

Special Collections and Engagement: A Symbiotic Relationship Between Collection Development and Community Engagement

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The launch of a new online repository gave us an opportunity to connect with our community



40 Expected attendees
140+ Actual attendance
6500+ Social media reach



The launch of the **NQHeritage@JCU** online repository of digitised items from our Special Collections was one of the most successful events ever hosted by the library. Donors travelled to Townsville to take part in the event, which was launched by the Vice Chancellor of the university, and a number of people who attended later contacted the Special Collections Librarian to congratulate the library on the successful launch.



But that wasn't the start of it...

Before that we...



- Created promotional material—including the post cards on this poster
- Sent personalised invitations to donors and stakeholders, as well as local historians, librarians and archivists from North Queensland
- Arranged for the University Librarian and JCU Vice Chancellor to open the event and launch the repository

And we...

- Created a screencast and "opening video" for use in the launch
- Hired large HD TV screens to show the product
- Temporarily redesigned the library space



Before that we...



- Created a buzz by using social media
- Engaged a wider audience by conducting a fortnightly radio interview series with *ABC Local* ("white gloves")



- Used the local newspaper to promote objects in the collection
- We created physical displays to gain local interest

And we...

- Digitised a key photographic collection, a visually striking rare book and key archives to make available during the launch
- Set up the NQHeritage Repository

Before that we...



- Talked with relevant stake holders and donors
- Built relationships with local media, historians and community groups
- Reached out to the families of donors who may be willing to make their family's material publicly accessible.
- Opened up channels for taking the stories from the collections to the community by always saying "yes" to invitations to attend community events

And we...

- Prioritised which collections could be digitised first and obtained relevant permissions
- Created metadata, photographed materials and developed the web platform



Before that we...



- Employed a Special Collections Librarian, with a background in the GLAM sector.
- Dedicated staff time and resources to developing and promoting our Special Collections



The launch of the repository gave us an opportunity to promote the collections, and also offered us an **opportunity to strengthen our ties with various stakeholders** – as well as demonstrate the value of the library and its collections to the university's Chancellor.

Taking advantage of every opportunity to tell the stories of the collections helped us build the profile of special collections and increase public awareness of the library's holdings and services and create a **positive feedback loop**.

Creating interest in the collections helps grow the collections, and promoting the library to potential future stakeholders creates opportunities to strengthen ties with existing stakeholders, and **demonstrate the value and significance of the collections**.



NQHeritage@JCU



JCU Special Collections



Blog post promoting launch