome to...
2	Customers	Our café customers... NLA Bookshop customers can pay by...
3	Patrons Capital letter when referring to financial donors	Thank you to our Patrons and donors for making these projects possible.
4	Patrons	For the safety of our patrons unattended items may be inspected and removed by authorised officers.
5	Researchers	This guide aims to assist researchers in identifying and using the Library’s collection.
6	Readers	Researchers may apply for Petherick Reader status...

Current audience

Information about the Library’s current audience and how we engage with them can be found in the [Communications and Digital Community Strategy](#). We regularly conduct research and focus groups to keep this information current. Read more about the [findings from our market research](#) on MyNLA.

When we talk about our current audience, we mean the people who are currently receiving information from and about us. They might be writing to us about the collection, visit the reading room and attend events, be part of the Friends or share and engage with our social media posts. We know from our research that our current audience is, on average, older (55+), well educated, majority female and has strong interests in history, genealogy and visiting cultural institutions like museums, galleries and libraries.

An example of writing for our current audience:

The National Library of Australia is a world-leading and respected custodian of Australia’s published, written, oral, visual and digital heritage. We ensure Australian history, culture and knowledge is sustained for all Australian people, both now and in the future.

The Library aims to comprehensively collect Australian publications in order to reflect the full diversity and range of Australian life depicted in the published record. When it is not possible or practical to collect every Australian publication—for example, ephemera, posters and websites—the Library collects a representation of the breadth and diversity of materials.

- **from the 2020-21 – 2023-24 Collecting Strategy**

The above writing has a formal tone. It uses terms specific to cultural institutions like ‘digital heritage’, and ‘ephemera’. Overall, it is written for a reader who has a high level of literacy and assumed knowledge of how libraries work. This style works in a formal document, but it is not appropriate for a blog or event listing.

Potential audience

If, when we write, we assume our main readers are our current audience, we ignore people who might be interested in using our services but are not currently doing so – our potential audience. This includes younger people, those from regional and rural parts of Australia, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and First Australians.

From our audience research, we know there are barriers that prevent people using our services. This might be a lack of awareness about the Library in general, thinking you need to be a student or a researcher to get a library card, or the idea that you can’t visit the building without an appointment.

Writing for a wider audience

Thinking about the different parts of our tone of voice, described in previous sections and through the supporting examples, you might be getting an idea of how you could write to appeal to a wider range of readers than just our current audience. A few more tips:

- While you should write in plain language, you don’t have to spell out concepts or terminology as if you were writing for a child.
- Don’t be afraid of using engaging adjectives or grammatical tools to make a point. Your audience will follow you.
- There is an enthusiasm for the Library as an institution and for books. This means you can write with warmth and zeal. You can allow a passion for the Library content to seep into your writing.
- Both the potential and current audiences enjoy stories. You can bring a story telling style into your writing, where appropriate.

The audience understands the structures of journalism and you can use them, especially in things like blog writing, where you can apply classic long form media stylings. These writing techniques include having a strong introductory sentence, using a conversational tone and a hierarchy, such as the [‘inverted pyramid’](#).

For more tips on writing for a wider audience, see the Communications & Marketing section’s [blog writing guidelines](#) on MyNLA.

People working or presenting at the Library

When writing someone's title, we always begin with their honorific (i.e. Mrs, Dr, Professor, etc) then their first and second names, before specifying a current job title. Any honours such as Order of Australia come after the person's name and before their current job role. For example:

- Professor Alex Zafiroglu, Deputy Director ANU School of Cybernetics
- Dr Marie-Louise Ayres FAHA, Director-General of the National Library of Australia.

There are more guidelines about professional and academic titles in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#).

Tone of voice

Tone of voice means what we sound like as an organisation. Even though many people write for the Library, and we don't all sound identical, there's guiding principles for the impression we want to give to our audience.

Our tone of voice elements

Tone of voice is mainly applied on our social media, websites and newsletter content. This section does not cover formal writing, including writing letters. Information about writing letters is in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#). The three crucial parts of our tone of voice are:

- open and approachable
- reliable and resourceful
- surprising.

Open and approachable

To apply this in writing:

- use shared pronouns where appropriate (we, us, our)
- use positive and polite language
- use plain language, which you can read more about in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#)
- avoid Library jargon and don't assume knowledge.

Example of open and approachable writing:

By bringing together our stories, we can build a rich and vibrant resource that lets current and future generations know who we are.

- from [What We Collect](#)

Example of writing that creates a barriers:

The Library is always in need of more material in order to meet its charter. Contributing collection items that strictly adhere to our acquisition policies will supply knowledge to current GLAM enthusiasts and future generations.

This above writing isn't inclusive and reads as a directive. The language used is formal, mostly not plain language and includes Library-specific jargon. Most of all, it's all about the Library's needs, rather than being framed as everyone being part of a collective whole.

Reliable and resourceful

To apply this in writing:

- explain simply
- use relevant and timely examples that people can easily understand
- be informed and accurate but humble

Example of reliable and resourceful writing:

Another essential resource is Trove, a great online source of information from not just the Library's collections, but organisations across Australia.

Trove has millions of pages of Australian historical newspapers dating back to 1803, which carried news of enlistments, troop movements, war reports and even letters from the front during many armed conflicts. Trove also has collections of diaries and personal papers from many people who served with or had links to the military.

All searching and access is free, no signup required.

- from [Finding Family Military History](#)

This above example is positive in tone, but also direct, giving a clear overview of the resource.

It has helpful hyperlinks that take the reader directly to more information and lists the most likely things that people searching for family history would be looking for: diaries, letters, war reports. This shows empathy for the reader and their interests.

Surprising

By surprising, we mean that we love words and have fun with them. We share unexpected stories behind the items in our collection and are passionate about helping people to uncover interesting material of their own.

To apply this in writing:

- use story telling principles, like beginning with a captivating opening and writing from a character's perspective, when appropriate
- share human-centered stories
- have a purpose to your humour
- encourage people to get curious
- share how you found something or solved a puzzle.

Example of writing that is surprising:

If you wanted to have some fun on a voyage from Britain to the antipodes in the 19th century, you often had to jolly well make it yourself.

To stave off cabin fever, you could read a book, write some poetry, or socialise with your fellow passengers. Or...if you had a literary mind, and a certain lust for power, you could establish a tiny media empire and use it to control the very ebb and flow of information on board via the ship's newspaper.

- from [Quips and Quirks of Facetious Mirth](#)

This example works because it has a sense of fun which is infused through the writing. It's written from a definite point of view, someone writing in the style of the time ('you jolly well had to make it yourself'), but with an ironic take on the subject.

The use of the pronoun 'you' also keeps the reader invested in the story and makes them feel as if they are there on the ship, trying to pass away the time. Finally, it shares stories in a conversational, engaging way which makes the reader want to explore the subject more.

First Australians

This section contains guidance on creating public content that features or references First Australians in a way that respects and acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia.

Consultation is the most important part of this writing process. Anything that is assessed as containing ICIP requires:

- direct consultation with relevant community(ies)
- an appropriate approval process.

When creating any content with that features or references First Australians, always consider the impact it may have on the community or communities involved.

Including First Australians content or references to First Australians must be relevant and within context. Consider the purpose of the content you're creating, and who the audience is, and then given both those factors – whether the inclusion is appropriate.

When in doubt about what to do, refer to the [Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property \(ICIP\) Protocol](#). If needed, consult with Indigenous Engagement before you begin writing and they can assist.

Approved terminology

The Library only uses the following:

- First Australian/s
- Aboriginal people/s
- Torres Strait Islander people/s

These terms must be capitalised as shown above, as they are proper nouns. This is an approved list from Indigenous Engagement and may be changed or added to over time. You must consult first with the Indigenous Engagement Section if you wish to use a term that is not on this list.

Diversity of First Australians

There is a wide range of nations, cultures and languages across mainland Australia and throughout the Torres Strait. Given this diversity, respectful language use depends on what different communities find appropriate. There may be more than one 'traditional' or 'correct' term for something you are describing, and this is why it is important to consult with Indigenous Engagement before you begin writing or creating content.

When creating content, it is important to use language that is consistent with the Library and to avoid diverse terms used primarily by and in First Australian communities. For example, avoid phrases such as 'you mob', or 'deadly', as it is not appropriate when used by an organisation.

Keep in mind that if you would also like to use words or phrases that are from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language, please consult with the Indigenous Engagement Section to make sure you have permissions and the usage is correct and appropriate.

Punctuation and style

Using italics and quotation marks for words from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is inappropriate. If you are using words from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in your content, use the correct words to describe the specific language being used. For example, in our video transcripts we use:

Jeannie: (speaks in Warlpiri). What I've just said can be translated in English to 'I will see you'.

OR

Jeannie: kapirngaku nyanyi (in Warlpiri). What I've just said can be translated in English to 'I will see you'.

Capitalisation of respected terms is required, such as: Elders, Traditional Owners, Traditional Custodians, Welcome to Country, and Acknowledgement of Country.

Considerations for using archival material

Some of the Library's archival material will contain language from a particular era and wouldn't be used now. This includes not only the text of books and articles, but also [image credits](#) with terms that have loaded meanings like 'colonisation' or 'terra nullius'. In these instances, you may need to:

- Consult with Indigenous Engagement for more guidance, including options for updating descriptions.
- Flag this language and alert viewers that it is there.
- Explain this in the context of the times and how we don't use this language anymore.

Some of the Library's archival images contain hurtful or distressing subject matter and images of First Australians who are no longer with us. Readers also need to be made aware of this if you are using archival images in your content, so they can make decisions that are culturally appropriate for themselves while engaging with our collections.

Wording could read: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that there are images of deceased persons'.

Further reading

In addition to consulting with the Indigenous Engagement section about your content, we recommend the following for learning more about creating respectful content that features or references First Australians:

- [Australian Government Style Manual on inclusive language](#)
- [The Library's Reconciliation Engagement Plan](#)
- [Demonstrating inclusive and respectful language](#)

Culturally and linguistically diverse groups

Each culture and language group is different. They have their own nuances, sensitivities and concerns. This section contains general information and suggestions on where to seek further guidance.

Using constitutional definitions

There can be sensitivities around things like geography or demographics or the correct cultural terms. To avoid causing contention, go with the official definition given by the government of the country or acknowledged community leaders.

For instance:

The Fijian Australian community is diverse, reflecting the vibrant nature of contemporary Fiji.

The Fijian Constitution defines Fijians to include those of iTaukei (Indigenous Fijian) background, Indian background, Rotuman, European, Chinese or other Pacific Islander background.

- from [Collecting Fijian Australian Stories](#)

This above example uses both positive language and a constitutional definition to deftly navigate through the issue of what constitutes the Fijian Australian community.

Inclusive language

Read the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) for detailed advice on this topic.

It's much better to use inclusive language and only draw attention to the specific cultural or language group when it's needed. For example:

- If you have a connection to the Fijian-Australian community you would like to share, please contact us.
- Australia is home to more than 1.2 million Chinese-Australians, many born in Australia, with lineages that span generations of Australian history.

Avoid using the following phrases:

- CALD - While we write about CALD internally in government, as a quick umbrella way to capture many different groups, never use this acronym in public facing writing as it may cause offence.
- Minority – this implies an inferior status within the general population.
- Non-English speaking - could be considered offensive and may be taken to imply the person is being categorised or is not part of the wider Australian community.
- Avoid words like 'foreign', which has an implication of something not belonging, or being unnatural. Instead, 'other parts of the world' is clear, factual, and inoffensive.

Writing about sensitive topics

This is a guide to helping minimise risks and consider tone when writing about a topic or situation of a sensitive nature.

What is considered a sensitive topic

Subjects that can potentially cause distress, offence or risk to reputation if not handled correctly are considered sensitive topics. These include:

- A tragedy or natural disaster that affected people recently or in the past (i.e., A bushfire, a flood, a fatality).
- An event that causes distress to a group of people or culture recently or in the past (i.e., The Stolen Generation, or a targeted act of violence against a person or group of people).
- Cultural or religious subjects of sensitivity (i.e., Beliefs of a community or culture; cultural clashes or disputes over beliefs or objects of importance).
- Something that's deeply affected an individual or group on a personal level (i.e., Loss of a home or land; a political decision; harassment, abuse).
- Vilification of an individual or group based on race, age, culture, language, gender, sexual diversity or disability.
- Something that's unresolved and ongoing and is the cause of stress and anxiety (i.e., A lawsuit or legal case; an ongoing dispute over land; a negotiation between employers and workers).

General suggestions

- Words matter. Be aware of their consequences and how they may be received. Consider each phrase or word carefully before using it. Refer to the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) section on inclusive language for guidance on words that are culturally appropriate and respectful of the diversity of Australia's people.
- Empathy is key. Deal with topics factually and sensitively, but don't get judgmental, political or emotional. Ask yourself what it would be like to be in the shoes of the individual or group. How would they want the topic to be approached? Stay away from aggressive, lurid adjectives (i.e. 'horrific' or 'shocking'). Even if you mean well, you won't be supporting those affected. Write in a neutral tone and stick to the facts.
- Put topics into context. This helps readers get a better understanding of why it is sensitive and how it may affect people. This can be done through giving a brief historical context or the topic's wider implications on society.

- Avoid slang or jargon, words that could be pejorative or any words that are controversial.
- When in doubt, consult with an expert. Before you publish sensitive content, contact the Communications and Marketing Section, or Indigenous Engagement Section.

Example of how to write about a sensitive topic:

During the summer of 2019 – 2020, Australia experienced a catastrophic bushfire season. Many deadly fires broke out around the country. It was a landmark event in Australian history. The NSW towns of Cobargo, Quaama, Nerrigundah and the surrounding regions were devastated.

- from [The Badja Forest Road Fire Oral History Project](#)

The above example uses facts, empathy and adjectives to describe the event but stays away from sensationalism or casting judgement. It stays focused on the event, the consequences, and the geographic area.

When to seek advice

You should consult and seek advice if you are unsure about how to write about the delicate nature of the content. For example:

- If you're writing about a legal matter that is before court.
- If anything may potentially be libelous or defamatory. This can occur if you're writing about a person or group's character or something they are alleged to have done.
- When you're simply quoting another source that is potentially libelous or defamatory.
- If you are writing about a cultural group of people or their experience and are unsure what appropriate words to use.
- When you're writing about a past historical event that has multiple, conflicting perspectives.

If your writing covers sensitive topics that you feel you lack sufficient expertise and knowledge in, please submit your ideas via the monthly content submission process coordinated by the Communications and Marketing Section.

Disclaimer to use

You may come across material written from another time that could now cause offence or be considered contentious. For instance, material that is racist or sexist.

If you are writing for an external channel, for example a conference presentation or paper, please talk to your supervisor or the Communications and Marketing Section and discuss if a disclaimer such as the one below should be included alongside your content.

The National Library of Australia's collections contain terms that reflect authors' views, or those of the period in which the item was written or recorded, but may not be considered appropriate today. These views are not necessarily the views of the National Library. While the information may not reflect current understanding, it is provided in an historical context.

Support services

In some instances, it may be appropriate to include information where people can go to for support, if content in an article has caused them distress.

Example of how to write a support services message:

For crisis support, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, chat with them online at www.lifeline.org.au or text them on 0477 13 11 14. Lifeline services are available 24/7.

If the material you are writing about includes these sensitivities, please make sure your content is reviewed by your supervisor before it is made public.

Image captions & in-text citations

We use the Australian Government Style Manual for most citations, with the following exceptions described in this section. Examples provided for guidance.

Image captions

Use the following guidelines for crediting images in content written for newsletters, on Library websites, or for external digital channels. This style should also be used by media outlets and other organisations who are using our images if they don't have a house style for image credits.

For guidance on providing context for historical image credits that may contain hurtful and offensive language, please see the section in this style guide on [using archival documents](#).

This guidance does not apply to image credits and citations in books published by NLA Publishing, or to exhibition labels.

Image available online (link to Trove)

If an image has been digitised and is available online, link to Trove in the image caption. Use the short form of the image's URL, which contains a persistent identifier (a code that ensure the link stays active and correct in the long term). This short form URL is part of the full URL when viewing the image in Trove – the section needed is 'nla.gov.au/nla.obj-XXXXXXXXX'. Use the following order of information for the image credit:

Creator, Title (in italics), date (if not included in title), short form URL, credit (if required)

If any part of this information is not known or not relevant, skip it and move onto the next section. For example:

- Samuel Thomas Gill, *Pitt Street from King St., looking south*, 1856, nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135663067
- Peter Dombrovskis, *Icicles on creeping pine, Cheyne Range, Tasmania, 1979*, (detail), nla.gov.au/nla.obj-148521911, courtesy Liz Dombrovskis
- Ellis Rowan, *Blue flycatcher*, 1917, nla.gov.au/nla.obj-138743765

In one of the examples above, '(detail)' has been included in one of the image credits where the image pictured is not the entire work. If a title is very long, shorten it by removing extra information in brackets, or any words not necessary for understanding the subject or context.

Keeping the 'nla.gov.au' section in the short form URL means it can be cut/pasted or copied into a browser and will open directly to the image in Trove, even when the text can't be hyperlinked.

Example from digital content:



Ellis Rowan, *Eucalyptus macrocarpa* Hook., family Myrtaceae, Western Australia, 1880s, nla.gov.au/nla.obj-138826568

Image not available online (link to catalogue)

If an image is not yet digitised, link to the Library catalogue in the image caption instead of to Trove. The short form of the catalogue link can be found in the 'cite this' option on the catalogue record – the section needed is 'nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vnXXXXXXX' Use the following order of information for the image credit:

Creator, Title (in italics), date (if not included in title), catalogue identifier, credit (if required)

If any part of this information is not known or not relevant, skip it and move onto the next section. For example:

- Ellis Rowan, *Spring landscape*, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn8676056
- Peter Dombrovskis and Les Walkling, *She-oak cones (Allocasuarina littoralis), east Freycinet, Tasmania*, 2017, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7386656, courtesy Liz Dombroskis
- William Yang, *Stiletto Oscars*, 1976, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7250851

If a title is very long, shorten it by removing extra information in brackets, or any words not necessary for understanding the subject or context.

Keeping the 'nla.gov.au' section in the link means it can be cut/pasted or copied into a browser and will open directly to the catalogue record, even when the text can't be hyperlinked.

Captioning images from books, newspapers etc.

When using an image sourced from a larger work (such as the page of a newspaper or magazine), use the following order of information for the image caption:

Description of image or image title, Work title (in italics), publication date, link to Trove or catalogue, page number/s

Whether you link to Trove or the Library catalogue will depend on whether the work is available online or not. More guidance on this is available in the sections above. If some of this information is not known or not relevant, skip to the next part. Examples:

- Mr Carter, *Canberra Times*, Wed 5 Dec 1973, nla.gov.au/nla.news-article131696178, p.9
- View of Brisbane River from Kangaroo Point, *Beautiful Brisbane: 36 new views of the pearl city of the Commonwealth*, 1933, nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn126889, p.17
- Tokelauan dancers stirred the crowds with their songs, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, vol.59 no.10 (Oct 1 1988), nla.gov.au/nla.obj-338249427, p.22
- Portrait of Balbir Singh, *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic), Tues 6 Nov 1956, nla.gov.au/nla.news-article71764125, p.6

If the image is from a newspaper, double-check whether the name of the newspaper includes 'The' in the title. For example, newspapers The Age or The Australian both have a capitalised 'The' in their titles, however Northern Territory News and Canberra Times don't.

Include the place of publication in brackets after the title when it is not clear from the title, as per example above.

When linking to a newspaper article in Trove instead of an image, the short form URL looks slightly different to the one for images and has the format 'nla.gov.au/nla.news-articleXXXXXXXX', as per examples above.

Captioning internal images

Images taken by internal photographers/Library staff members for promotional purposes do not need to be captioned. However, it will sometimes be appropriate to write an informal descriptive caption to give some context to the image.

Example of descriptive captions on internal images:



Clockwise from top left:

1. National Library exterior
2. National Library exterior during Enlighten, 2016
3. A National Library Fellow on the Patrick White Lawns, 2017
4. Bookplate cafe
5. The National Library Bookshop
6. A staff member in the Special Collections Reading Room

In-text citations and reference lists

Hyperlinks and in-text citations

If you're referring in your writing to another source (i.e. a blog, web page or newspaper article) and it will be published on digital channel like a website or newsletter, link directly to the source in your text. For example:

The Windsor and Richmond Gazette wrote that [A Woman of Mars](#) 'should be read by every student of political economy'.

- From the blog post [From Braidwood to the Red Planet](#)

In this example, the link goes to the newspaper article from the Gazette on Trove and because it is a blog and not scholarly work, a hyperlink is more suitable than an in-text citation.

If you are writing for an audience that expects more academic-style referencing, use the author-date system for your in-text citations, as detailed in the [Australia Government Style Manual](#).

Reference lists

If you're using in-text citations as per the author-date system as described above, you will also need to provide an alphabetical reference list with full information on each of the sources cited. Format this in line with the guidance in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#).

Formatting for titles

Guidance on italics, capitalisation and other formatting for titles, that are specific to the Library, are outlined in this section.

General formatting for titles of works

In content for Library websites and newsletters, titles of works should be in italics and reflect the capitalisation used by the work itself. For example:

- *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* by Richard Flanagan
- *The Great Book-swapping Machine* by Emma Allen & Lisa Coutts
- *Searching for Charlotte: The Fascinating Story of Australia's First Children's Author* by Kate Forsyth & Belinda Murrell

On social media, we use single quotes for titles of works in place of italics. This is because italics aren't available for text formatting on some social media platforms.

This guidance does not apply to catalogue entries.

Formatting for subtitles

Subtitles within work titles are separated with a colon and always begin with an upper-case letter. For instance:

- *Cook's Endeavour Journal: The Inside Story*
- *In Bligh's Hand: Surviving the Mutiny on the Bounty*
- *A Brush with Birds: Australian Bird Art from the National Library of Australia.*

As above, titles in content for Library websites and newsletters should be in italics, and in single quotes on social media.

Dates in titles

Dates should not be italicised unless the date is part of the title. As in this example:

- Don McMurdo, *Portrait of Leona Mitchell in Idomeneo, the Australian Opera, 1979*

But not in this example, which is an artwork image credit that includes the date the artwork was produced:

- Minnie Lumai, *Yab-yab-gnerni-gnim (Sugarbag Dreaming), 2009*

Other works that may have dates in their title and italicised may include:

- Lectures, such as Peter Greste's, *Press freedom in Australia and why it is in crisis, 2019*
- Legislation, such as *Copyright Act 1968*
- Music pieces such as *Midday Show Theme 1991*

Italics in series or collection titles

A series title is italicised only if it is a work itself, for example, a volume of an anthology. For instance, *The New Australian Book of Verse*.

However, the Kenneth Myer Lecture would not be italicised because it is the name of a series of individual lectures and not the name of a standalone work or anthology. The titles of the individual lectures in this series would be italicised, for instance:

- Anne Summers, *20/20 vision: Where is Australia headed?*, 2017

A name for a series of podcasts such as *Bookmark This* is italicised because it is a definite series of works. The episode title of each podcast would be also italicised. An exhibition title such as *On Stage: Spotlight on Our Performing Arts* is also italicised.

Titles on web pages

For titles on web pages and blogs, we use sentence case. Italics are not required, because they are not titles of works. Here are some examples of web page headings in sentence case:

- Buy our books
- Published guides and bibliographies
- General guides to the collections

We use title case for a heading only when the heading is all made up of proper nouns. For instance:

- Special Collections Reading Room
- The Copyright Status Tool

Sometimes it may not be clear what is a proper noun or which case to use. For example:

- Summer Long Reads - Part 1
- Summer of Stories: A Spoonful of Magic

In these examples of blog titles, *Summer Long Reads* and *Summer of Stories* are clearly intended as a series, so they use title case.

Further reading

See the section in this style guide on [Writing about the National Library of Australia](#) for more information on capitalisation used for specific Library terms.

Web page layout

The key to a clear and engaging web page layout is to consider the needs of your audience with each design decision.

Page layout vs content

This section covers how to structure a web page using elements such as headings, lists and images to improve the readability and accessibility of your content. For guidance on writing specific content, such as

blogs and articles, please see the [blog writing guidelines](#) on MyNLA or contact nlawebsite@nla.gov.au to arrange in-person training.

Be aware that your content on a web page may look different to how it looks in a Word or PDF document. However, the underlying structure will be the same: headings will still be headings, paragraphs will still be paragraphs, lists will still be lists. Websites use styles that are optimised for online reading and ensure consistency of content across the whole website.

Headings

Headings act as signposts that guide readers through an article. They provide spacing and structure to the content and allow readers and assistive technologies to scan the content and understand what to expect from each section and the article as a whole. Screen reader technologies also often use headings as navigation, allowing readers to quickly jump from one heading to the next.

There are six nested heading levels that may be used on web pages. Headings on web pages should always be in hierarchical order, from H1 (most important) through to H6 (least important). Heading levels must not be skipped, for example do not follow a H2 heading with a H4 just because you don't like the look of the H3.

Hierarchy of web page heading levels

H1: The Title and “Big Idea” of the page

H2: First Point

H3: Subsection of H2

H4: Subsection of H3

H5: Subsection of H4

H6: Subsection of H5

H2: Second Point

H3: Subsection of H2

Etc.

H1 – This is the title of your page. There will be only one H1 on a web page.

- Keep your H1 under 60 characters, including spaces. This ensures the page title won't be cut-off in search engine results or on mobile devices.
- Between the H1 and the first H2, you might like to include a paragraph of one or two sentences summarising what the page is about. This may help with search engine results and ranking if you include keywords that you think readers might be searching for.

H2 – A Heading 2 is like a chapter title that groups information into a logical section.

- Your H2 should describe the main idea of that section of text.
- A H2 may also appear in a menu or table of contents to allow readers to quickly navigate the page.

H3 – A Heading 3 is a further breakdown of information that further clarifies or groups information under the previous H2.

H4, H5, H6 – Headings 4, 5 and 6 break information down into even smaller chunks under the previous headings. In most cases, H4 is the lowest you should go within web content, but H5 and H6 might be needed for more detailed plans and reports.

Heading examples

H1: A guide to locating rare manuscripts

H2: Locating rare manuscripts in Australia

H3: Rare manuscript specialist societies in NSW

H4: NSW Central Coast

Paragraphs and spacing

Each new idea or topic on a web page should get a new paragraph.

Order your paragraphs in the way that makes the most sense to the reader.

Do not make paragraphs too long. If possible, try to keep them to two or three sentences. Web pages become hard to read and it is hard to engage the reader when they are presented with a wall of text. Long paragraphs are also harder to read on mobile devices.

Remember that the white space on a page is just as important as the text and images. The space provides a buffer and makes the text easier to read.

Lists

Bulleted and numbered lists are a great way to make a page more readable and help readers scan and understand a series of related items. Read about how to format and punctuate lists in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#).

Images

Images provide visual breaks between sections of text. They add white space to the page and make the web page look more interesting.

Make sure that any images you use:

- are useful, relevant to the content, and convey meaning
- do not overwhelm the page – avoid putting multiple images or large images close together
- are accompanied by appropriate [alt text](#) and [image credits](#).

Talk to Indigenous Engagement before using First Australians imagery in your content.

If you want an image carousel as part of your content, discuss it with the Communications and Marketing Section.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks can help readers and search engines easily navigate to related content. However, you should only link to things that help the reader. Links are styled differently to normal text on a web page so they increase the cognitive load on the reader and can reduce the readability of the content.

Make sure your links are on relevant text that makes the destination clear, for example ‘...copyright in Library collections...’

Do not put links on generic terms, such as ‘Read more’ or ‘Click here’, or on web addresses, such as www.nla.gov.au/using-library/copyright-library-collections.

Read more about using and formatting links in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#).

Call-out boxes

A call-out box makes text stand out from the normal text on a web page. It is designed to catch the reader’s eye and draw attention to something important.

We use call out boxes to provide contact information at the end of a section, or at the top of the page to let readers know about an important change or information about the Library.

The look of a call-out box depends on the website that you’re publishing content on, but they will be consistent across that website.

Try not to overuse call-out boxes in web content. Too many on a web page reduces the effectiveness of them and readers will start to skip over them.

Alt text for images

Alt text (alternative text) helps people who cannot see an image understand what that image depicts.

Alt text serves several functions.

- Screen reader technologies announce alt text in place of an image, which helps users with visual or cognitive impairments to understand the content and the function of the image.
- Browsers present alt text visually in place of an image that is slow to load, fails to load, or where the user has blocked images.
- Search engines factor alt text into their assessment of the purpose and content of the web page.

Alt text is not usually visible on a web page (unless an image has not loaded) or in a PDF document. It is included in the ‘back-end’ markup of the web page and the tagging of a PDF document.

When to use alt text

We use alt text for all images that are displayed on a web page, as well as in documents published in PDF or Microsoft Office formats. This includes:

- photos
- drawings

- artworks
- cartoons and illustrations
- posters
- logos
- graphics
- infographics.

Read the [WC3 decision tree](#) to help know when to use alt text.

Alt text versus image credits

Alt text should describe the elements of the image and may provide some context. An [image credit](#) describes who took the photograph, who appears in the photograph and the date and location if known.

For example:



From: [Anna Zhu tells the story of a lifetime in pictures](#)

The alt text is: 'An elderly couple stand arm in arm outside a brick building'

The image credit is: Anna Zhu, *Home*, 2008, nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2988779738

Here, the alt text describes what we see in the image, not their names, cultural background or where the photo has been taken.

Alt text for different image types

Decorative images

A decorative image is one that can be removed from the content without losing meaning or context.

Contrary to guidance in the Australian Government Style Manual, we need to use captions for decorative images if they are from the collection.

For decorative images, the alt text attribute is still required in the web page markup, PDF tags, and Microsoft Office documents. This tells technologies that the image is not necessary to understand the content. In the web page, an empty alt attribute is used in the image tag (`alt=""`). In PDF and Microsoft Office documents, the alt text should be set to 'Decorative image'.

Images from our collections

Alt text for Library collection images should be neutral and factual. Think of alt text as a shorthand way of quickly describing an image.

- Keep it short. If possible, keep it under 100 characters, including spaces.

- Do not start the alt text with “Image of” or “Graphic of” or “Photo of”. Technologies such as screen readers will recognise it as an image and will announce that to the user anyway.
- Don’t make assumptions about the reader’s knowledge. For example, for a photo taken during a famous event such as WW2 or the Sydney Mardis Gras, don’t describe the event in the alt text, only what can be seen in the picture. The event itself should be described within the text of the page to give context.
- When the image contains text, that text should be included in the alt text. For example, the alt text for an image on this [Philanthropy campaign web page](#) would be: “Cropped book title page of the ‘Victorian Almanac 1867’”
- You can describe the type of image or how close it is. For instance, ‘a close up of a face’. Or ‘a group of soldiers seen from a distance’. Or you could say it’s a painting or photo with a filter to add blur or a graphic effect.
- Never put hyperlinks in alt text.

Logos

Write the full name of the organisation in the logo’s alt text. For instance, the alt text for the National Library of Australia logo would be ‘National Library of Australia’. You must include all the text that appears in the logo.

You don’t have to include the word ‘logo’ unless that adds context to why the image is being used. For example, on a page with logos of exhibition sponsors, those logos would all need to include the word ‘logo’ if the organisation names were also used within the web page text.

Functional images

For images that have a function – such as a logo within content that links to another web page or website, or an icon that prints, downloads, or saves an item – the alt text will describe the function, rather than describing the image.

For example, an icon of a printer that you might click to print a page should have the alt text: ‘Print this page’.

Do not use generic text, such as ‘Read more’, as alt text for images that link to something because it provides no context for where the link leads.

If you use a logo or image to link to another web page or another website, the alt text should include an indication of where the link leads to. For example, if you use the NED logo in content and have it link to the NED website, the alt text for that logo would be: ‘National edeposit website’.

The use of a logo in the header of web pages to link back to the Home page of the website is a common convention that most people understand. The alt text for the logo in this case can just be the organisation’s name. For example, the logo of the National Library of Australia in the web page header has the alt text ‘National Library of Australia’. A screen reader will read this as: ‘Link, Graphic, National Library of Australia’ and most people will understand where the link will take them because of where the image is on the page. You can include the word ‘home’ if you think it might be confusing for some of your audience (so: ‘National Library of Australia home’).

More information is available from the [W3c’s functional images guide](#).

Other formats

Please refer to the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) for writing alt text for images in other formats.

Temporary signs

When writing content for temporary signs around the Library, aim to be succinct and clear. Follow the guidelines below to request physical and digital signage for display in public areas of our building.

Temporary sign types

Temporary signs can be seen around our building. They are usually public facing messages aimed at:

- pre-empting user inquiries
- giving useful information and directions
- warning about dangers or important issues
- advertising events or occasions.

Temporary signs can be physical (usually paper/laminated) or digitally displayed on screens. If you wish to display a sign in an any public area of our building, follow the guidance below.

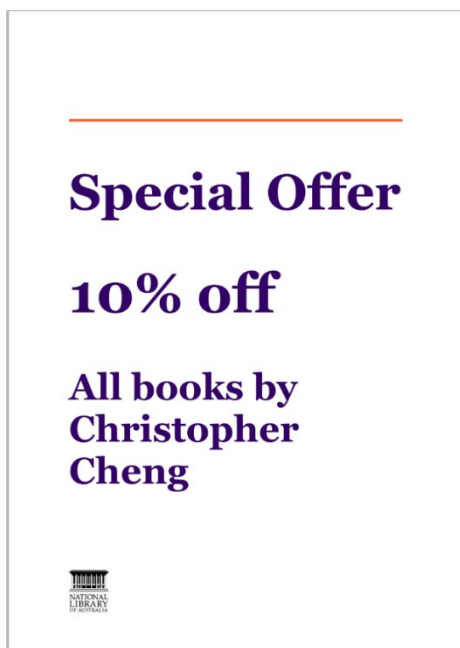
Physical signs

For physical event signs, there is currently an [A4 sign template](#) available for use in the branding resources section on MyNLA. If you require a temporary sign, outside of standard event signage, please complete a design brief. The online [design brief](#) form is accessible through MyNLA, and will automatically send to the Communications & Marketing section when completed.

When filling out the brief, keep in mind that you want your sign to be easy to understand. Use active voice and structure your information over no more than 3 levels, such as:

- a headline - to grab attention and convey the critical points or message.
- key information - including more detail of the message conveyed in the headline.
- special information – such as dates, locations, prices.

Example of physical sign:



Digital signs

There are 3 digital displays in the public areas of our building: the Library foyer, the Main Reading Room and The Hub on Lower Ground 1. Communications and Marketing have responsibility for creating and scheduling digital signs for the display and decide what's required based on our monthly content calendar and additional information from Community Engagement, Exhibitions and Reader Services.

If you would like to request a digital sign, get in touch with the Communications and Marketing staff member contact for your team. If you're unsure of who this is, or they're not currently available, email the marketing@nla.gov.au inbox with the details of your request.

As with the physical signs, keep in mind that your digital sign will need to be simple and clear. Structure your information over no more than 3 levels, as described above. Also think about how long a potential viewer is likely to be engaged with the display, with some common examples being:

- Short-term viewing (passing by): 5-8 seconds
- Mid-term viewing (standing in foyer or at reading room information desks, or waiting for cafe takeaway): 30 seconds
- Long-term viewing (seated in foyer, study areas or in reading rooms): 2 minutes or more.

How much engagement your sign will get will depend on where your digital display is positioned. This in turn, should inform the way you present your digital sign.

Examples of digital signs:



Exhibitions



ON TODAY

A Nation Imagined
Exhibition Gallery, Ground floor

Rivers: Lifeblood of Australia
Treasures Gallery, Ground floor

Explore more in our Treasures Gallery
Open daily 9am – 5pm

Glossary

A guide to words and phrases used by the National Library of Australia. Included words and phrases are either specific to us, or have rules about usage that differ from the norm.

Other information sources

If you can't find a word or phrase here, it's likely because our usage (spelling, capitalisation, punctuation etc.) follows what is recommended by either the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) or the [Macquarie Dictionary](#). If you have suggested edits or inclusions for this section to be considered for future updates, please send them to marketing@nla.gov.au

A

Aboriginal people/s: See section on [First Australians](#) for further guidance on approved terminology.

Asia Study Grants/Asia Study Grant recipient: The names of our grant and fellowship programs have initial capitals, as they are proper nouns. The word 'recipient' is lower case, but some recipients may have an additional title that is capitalised as a proper noun, such as 'Fellow'.

Australian Web Archive: This a proper noun, as it is the name of a Library collecting service, so use initial capitals for each word. Its acronym is AWA, which can be used for subsequent mentions in the same piece of content after flagging the acronym in brackets after the first full name mention, i.e. 'the Australian Web Archive (AWA) has been collecting website snapshots for decades'.

B

Bookplate: The name of the cafe on the Ground Floor is written as one word. If you think that using just 'Bookplate' on its own will confuse readers in some contexts, use the full name of the business - 'Bookplate cafe'.

Bookshop: Use for references to the National Library of Australia Bookshop, when writing for our digital platforms (including the initial capital). If the content will appear on external digital platforms, use 'National Library of Australia Bookshop' for the first reference, to give context.

b&w photograph: If additional information is needed beyond 'photograph' in your text, use 'black and white photograph', with no hyphens or abbreviations. Using 'b&w' is a convention in cataloguing that doesn't need to be replicated in our general writing.

C

cafe: Or cafes for plural. We don't use an accent (ie. café), including when referring to the Library's Bookplate cafe – as per glossary entry above.

catalogue: Avoid using the American spelling of 'catalog'. This guidance also applies for related words 'catalogued', 'cataloguer', and 'cataloguing'. Only use an initial capital for this word when part of the proper noun 'National Library of Australia Catalogue'. On our own digital platforms, there's usually no need to be so specific, and lower case 'catalogue' can be used in nearly all instances.

collection/s: Use initial capitals only when this word is part of the name of a formed collection, otherwise use lower case. See [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

Community Heritage Grants: This is a proper noun, so use initial capitals. Its acronym is CHG, which can be used for subsequent mentions in the same piece of content after flagging the acronym in brackets after the first full name mention, i.e. 'applications for Community Heritage Grants (CHG) are now open'.

Copies Direct: TBC

Council of the National Library of Australia: This has initial capitals for key words as it is a proper noun, as established by the National Library Act 1960. For subsequent mentions in the same piece of content, use 'the Council' as this is also reflected in the Act.

Council member/s: The 'member/s' part of this term does not need to be capitalised as it is not a proper noun, unlike 'Members of Parliament'.

D

digital collections: This term is preferred over 'digitised collections', as the meaning is broader and used more often in non-GLAM environments and on the websites of cultural organisations similar to the Library. You do not need initial capitals it, as it's a generic term, not a proper noun – see [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

Director-General: Both words have initial capitals in this hyphenated title. For more information on using titles, see [Writing about the Library](#).

E

ebook: Always write this lower case and with no hyphen.

edeposit: Always write this lower case and with no hyphen.

eNews: This word has a capital 'N' when you are referring to the specific Library newsletter.

epublishing: Always write this lower case and with no hyphen.

eResources: This word has a capital 'R' when you are referring to the specific Library service.

exhibition galleries: General references to our exhibition galleries, in the plural, are in lower case – see [Writing about the Library](#) for more information

Exhibition Gallery: This term has initial capitals when referring to the specific area in the building that shows our temporary exhibitions. See [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

F

Fellow: Where this forms part of an honorific title for the recipient of a Creative Fellowship or National Library of Australia Fellowship, you should use an initial capital. For example: 'In January, we will have a new National Folk Fellow arriving to start their research'.

Fellowship: A proper noun that must always be capitalised when referring to a National Library of Australia Fellowship or Creative Fellowship program. For example: 'applications for the 2024 National Library of Australia Fellowships are now open'.

First Australian/s: See section on [First Australians](#) for further guidance on approved terminology.

foyer: Is spelt lower case unless it's part of the proper noun referring to the space in our building, for example, 'the performance will be held in the National Library Foyer tomorrow'. A more general use that doesn't need capitalisation would be something like, 'our 3 large tapestries have been removed from our foyer for cleaning'.

Friends: This has an initial capital when referring to the Friends of the National Library of Australia program. Also capitalise it for related phrases like 'Friends Event' and 'Friends Lounge', where Friends is treated as an adjective, and as such, no apostrophe is needed (e.g., not 'Friends' Lounge').

G

Ground Level: When referring to the area of our building, this is a proper noun that must use initial capitals. Do not shorten unless for certain types of temporary signage.

H

hard cover (noun): Always use lower case and write as two words when it's a noun. For example: 'The book had a hard cover made from cardboard and wrapped in blue paper'.

hard-cover (adjective): Write with a hyphen when using as an adjective. For example: 'You can find the hard-cover edition of this book over here'.

I

Information Desk: This is a proper noun, to describe the area in our foyer that provides information and assistance to visitors. Use instead of 'Front Desk' or 'FID'.

interlibrary: We write this as one word, not as 'inter-library', when describing our interlibrary loans program. It only needs an initial capital when it is part of a proper noun for a program or policy name, i.e. 'our Interlibrary Loan Policy'.

L

lecture: This is lower case unless it's a proper noun used for one of our annuals events like the Kenneth Myer Lecture. But if it's an ordinary lecture that is not part of a titled series, we would write 'they attended a lecture at the Library'.

legal deposit: This is lower case, as legal deposit is a general service/legislated requirement that State and National libraries provide, and is not a proper noun for the title of a specific service.

Level 1, 2, 3 and 4: This is the preferred way of writing out the levels of our building, not '2nd Floor' or 'Floor Two' or 'Second Floor'. For some temporary signage, we can shorten if needed to 'L1', 'L2' etc. See [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

librarian: We use librarian in lower case in the same way as other profession descriptions like doctor, teacher or lawyer. Librarian only becomes capitalised when it's part of a title, for example: Teacher Librarian. Or it's a specific proper noun for the name of a service such as Ask A Librarian.

library: We use the lower case of library when it's not a proper noun. For instance, 'my aunt's private library fills two rooms of her house' or 'here are some of our favourite libraries around the world'.

Library: We write out the 'National Library of Australia' in full in the first mention. Subsequent mentions differ depending on format – see [Writing about the Library](#) for more information. For our writing, 'the Library' only ever refers to the National Library of Australia. For other state/territory/international libraries we would use their full name, e.g., 'the State Library of Victoria' or 'the National Library of Scotland'.

Lower Ground 1, 2: This is the preferred way of writing out the lower levels of our building. For some signage, we can shorten if needed to 'LG1' or 'LG2'. We don't write 'Lower Ground Floor', 'Lower Ground' or 'Lower Ground One'. See [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

M

Main Entrance: This is a proper noun, to describe the public entrance of our building. We use this instead of 'front entrance'.

Main Reading Room: This is a proper noun, to describe the reading room on the Ground Floor of our building. General references to our reading rooms, in the plural, i.e., 'our reading rooms are an enjoyable place to study', do not need initial capitals.

N

National edeposit: This is a proper noun to describe a program, but only needs an initial capital on 'National'. Its acronym is NED, which can be used for subsequent mentions in the same piece of content after flagging the acronym in brackets after the first full name mention, i.e., 'National edeposit (NED) is an exciting collaboration between Australia's national, state and territory libraries'.

National Library of Australia Bookshop: Use this full proper noun for your first reference to our Bookshop on digital platforms that aren't ours, or in contexts where using just 'Bookshop' could confuse readers.

National Library of Australia: Depending on the format of your content, you will often need to use this full proper noun for your first reference to our organisation. In these cases, subsequent references will usually be to 'the National Library'. We don't use 'NLA' except when it's part of a proper noun, such as NLA Publishing. See [Writing about the Library](#) for more details.

O

Oral History and Folklore Collection: This is a proper noun for a formed collection, so use initial capitals for key words.

P

PANDORA: This is the name of an early web archiving program and is written in all upper case. The current name of our public web archiving program is the Australian Web Archive and is the term that should be used when creating new content about our web archiving activities, except for historical references to previous programs.

Paperplate: The name of the cafe on Lower Ground 1 is written as one word. If you think that using just 'Paperplate' on its own will confuse readers in some contexts, use the full name of the business - 'Paperplate cafe'.

Petherick Reader/s: This is a proper noun to describe a member of the Petherick Readers, who are granted special access to the collections for their advanced research. The term should have initial capitals.

Preservation Needs Assessment: This is a proper noun to describe a Library-specific work process, so should have initial capitals.

R

recipient: A recipient is not an honorific so it doesn't need an initial capital, but the name of the grant being received might be a proper noun. For example: 'please welcome our new Asia Study Grant recipient'.

S

Significance Assessment: This is a proper noun to describe a Library-specific work process, so should have initial capitals.

Special Collections Reading Room: This is a proper noun, to describe the reading room on Level 1 of our building. General references to our reading rooms, in the plural, i.e., 'our reading rooms are an enjoyable place to study', do not need initial capitals.

stacks: Unless you are referring to the proper noun of a named stack in our building, for example the Hurley Stacks on Level 1, this word does not need an initial capital.

Scholars: Where this forms part of an honorific title for the recipient of a National Library of Australia Scholarship, you should use an initial capital. For example: 'last year, we welcomed eight new National Library of Australia Scholars'.

Scholarship: A proper noun that must be capitalised when referring to a National Library of Australia Scholarship program. For example: 'here are the guidelines for the 2024 National Library of Australia Scholarships'.

social media handles: These are the shortened versions of our organisation's name that we use on social media. Our current names for each platform are – Instagram: @nationallibraryaus , Facebook: National.Library.of.Australia (URL facebook.com/National.Library.of.Australia) , Twitter/X: @nlagovau, and Youtube: @NationalLibraryofAustralia (URL youtube.com/channel/UCv51AT4rmiwH1M9aLDE1AIA).

T

Theatre: This term has an initial capital when referring to the specific auditorium on Lower Ground 1. It can be referred to as the Theatre (if writing for our own digital platforms) or the National Library of Australia's Theatre (if writing for an external platform and more context is needed). See [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

Torres Strait Islander people/s: See section on [First Australians](#) for further guidance on approved terminology.

Treasures Gallery: This term has initial capitals when referring to the specific area in the building that shows our rotating display of permanent collection items. See [Writing about the Library](#) for more information.

Trove: Use an initial capital when referring to our online research service, rather than all caps (so not 'TROVE').

Trove Partner/s: This term has initial capitals when referring to an organisation enrolled in the specific program that collaborates to share items/materials on Trove.

trust: Only use an initial capital where 'trust' is part of a proper noun. For example: 'the Ray Mathew and Eva Kollsman Trust'.

National Library of Australia

Visit the [National Library of Australia website](#)

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