

Backing Up Collection Data

It's important to always have a secondary copy of all the information you've collected along with a collected object. Did you know digital data and records decay over time, similarly to physical records?

Collection management systems (CMS) are the digital databases museums and cultural institutions have migrated towards due to their accessibility, however they cannot be relied upon alone to save all the information about your collection, and you will need to have all this information saved elsewhere to keep it safe.

Whenever possible, you should ensure you have at least two back-ups of your collection's data, and that these back-ups are updated on a regular basis.

Consider the two types of damage that can impact your collection's data:

Physical damage includes fires, floods, earthquakes, the work computer falling out a window, anything that might physically prevent you from accessing that data in its current format.

Digital damage includes corruption of files, viruses, or damage to the computer or system internally that might prevent digital access to the data.

We recommend one physical back-up and one digital back-up. We also recommend keeping one back-up geographically separated from your office or from the other back-up, wherever possible, in case of emergency. Ensure more than one person knows and can access this alternative location.

Some ideas for backing up your data in both mediums:

<i>Physical</i>	<i>Digital</i>
- Printed database entries - Index folder - USB or hard drive, kept geographically distant**	- Cloud storage (can be an external cloud storage, such as Apple's iCloud or Google Drive, or built into some CMS such as CatalogIt) - Local computer drive - Excel spreadsheets - USB or hard drive

*** Please keep in mind that these are both digital and physical in nature, making them vulnerable to digital decay and physical damage. When kept physically apart from the collection and database, they can be used as physical back-ups in emergencies.*

Backing up your data might take some time, and will require ongoing management of the records, just like physical collection management. It is recommended that you access your backed up data regularly to test it is still accessible, and commit to backing up often, especially if you are making regular changes within your records.

Once the relevant information surrounding an object is lost, it can be very difficult if not impossible to find again. We want to safeguard all the information we have spent so long collecting, so that future generations will still be able to access our current knowledge.

Exporting Data from Your CMS

If you are using a CMS such as Mosaic, EMu or CatalogIt, there is an option for you to export all of the data in the system into one file. This file can then be used either as a back-up of this data, or to migrate to a new system.

Exporting will allow you to choose the format of file you export your data as. .JSON and .CSV are both recommended and both can use Excel as an application to open these files to review data.

Once you have exported your data into a .JSON or .CSV file, a professional can help you migrate this data into a new CMS, or you can continue to access it using Excel.

Exporting is particularly relevant for institutions currently using Mosaic, which we understand will not be supported with the upcoming Microsoft update later in 2025. If you are using Mosaic, please ensure that you export your data into a .JSON or .CSV file to protect this data and to migrate it to another CMS when possible.

CatalogIt's Export screen, showing the option to export as JSON or CSV files.

**For questions, queries and assistance, contact the
Collections team, Erin & Felicity, directly at:**

collections@nationaltrustsa.org.au

For more information on back-ups and safeguarding against disaster:

Blue Shield Australia - <https://blueshieldaustralia.org.au/resources/>

**Digital Preservation Handbook, Museums and Galleries of NSW -
<https://mgnsw.org.au/sector/resources/online-resources/collection-care/digital-preservation-handbook/>**

National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries 2.0 - <https://mgnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Nationals-Standards-for-Australian-Museums-and-Galleries-2.0.pdf>

Standards and Guidelines, ICOM - <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/>