



Lending & Donating Material to the Ara Irititja Project

OVERVIEW & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

INTRODUCING THE ARA IRITITJA PROJECT

Over the last century, many visitors to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands and surrounding regions collected artefacts, photographs, film footage, sound recordings and other material. While some of these items eventually ended up in public institutions, others were soon 'lost' in family photo albums or packed away in old suitcases and boxes. Today, much of this material is of great importance for Anangu (Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara & Ngaanyatjarra people).

Ara Irititja ('stories from a long time ago') tracks down 'lost' material and arranges for a digital copy of it to be returned to Anangu. Ara Irititja commenced in 1994 when it was realised that the vast majority of material about Anangu was not accessible to them. By 2007, Ara Irititja has tracked down more than 65,000 items and arranged for digital copies of them to be incorporated into a specially-designed electronic archive. This has included making digital copies of many thousands of still photographs, art and craft works, diaries, manuscripts, traditional objects, and hundreds of hours of movies and sound recordings.

Ara Irititja delivered its first electronic archive to the community at Ernabella in March 2001. Since then, others have been handed over to Anangu at Alice Springs, Amata, Areyonga, Coober Pedy, Fregon, Indulkana, Kalka, Kenmore Park, Mimili, Murputja, Muṯitjulu, Pipalyatjara, Tjuntjuntjara, Umuwa, Watarru, Wingellina and Yalata (all of these communities are located on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands or in adjacent regions).

Ara Irititja continues to track down material of significance to Anangu. This document explains how any relevant items that you hold can be electronically returned to Anangu.

HOW MATERIAL IS RECEIVED AND PROCESSED

The process of electronically returning a collection of material to Anangu typically begins with a letter, phone call or email. Contact is established with a person who may be holding important cultural and historical items. Subject to that person's agreement, an 'Agreement Form' is prepared and signed.

Within the agreement form

- a 'Schedule of Material' itemises the material that is being lent or donated to Aṛa Irititja
- a 'Permission Statement' provides Aṛa Irititja with permission to make a digital copy of any relevant items and to use that copy in particular ways.

The permission statement does not transfer the copyright of the original material to the Aṛa Irititja Project.

Once an agreement form has been signed and the material has been safely transported to Aṛa Irititja's Adelaide office, the process of assessing, digitising, cataloguing and documenting the relevant items begins. These tasks often take many months to complete. In most instances, the owner of the material is invited to assist with the documenting process – this might involve helping identify persons visible in photographs or slides.

When all of these processes have been completed, the original material is returned to the lender, if required. Finally, Aṛa Irititja loads a copy of the digital records into the electronic archive from where Anangu can easily access them in their home communities.

DONATING ORIGINAL MATERIAL TO AṚA IRITITJA

When the Aṛa Irititja Project commenced in 1994, it was not envisaged that the Project would become a permanent repository for original material. However, many people have subsequently expressed a wish to find a safe and permanent home for their material, a place where it can be looked after and preserved for future generations. Consequently, Aṛa Irititja has taken on the responsibility of protecting a large amount of original material that has been permanently handed back to Anangu.

In general, such fragile material cannot be physically returned to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, where harsh environmental conditions would quickly cause damage and deterioration. Therefore, original material permanently handed back to Anangu is stored in a safe and secure environment in Adelaide provided by the South Australian Museum. While these facilities are not open to the general public, Anangu are able to access the original material whenever they visit Adelaide.

Where a person indicates a wish to permanently hand back some or all of their original material to Anangu, this arrangement is formalised through the completion and signing of a 'donation statement' (*this statement is contained in the 'Agreement Form'*).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will my contribution to the Aṛa Irititja Project be acknowledged?

Every item incorporated into the electronic archive is catalogued as belonging to a specific, named collection. The collection name recognises the individual, family or institution from whom the material has come (eg 'John Smith collection' or 'Smith family collection'). The collection name, source and location of the original material is listed in the database and appears on-screen each time a specific record is accessed. The name of the photographer/author/creator also appears.

Furthermore, whenever Aṛa Irititja uses specific digital records in publications or displays, the name of the collection is also acknowledged.

Aṛa Irititja's responsibility to make these acknowledgments is detailed in both the permission and donation statements.

If I hand back original material to Aṅangu, via Aṛa Irititja, will my immediate family and descendants have access to it?

Yes. Aṛa Irititja's requirement to provide such access is detailed in the donation statement which, in part, states:

The donor and the donor's descendants will be granted access to the material by arrangement with the manager of the Aṛa Irititja Project. Copies of donated material can be provided by arrangement with the manager.

What steps has Aṛa Irititja taken to ensure the long-term security of donated material?

Under the terms outlined in the donation statement, Aṛa Irititja is obliged to house all donated material in 'a safe, secure and stable environment.' Since 1994, all original material returned to Aṅangu via Aṛa Irititja has been stored in Adelaide in premises provided by the South Australian Museum. This ongoing arrangement allows Aṛa Irititja to ensure fragile items are protected and to address their long-term preservation requirements. Ownership of the material, however, remains with Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra people.

How does Aṛa Irititja manage material that is sensitive or which may cause sorrow for Aṅangu?

Since the beginning of the project, Aṛa Irititja has followed the instructions of Aṅangu in terms of managing traditional and contemporary material. Sensitive items are physically separated within the storage and filing systems. The design of the electronic archive's software enables Aṅangu to restrict access on a permanent or temporary basis.

Can the permission statement and/or donation form be amended to suit my needs?

Aṛa Irititja recognises that some lenders and donors have specific needs and/or requirements. It is happy to amend the permission and/or the donation statement to accommodate an individual's circumstances.

If you have any other questions, contact the Aṛa Irititja Project:

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