

# Digitising museum collections: balancing freedom of information and copyright requirements at a South African Museum

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*The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of museum practices. As museums increasingly digitise their collections to enhance accessibility and engagement, they face numerous ethical dilemmas regarding intellectual property rights and copyright protection. Through this comprehensive case study, the authors explore the Albany Museum's strategies, procedures, and initiatives to balance digital access with the imperative of complying with legislative requirements. Guided by an interpretivist worldview, this research is grounded in the Albany Museum's experiences navigating the complexities of digitising its collections without compromising ethical standards. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, utilising semi-structured interviews. The findings highlight the delicate equilibrium the museum must maintain to uphold ethical standards while leveraging digital technologies to increase access to its collection. The study recommends that staff members at the Albany Museum receive training on digitisation and the protection of intellectual property rights and copyrights. Additionally, it suggests the implementation of quick-response (QR) codes for all exhibitions at the museum.*

**Keywords:** Albany Museum, digitisation, copyright, exhibitions, collection

## 1 Introduction

Freedom of information is a socioeconomic right, not only in South Africa but also in many other countries worldwide (Mojapelo 2023). It refers to the ability to obtain information held by public bodies and private institutions for the exercise or protection of rights. While access to information is constitutionally protected in South Africa, implementation gaps caused by other legislation persist, making it difficult for freedom of information to be fully realised. Some of these legislations include the Copyright Act (Act No. 98 of 1978) (hereafter the Copyright Act) (South Africa 1978), especially in terms of heritage collection. However, it is worth mentioning that South Africa has embarked on a process to review the legislation, and the effort has resulted in the 2018 Copyright Amendment Bill, which seeks to address the challenges brought by digital technologies. One of the key provisions of the bills is the expansion of the general and specific fair use exemption from copyright protection. Heritage collection in the context of the current study refers to tangible and intangible collections preserved by museums. Previously, these collections were mainly accessible in person in physical formats, such as photographs and artefacts.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic forced many institutions to consider new ways of doing business. Cultural institutions also faced temporary closures during this period (Klinowsky & Szafarowics 2019). During and post-Covid-19, there was a growing interest for museums and other cultural institutions to consider making their content available online for wider public access. In a survey to investigate the visibility and usage of museum collections worldwide, Corona (2023) found that many museums used social media networks such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube to increase the accessibility of their collections. By January 2020, South Africa had 36.54 million internet users and 22 million social media users (Kemp 2020). These figures underscore the necessity of streamlining museum collections in the country to accommodate the majority of users. Making the collection available on these sites requires investing in digitisation projects.

Digitisation has emerged as a key strategy for organisations seeking to provide broader online access to information services, fuelled by the increased use of technology and its rapid development around the world and in different sectors of business (Azam & Quaddus 2012). Mukred, Yusof and Alotaibi (2019) and Teryima and Sunday (2015) concur that information and communications technology (ICT) has been widely accepted and successfully used as a tool to enhance

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productivity in various sectors such as academia and local government. In the context of museums, like the Albany Museum, ICT assists with the digitisation of museum collections and effective management of digital collections. According to Nicholson (2019), if museums want to fulfil their mission in the 21st century, various new activities must be put forward. Nicholson (2019) believes that the Copyright Act is outdated, especially when it comes to the digital world and technology. As already highlighted, processes are underway to review the legislation (Beiter, Flynn, Forene, Klaaren, Ncube, Nwauche, Rens, Samtani & Schonwetter 2022). South Africa's Copyright Amendment Bill is still awaiting the ratification of the office of the President of the Republic of South Africa, and Nicholson (2019) believes that provisions of this bill will have a positive impact on institutions like museums, libraries, and archives by allowing fair use of copyrighted materials for research, exhibitions, and education. This legislation would eventually give museums the freedom to digitise their content and increase access. The current study was based on the Copyright Act, which states that the following original works are eligible for copyright: literary works, musical works, artistic works, cinematographic films, sound recordings, broadcasts, programmatic signals, published editions, and computer programmes.

According to Virga (2023), museums are relying on technology for the digitisation of their collections to increase customer satisfaction and retention. Digitisation has many benefits, but it also comes with certain drawbacks. These problems include the financial repercussions of digitisation projects, especially at institutions such as museums. However, the current study focused on challenges pertaining to copyright protection. According to the Copyright Act, digitising archive material requires consent from the copyright owner. While this provision aims to protect the copyright owner, the reality is that it creates a mammoth task for those involved in digitisation projects to trace the copyright owners.

Several studies in South Africa and beyond looked at the impact of copyrights on the digitisation of records and archives. For example, Netshakhuma (2021) investigated how the African National Congress (ANC) political party in South Africa complied with international copyright laws and the South African Copyright Act, and the study found that ANC partially complied with several provisions of the laws. In the Australian context, Arthur, Hearn, Smith and Koutras (2024) explored the copyright barriers for museums in that country, and the study concluded that recent copyright reviews offer the museum sector an opportunity to restructure strategies. As online formats evolve, Arthur et al. (2024) recommended that other countries explore how copyright law has allowed more fair and flexible use of cultural artefacts and orphan works, and this has informed the current study.

This study focuses on Albany Museum, which opened its doors in 1855. It is the second oldest museum in South Africa (Albany Museum 2024). The museum is an affiliated research institute of Rhodes University. Today, the museum consists of seven buildings, namely, the Natural Science Museum, the Historic Museum, the Observatory Museum, Fort Selwyn, the Old Provost military prison, Drostdy Arch, and the Old Priest's House (Rhodes University 2015). Albany Museum has a rich history of showcasing South Africa's unique cultural, scientific, and historical heritage (Museum Explorer South Africa 2024). The key components of the Albany Museum's collection include natural history (terrestrial insects, freshwater invertebrates, fish, and paleontological specimens) and historical and cultural artefacts (stone tool assemblages and historical objects). The types of collections housed by the Albany Museum include beads, artefacts, images, objects, documents, books, manuscripts, maps, and rocks. As Ogbu and Igwebuike (2024) put it, cultural heritage can come in different forms, such as verbal, musical, and tangible expressions.

## 2 Research problem

As required by copyright law, organisations must make reasonable efforts to identify the copyright holders of the works they intend to digitise. Once identified, organisations must determine whether these works are still protected under copyright laws. Copyright law safeguards the rights of copyright holders (Klinowsky & Szafarowicz 2023), and institutions such as the Albany Museum are required to comply with these legal provisions.

Like other museums in South Africa, the Albany Museum undertakes digitisation projects to enhance access to their collections. However, the restrictions imposed by copyright law hinder the museum's ability to expedite the digitisation process. While some copyright holders ignore requests, others remain untraceable. Additionally, a significant portion of the Albany Museum's collections consists of donations from individuals. Art collections remain subject to copyright protection, creating further challenges in locating and obtaining permission from copyright holders.

This situation creates a tension between the museum's obligation to promote access to heritage materials and the constraints of copyright law. A similar challenge was noted by Netshakhuma (2021), who observed that the African National Congress (ANC) faced difficulties in digitising materials due to challenges in tracing copyright holders.

Furthermore, the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, particularly Target 11.4, mandates countries to safeguard both cultural and natural heritage (United Nations 2015). This target places an obligation on museums to use all available resources to ensure the protection and accessibility of cultural heritage materials.

### 3 Research aim and objectives

The study aimed to investigate how the Albany Museum balanced freedom of information and copyright protection requirements. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- assess how the museum prioritised the selection of material for digitisation
- determine the financial implications of the digitisation for the museum's collection and protection of intellectual property rights and copyright holders
- determine the views of the museum's employees regarding copyright law
- explore better ways to trace copyright holders whenever digitisation projects are undertaken.

### 4 Literature review

Literature was reviewed according to themes drawn from the research objectives.

#### 4.4 Prioritising collections for digitisation

Prioritising collections for digitisation is not always an easy task for museums. Salamon-Cindori, Tot, and Zivković (2014) note that Croatian museums faced challenges in determining which collections to prioritise for digitisation. As a result, most museums choose to digitise only collections that are no longer protected or are not subject to copyright law. Records from museum holdings, brochures, and publications are often prioritised for digitisation.

Avgousti and Papaioannou (2023) state that while many museum collections remain undigitised, significant efforts are still needed to bring them online. At the same time, as museums continue to collect and acquire physical artefacts, fully digitising their entire collections may be unrealistic, particularly given the complexities of ensuring full compliance with copyright law.

Woody (2019) provides key questions to guide the prioritisation of materials for digitisation:

- Which objects are completely hidden? (This refers to collections stored away rather than displayed in exhibitions.)
- Which objects are at risk of deterioration or disappearance?
- Which objects are most frequently used?
- Which objects can offer better representation?
- Which objects can support current projects or museum initiatives?

Note (2021) argues that organisations should prioritise collections best suited for digitisation, particularly those that would provide greater insight and accessibility in digital form. According to Note (2021), the digital collections that archivists build have the potential to enhance the research experience.

#### 4.1 Financial implications of digitisation

Museums are confronted with various financial implications when it comes to digitising their collections (Wilson 2024). Moreover, the International Council on Archives (ICA) Electronic Management Guidelines acknowledge that financial resources are a serious challenge in digitisation (International Council on Archives 2005). According to Mabe and Potgieter (2021), digitisation can be expensive, especially for a museum operating on an insufficient budget. Several tools and resources are required for the digitisation of collections to take place, including digitisation equipment, digitisation software, collection management systems, digital asset management systems, training and workshops, certificates and classes, and contractors, vendors, and consultants. The lack of financial resources means that there is a lack of equipment, human resources, and specialised departments to embark on digitisation (Kimura 2022).

De la Porte and Higgs (2019) highlight that museums in Lithuania faced a serious challenge with human resources, as they struggled to attract specialists who were able to carry out the task of digitisation. Kimura (2022) thinks that a digitisation department is needed for museums to conduct the digitisation process properly, although that will come at a cost for museums. Interfacing South Africa's Creative Industries (2021) concurs that digitisation is important. The main challenge of digitisation for South African museums is the costs of digitising museum collections. Interfacing South Africa's Creative Industries (2021) further states that currently, funding is a major problem for museums in South Africa. The Albany Museum is no different, being the second oldest museum in the country, as stated earlier, with collections dating back to 1855, before technology was even considered a possibility in museums.

#### 4.2 Digitisation and copyright law

According to Benhamou (2016), copyright plays a key role in determining what can be used and to what extent it can be used; various forms of digital museums exist for different reasons. This harms cultural museums, as Netshakhuma (2021)

explains: copyright law negatively affected the digitisation of records in the ANC Archives. Bayrou (2022) asserts that copyright is a challenge that museums constantly face, recognising that it only refers to objects that fall within the scope of this protection. In other words, there may be objects or artefacts in museums that lack copyright protection. According to Borissova (2018), the digitisation of cultural heritage for preservation purposes gives rise to serious concerns related to intellectual property rights. The other challenge with the digitisation of objects and artefacts is that they require funding, and this has been found to be a gap in many cultural heritage institutions (De La Porte & Higgs 2019). This means that there is a need for strategic planning on policies related to cultural heritage, which includes protecting such heritage as intellectual property.

### 4.3 Tracing copyright holder

Tracing copyright holders or owners of collections can be a lengthy and difficult process (Bayrou 2022). The issue is especially pertinent because museums do not engage regularly with these owners, whose collections they house or have on display as exhibitions. Bayrou (2022) notes that multiple owners typically hold copyright. Salamon-Cindori et al. (2014) postulate that tracing copyright owners can be a tedious and time-consuming process, especially in heritage institutions that want to digitise various materials, which can include anything from phonograms to artefacts and even letters. This could, therefore, be the same struggle that museums face, especially since many of their collections are ancient and were donated to them a very long time ago by owners who are probably not around anymore. When any organisation or, in this instance, a museum decides to digitise their collections, the collections should contain a catalogue that provides information (Willemse, Runnel, Saarenmaa, Casino & Gödderz 2020). However, in some instances, there is no information on copyright, which requires the organisation or museum to do copyright research. This is especially important before digitising, as it could save the museum from any legal consequences.

## 5 Research methodology

Guided by the interpretivism worldview, which suggests that there are multiple truths, the researchers relied on a qualitative research approach to collect the data. A case study was used as the research design, and the case was the Albany Museum in Makhanda in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A case study is a useful way for researchers to describe, compare, and evaluate the different aspects of a problem. The selection of the Albany Museum as a case is driven by the challenges it faces in ensuring compliance with copyright law and digitising its collection. As a heritage institution, the museum must balance public access and legal compliance. The researchers used semi-structured interviews to obtain the views of employees responsible for digitisation and access regarding digitisation, freedom of information, and copyright law. Interviews were conducted with curators, conservators, and assistant curators as they work with and manage collections.

The interviews comprised open-ended questions to gain more insight into the topic under investigation (see Appendix A). To allow participants enough time to engage with the questions, asynchronous online interviews were used where questions were sent to them via email. As Saarijärvi and Bratt (2021) put it, asynchronous interviews provide more time for the participant to reflect before answering questions and offer flexibility to respond to questions at their convenience. Responses were validated through member check of synthesised analysed data where interpreted results were shared with the participants to confirm the accuracy and intended meaning. For anonymity, codes were used to refer to the participants. To identify two curators and the assistant curator, for instance, the researchers used CR1-3. The conservator is labelled CON1, and the natural scientist is labelled NS1.

## 6 Research findings

In the following section, the findings from the interviews are presented and discussed.

### 6.1 Prioritising collections for digitisation

The first objective dealt with the prioritisation of collection for digitisation. The participants were asked what process should be followed to determine which collections or artefacts had to be prioritised over others for the purposes of digitisation. Fragile and delicate items should receive priority, according to CR1, CR2, CR3, and CON1. The reason for the decision was that such items required more care, as they would deteriorate much faster when they were constantly accessed physically. This concurs with Zhang (2023)'s views that a principle of prioritising fragile objects and audience-attractive collections is considered key for many museums. CR2 added that items that could easily be scanned and did not require special digitising equipment should also be given priority. Easily scanned material will help the museum to minimise costs, as digitisation projects are obviously costly. Albany Museum is sustained by funds obtained from donations, research, membership fees, visitor fees, and grants. However, CON1 felt that all the items in a collection should get priority, especially

in terms of digital preservation. While it may be a wish for all museums to digitise all their collections, it may be impractical for some, as this will require many resources and capacity. The findings indicate that all participants agree to prioritise fragile items. NS1 stated:

All collection objects ultimately should be data captured and digitised as all are valuable in the sense that they are heritage assets and should be treated as such. However, the metadata associated with natural history collections (determinations, collection object attributes etc) increase the value (at least in terms of use), over others. Prioritisation is therefore based on this, where, for example, type specimens, or specimens for groups of conservation importance may be prioritised.

The participants were then asked how they would implement this process at the Albany Museum. CR1, CR2, and CR3 felt that relevant staff needed to be trained. CON1 believes that the museum needs a dedicated space to carry out digitisation activities. CON1 raised a concern that the museum does not have special digitisation equipment. High-resolution scanners and specialised software tools for metadata are required for digitisation projects in museums. Participants suggested using service providers, particularly for digitising oversized items. CON1 mentioned using Africa Media Online to digitise collections, which the museum uses. Collaboration for museums was emphasised by Saurombe and Ngulube (2018) and Mabe and Potgieter (2018), who argued that it had the potential to alleviate some of the financial and human capital challenges. For example, Saurombe and Ngulube (2018) highlight that one should not ignore the fact that museums, archives, and libraries find themselves operating in a tough economic environment with so many projects unfunded. Collaboration would allow these institutions to do more with less money since each would contribute financially to the project.

The participants were further asked if they thought that the usage of collections was a factor to consider when determining a collection's priority for digitisation. CR1 and CR2 agreed that the use of collections was a factor that must be considered when prioritising. This approach is used to ensure that resources are allocated effectively to maximise the impact. CR3 was of the same opinion. Their reasons were based on the assumption that the more a physical object/artefact was used, the faster it deteriorated. CON1 mentioned that "as a starting point, it can be considered, because GRAP 103 requires that all collections be digitised regardless." GRAP 103 is an accounting standard that prescribes uniform accounting for classifying and recording heritage assets and regulates related disclosure requirements. However, NS1 believed that in some ways access to collections and their use added value for the users and their work. At the same time, NS1 stated that "collections themselves, as information (particularly specialist inputs), are added to the collection. A good example of this might be updated taxonomic determinations."

These responses from the participants seem to suggest that usage is a critical aspect to consider for digitisation to ensure that museums focus on impactful and meaningful contributions to society at large. In a study to investigate inclusive digitisation strategies, Dickinson, Klindworth, Mackenzie, Mojapelo and Narbona (2024) emphasised a need to digitise records of marginalised communities because failure to do so will erase them from history. On the other hand, Ngoepe (2020) postulates that the only way to attract ordinary citizens to use the collection is by preserving their history, as many people see no need to read about the history of other people or that of the oppressor.

## 6.2 Financial implications of digitisation for museums

The second objective examined the financial implications that museums may face when undertaking digitisation projects. Participants were asked to identify the financial challenges associated with digitising museum collections while simultaneously ensuring the protection of intellectual property rights.

As previously mentioned, digitisation can be an expensive process. Participants expressed diverse perspectives on its financial impact. NS1 highlighted opportunity costs as a key concern, particularly when digitisation is prioritised over other essential museum operations. Additionally, they noted the financial burden of paying stipends to certified professionals responsible for digitisation. On the other hand, CR2 stated:

Digitisation can be expensive and time consuming, which then requires more staff, and that has an impact on funding for employing more people and buying the necessary equipment or even outsourcing, which will still require funds.

The special digitisation equipment that would be required would be expensive, as stated by CON1.

CR3 stated:

Training of current staff would also require the procurement of funds, and the rest of the staff at Albany Museum must be made aware of intellectual property rights and the implications of not abiding by the laws that are set out.

Participants were further asked how they felt the museum could ensure the protection of intellectual property rights when collections were digitised. NS1 suggested that intellectual property could be safeguarded by registering collections with heritage authorities at both the provincial and national levels. CON1 and CR3 recommended trademarking collections and embedding them with metadata to ensure intellectual property rights were not overlooked. CR1 argued that adherence to a copyright policy would help protect intellectual property. Additionally, CR1 emphasised that the museum should develop a copyright policy aligned with the Intellectual Property Policy of South Africa, 2018, the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008, and the Copyright Act.

CR2 suggested: "When outsourcing digitisation, an agreement should be signed between the museum and the external body." In some cases, donors or sponsors may object to museums converting objects into electronic formats due to intellectual property concerns and existing collaborative contracts with other institutions. Without clear policies and guidelines, such challenges will persist. Tumulavičius, Prykhodkina, Vovk, Mytych and Kustovska (2024) emphasised the need for policy adjustments to address ongoing challenges and ensure a balance between protection and access in the digital era.

Participants were also asked how the museum could minimise costs in the digitisation process. All participants agreed that digitisation can be costly. CR1, CR2, CR3, and NS1 suggested that hiring certified and competent individuals from the outset could help reduce errors and, consequently, lower costs. CR1 and AC1 recommended using smartphones to scan photographs and purchasing second-hand digital equipment to initiate the digitisation process.

Although the question was not about funding sources, CON1 suggested that the museum could apply for financial support from the National Lottery Commission or the National Research Foundation. However, CR2 proposed that the museum develop its own digitisation methods tailored to the Albany Museum's collections and formulate a long-term strategy.

Despite collaboration being a critical cost-saving element for museums, none of the participants mentioned it. According to Yap, Kamble, Kuah and Tolkach (2024), museums must carefully select the materials to digitise to avoid unnecessary expenditure on items that do not add value. The findings suggest that participants favour utilising existing resources rather than relying on external support over which they have limited control.

### 6.3 Views on copyright law

The third objective focused on participants' views regarding copyright law. Participants were asked to share their perspectives on copyright law, and most viewed it as a means of protecting collections from unauthorised use and reproduction. CR3 believed that copyright laws assisted institutions by preventing the unauthorised use of their collections. CR1 and CR2 acknowledged the protective role of copyright but also highlighted significant concerns regarding the misuse of materials. CR1 stated: "The copyright policies in South Africa need to be reviewed, as there is no complete control yet."

It is worth noting that the Copyright Act is currently under review in South Africa. The anticipated revisions may help address some of the challenges faced by museums and other cultural institutions in the country.

Participants were also asked whether they applied copyright policies when granting public access to collections. CON1 stated that while the museum had a mandate to provide public access to collections, access should be granted for valid reasons, making copyright law particularly relevant. However, CON1 noted that their department was not responsible for managing public access to collections. Like many other museums, the Albany Museum has designated personnel responsible for handling public access requests. CR3 and CR2 confirmed that they followed the museum's copyright policy when providing access to collections.

CR1 stated:

The Albany Museum has managed to establish copyright policy for the institution and is being used when dealing with researchers or members of the public when accessing our collection. There are two copyright forms with guidelines to the user and are used by researchers or members of the public whether in a publication or academic research.

The response by CR1 clearly indicates that there is a need for the museum to raise awareness on policies, as some of the participants are not aware whether such policies exist. The mistake that many organisations make is to develop well-crafted policies but fail to create awareness across the organisation.

NS1 stated:

I work in a natural science collection, and so these laws do not apply to me. But I would say that the balance of what is fair between ownership and use should be struck where credit in the form of recognition, or even monetary form is given where credit is due.

Curators who work with collections that have been donated were required to use the Albany Museum's copyright policy.

The participants were asked if there were any other policies the museum used when providing access to collections. NS1 mentioned that the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 applied to the Albany Museum. CR2 mentioned the use of the museum's copyright policy. CR1 mentioned the Albany Museum's copyright policy as well as the collections policy. CON1 stated that they did not deal with matters of this nature. As per the museum structure, conservators support curators and do not typically handle access and copyright issues, though they can offer input on these matters if needed. Policies are necessary to provide guidelines on what to do regarding digitisation and will, in some instances, protect individuals who are participating in digitisation projects. It is for this reason that museums like Albany Museum should invest more resources not only in policy development but also in training and education.

#### **6.4 Tracing copyright owners**

The fourth objective focused on the tracing of copyright owners. Participants were asked what could be done to streamline this process and reduce delays in digitisation.

CR1 had no response regarding the tracing of copyright owners. CR2 noted that when an item is donated to the museum, the donor is required to sign an agreement transferring ownership of the item to the museum. In such cases, tracking copyright owners would not be necessary.

CON1 and NS1, however, did not engage with this aspect, as natural scientists typically do not deal extensively with copyright issues related to collections. This is because the specimens they work with are naturally occurring or created by God. Instead, CON1 primarily focused on the conservation of artefacts and collections.

CR3 suggested that if the copyright holder could not be reached, the legal owners of the collection should be contacted. Meanwhile, CON1 highlighted that using platforms such as Africa Media Online could significantly shorten the process of granting access to digitised materials. Copyright owners who register with Africa Media Online allow users to access their work more easily online. The platform also assists museums in clearing copyright for the materials they digitise, which involves tracing the copyright holder and obtaining the necessary permissions for digitisation and dissemination. This process could be highly beneficial for museums, as it reduces the burden of handling these activities independently.

### **7 Conclusion and recommendations**

The findings indicate that, although the digitisation process at Albany Museum is still in its early stages, it faces numerous challenges. Despite this, all participants expressed strong support for digitising museum collections, believing that it will significantly contribute to the preservation of original materials. By using digital surrogates, the physical artefacts will experience less handling, thereby extending their lifespan.

The preservation of cultural heritage is crucial, and with it comes the responsibility of safeguarding copyright and intellectual property rights. Therefore, museums must ensure that their digitisation efforts do not compromise intellectual property protections or infringe on the rights of copyright holders.

The study established that fragile and delicate items should be prioritised in the selection process for digitisation. Financial implications remain a key concern, as digitisation requires staff training and the procurement of specialised equipment. Additionally, copyright law plays a vital role in protecting intellectual property rights, and strict compliance is necessary to prevent potential legal challenges against the museum.

Participants encouraged the use of Africa Media Online for outsourcing digitisation services, as it provides a more efficient and streamlined approach to securing permissions. Given that many museums lack the internal capacity to manage copyright clearance independently, such external platforms offer a practical solution.

The researchers make the following recommendations:

- Given the financial challenges associated with digitisation, the museum should explore funding opportunities from organisations such as the National Lottery Commission and the National Research Foundation.
- To safeguard intellectual property, all collections should be trademarked and embedded with metadata to facilitate the identification of copyright holders.

- The museum should ensure that all staff members are well-informed about copyright policies. Additionally, it should consider adopting supplementary policies to prevent unauthorised access to collections. The copyright policy and conditions for access should be visibly displayed within the museum.
- The museum should continue leveraging platforms such as Africa Media Online for digitisation and copyright clearance. Additionally, it would be beneficial to maintain a comprehensive record of artefact and collection owners, including their contact details, to streamline future copyright-related processes..

## 8 Suggestion for further research

This study focused on the impact of copyright law on access to heritage collections. The Albany Museum was used as a case study. More research can be conducted on the impact of copyright law on access to other heritage institutions, such as archives and libraries. Furthermore, students can learn how the Copyright Amendment Bill aims to address some of the challenges that heritage institutions face.

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