TAKING THE MUKURTU PROJECT INTERNATIONAL

In late 2018, the first international hub of the Mukurtu project was launched in Australia, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the State Library of New South Wales and the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Training, University of Technology Sydney, with the Centre for Digital Curation and Scholarship at Washington State University in the United States of America (USA).

The hub will provide advice on matters relating to digital curation (language and collection documentation and standards, digitisation, preservation standards), as well as advice to Indigenous communities on training on use of the Mukurtu Content Management System (CMS). The CMS, which is free and open source, was designed for Indigenous communities to manage and provide access to materials through locally informed protocols.

Mukurtu Project Director, Dr Kimberly Christen, said at the launch, 'An Australian Mukurtu hub will allow communities to access their cultural heritage materials using their own local protocols and will provide new points for fruitful relationships between repositories and communities into the future.'

Indigenous communities are accessing digital collections held in libraries and archives and taking materials back to local settings for them to be reused and recontextualised. Whether it be for language and cultural revitalisation and maintenance, the production of new creative works, or for use in local history and storytelling projects. Keeping materials locally in digital keeping places makes sense, however there is a lack of support and infrastructure (including areas such as digital curation awareness and training) for digital keeping places to be managed in sustainable ways.

The MOU provides an opportunity for the partner institutions to work broadly around advocacy for these issues. The Australian NSW Mukurtu Hub will connect with other hubs and spokes in the USA to share resources, and to provide feedback on the development of the Mukurtu CMS. The three main priorities for the Australian NSW Mukurtu Hub will be to develop a shared resource page with information on the project and available resources; connect broadly with communities, libraries and archives to raise awareness about the project; and develop further partnerships and 'spokes' for the hub to support training around the digital stewardship of Indigenous digital collections.

We are excited about the opportunities that the hub presents us with, including being able to work directly with communities around the management and care of digital collections, as well as connecting with other Indigenous communities internationally about shared interests in the respectful management of collections into the future. We have a lot of work to do in the library sector to make information and collections accessible and usable in Indigenous community contexts. The Mukurtu project is an example of how through collective action we can start to address the many priorities that need or urgent attention. We see this is an important collaboration between research and industry to seek positive and transformational outcomes for local Indigenous communities.

We look forward to sharing more information through ALIA networks as the project develops. For more information on the Mukurtu CMS see (http://mukurtu.org/).

KIRSTEN THORPE
Senior Researcher, Cultural and Critical Archivist
Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research
University of Technology Sydney