

What is a local history community?



<http://www.localhistoryisawesome.co.uk> [accessed 7 March 2019]

HistoryAtWork has been exploring the idea of what a local history community is since 2006 when we worked on the State Library Victoria's Memory Victoria Project.

Across Victoria and around the world people are passionate about their patch. They often join Friends groups, or volunteer with the local historical society or museum. They look after collections that include household, occupational, community, municipal and personal ephemera and objects that represent and interpret the lives of generations. They appreciate that the stories of their past can provide some context to life and living today.

Most of us are part of a place-based community and to have a sense of this place – a familiarity with it – is to be more strongly connected to it and more securely part of it. Importantly, this applies to new-comers just as it does to long-term residents.

If we were to take a broad community – say a local government area – and map these diverse groups with their historical interests and eclectic collections, we could be surprised at the depth and breadth of stories on offer. But these groups often work in near isolation or in silos, and are often under- or even un-funded, which hampers opportunities to make the most of, and to share, their local history knowledge. This in turn hampers opportunities for everyone to nurture and benefit from a sense of place and a place-based community.

In Victoria there are history communities of sorts, more often focused on specialist areas like family history or maritime history. However, there are real aspirations for stronger local history communities and for the capacity within local government to support and nurture them. A local history community is very diverse; you don't have to be a historian or to think about history to be part of it. You just need to be familiar with your patch and to know how you, your neighbours, and your landscape came to be there.

Local government knows that a sense of place and a place-based community is as much their responsibility as anyone's, and many areas are taking increasingly bigger steps to include history and history-telling amongst their community responsibilities. We look forward to talking about some of these as a couple of our projects unfold.

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