

Conservation Workflow Project

Exploring best-practice conservation workflow management systems for large organisations



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

22 October 2021 – Progress update 3
Grimwade Conservation Services

Ainslee Meredith, ainslee.meredith@unimelb.edu.au
University Collections Special Projects Conservator

Research ethics

To interview participants for our research project, approval from the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity (OREI) at the University of Melbourne was required before data collection could begin.

Obtaining ethics approval is compulsory for research involving human subjects to be carried out in a university context. It allows the University to confirm that proposed research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

The process of applying for ethics approval involves preparing the following:

1. Application form (providing a high level of detail about all aspects of the proposed research)
2. Plain language statement (a clear and succinct description of the project and the nature of participation)
3. Consent form (provides evidence of a participant's agreement to be involved in the research)
4. Copies of survey questions and recruitment materials

Several important considerations were raised in the feedback we received from the OREI. One question asked whether it would be possible to maintain anonymity for participants if requested, given that conservation is a relatively small field. This was clarified in the consent form. Another issue related to the intellectual property of conservation workflow systems. To address this, we implemented an IP register that would be maintained for the life of the project to record instances where new IP was shared with the research team.

Addressing these issues through the research ethics process improved the integrity and viability of our project prior to contacting participants and beginning data collection.

Key progress updates

August 2021: Overview

September 2021: Methodology

October 2021: Research ethics

November 2021: Data and analytic pathways

December 2021: Preliminary results and findings