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Australian museums
and galleries —
issues, news, views

FEBRUARY 2002 THE MAGAZINE OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

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WHAT'S IN MUSEUM NATIONAL?

In this age of information overload and sophisticated design, it can be difficult to distinguish editorial content from advertising in a magazine. At least four categories of material are included in *Museum National*. They range from contributions from members of Museums Australia and others in the museum profession to commercial advertising.

Articles contributed by individual authors carry the name of the author (or authors if there is more than one), and a small amount of information about them. Occasionally, as is the case in this issue with the article on 'Collections tangible and intangible', members of the Editorial Committee have collaborated with the Editor to produce an article which carries no individual author attribution, but has a note on the contributors at the end. Details about Editorial Committee members can be found on the 'MA in Action' pages.

Illustrations to editorial content carry captions stating what the illustration is, its creator (where known), and the source.

Some articles are **digests of material** sent to the Editor of *Museum National*. They are written up by the Editor and have no attribution. These articles are not

designed as advertising, but are intended to provide information of relevance to the museum community.

Paid advertisements promote products or events to the museum community.

Museum National is produced in magazine format, and does not carry refereed articles. Some articles are submitted to the magazine with references, and full versions of these can be made available to interested readers by emailing the Editor at editor@museumsaustralia.org.au. Their availability is indicated in a note at the end of the relevant articles.

Longer articles on subjects of interest to the museum community can be found in the *Open Museum Journal*, which publishes scholarly and applied research and commentary on museums (see <http://amol.org.au/craft/omjournal/journal.index.asp>). Short bulletins on current issues and events are often publicised through an Internet discussion list, the *Australian Museums Forum* (see <http://amol.org.au/craft/amf/amf.index.asp>). *Open Museum Journal* and *Australian Museums Forum* are published by Australian Museums On Line (AMOL) and access is free.



Cover: Detail from (above)

Artist: Dhalnanda Gurruwiwi

Object: Waistband

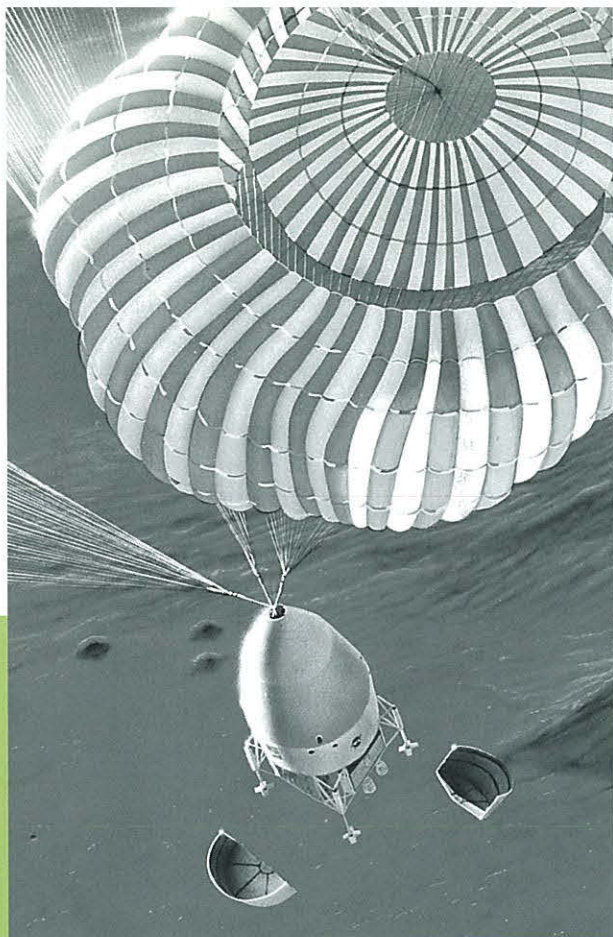
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From the Banumbirr *Morning Star Poles from Elcho Island* exhibition, Australian National Maritime Museum

Courtesy of the Australian National Maritime Museum



CONTENTS

→ NEWS AND COMMENT

- 2 Ian Grant on Australia–New Zealand relationship
- 3 Professional development — training in Western Australia
- 4 New Minister, new exhibitions
- 5 Sarah Stutchbury on artmail@qag

→ COLLECTIONS TANGIBLE & INTANGIBLE

- 6 Collections tangible and intangible
- 9 Brian Crozier on community collecting
- 12 Geoff Speirs on 'RLS' museums in South Australia
- 14 Anna Fairclough on Vision Australia collection
- 16 Fiona Cameron on themescaping virtual collections
- 18 Kylie M^cRae on AMCAI
- 20 Mickey Dewar on Australian Historic Themes

→ OTHER FEATURES

- 22 Martin Portus on *Mars and beyond*
- 24 Obituaries — Kay Daniels and Rhys Jones
- 24 Sue Terry on AMIA conference, Portland, Oregon
- 26 MA in Action
- 28 Reviews
- 32 And another thing ...
- 33 Noticeboard



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THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DITCH



HOW WE SEE IT

THE OGRE: "Come into these arms." NEW ZEALAND: "Nay sir, those arms bear chains."

How We See It, Scatz, *New Zealand Graphic*, 20 October 1900. In 1900 a New Zealand Royal Commission concluded that local interests would be swamped by Australia's size, population and resources
Courtesy of New Zealand Cartoon Archive

The idea for a cartoon exhibition about the trans-Tasman relationship grew out of a stray remark or two, over a glass of Australian wine, at the High Commission in Wellington.

It was a topic that intrigued me and I'm always eager to explore ways in which cartoons can help illuminate history. The Australians, in turn, were looking for a novel way to celebrate in New Zealand the Centenary of Federation.

About fifteen months later *The Other Side of the Ditch* and accompanying book were opened and launched at the National Library Gallery in Wellington. The exhibition, subtitled 'A cartoon century in the New Zealand-Australia relationship' examines the

PULLING AUSSIES DOWN A PEG OR TWO RANKS HIGHLY AS A NATIONAL PASTIME, AS A NUMBER OF THE CARTOONS GRAPHICALLY UNDERLINE.

strange, complex relationship between the near neighbours at the bottom of the world. Five strands — history, politics, economics, sport, and culture — are explored, each with ten cartoons and explanatory text panel.

Historically, no two countries on the face of the earth have had more in common — language, British heritage, a

pioneering push to the edge of the world, white skins on a brown frontier, colonial experience, very similar political and legal systems, fortunes built on pastoral farming, shared trade union traditions, and an obsession with sport. New Zealand and Australia have gone to war together; citizens of each country live back and forth

chasing the sun, opportunity or peace and quiet; families make their homes on both sides of the Tasman; the two countries are major trading partners.

Yet few countries bicker and grizzle about each other more without actually going to war.

In fact, New Zealanders do most of the bridling and are quick to take offence whether meant or not. Pulling Aussies down a peg or two ranks highly as a national pastime, as a number of the cartoons graphically underline. Generally, though, New Zealand's air of superiority is a not very convincing cover for a large, collective chip on the shoulder. Or as the Aussies have it: 'You can always recognise Kiwis, they're the ones with chips on both shoulders'.

New Zealanders might laugh about Australia's convict past and the average Aussie IQ, but Australians are really far more insulting. They are largely indifferent, with interest in their nearest English-speaking neighbour usually limited to seeing it as a good place for a quiet, quaint and relatively cheap holiday.

As the cartoons show, the feeling of being South Seas cousins rather than brothers was one of the reasons, along with different political and trading agendas, why there was surprisingly little interest, on either side of the Tasman, in New Zealand joining the Australian Federation in 1901. There is little evidence, through the subsequent century, that New Zealand much regretted the decision.

Australian indifference is partly the reason it has become so important for New Zealanders to beat Australians as often as possible. Rugby, netball, cricket or boardroom

victories are most satisfying, but almost anything will do. It is puzzling, particularly to the rest of the world, that a victory over the Aussies at rugby is an excuse for national celebration and a loss casts a palpable pall over the country.

While there is an inexorable trend towards economic union — pushed along by the forces of globalisation — closer political ties seem as unlikely today as they did in 1901. Politically, the two countries are drifting further apart — despite geological evidence that has them inching together again.

There are some early cartoons in *The Other Side of*

the Ditch, but most focus on the last quarter century, and most view the relationship from a New Zealand perspective. A number of prominent Australian cartoonists were asked to contribute. They searched their files and found very little. One, who had best remain anonymous, wrote: 'I've done a search of my back catalogue and find that I don't have a single cartoon that refers to New Zealand! Not even a lousy pun making fun of your accents'.

The exception is Alan Moir. After more than a quarter century working on major Australian newspapers, in a career liberally dotted with

plaudits and awards, he continues to be intrigued by the relationship between his adopted country and his trans-Tasman birthplace.

Ironically, just as work on the exhibition and book was being finalised, the Afghan refugee crisis and Ansett Australia collapse (both represented in the exhibition) stimulated a greater interest in New Zealand by Australian cartoonists than for many years.

The Other Side of the Ditch is on display at the National Library Gallery in Wellington. It will then be shown in Auckland and there is talk of the exhibition being seen in

Australia later in the year. The book version of the exhibition is available in Australia from the Australian Book Group, phone 03 5625 4290, fax 03 5825 3756.

AUTHOR IAN F. GRANT IS CURATOR OF *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DITCH* AND AUTHOR OF THE ACCOMPANYING BOOK. A WRITER AND PUBLISHER, HE IS EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF THE NEW ZEALAND CARTOON ARCHIVE, WHICH HE FOUNDED IN 1992, AT THE ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY IN WELLINGTON

The exhibition is reviewed on page 31 of this issue.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT — REPORT ON TRAINING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Museum consultant Ian McShane has recently completed a report for Museums Australia (Western Australia), 'Training for the Museum Profession in Western Australia', with research conducted over a three-month period in 2001. Funding support was provided by the Western Australian Department of Culture and the Arts, and the Western Australian Lotteries Commission.

While the report's focus is the particular needs of the sector in a geographically difficult state, its recommendations and conclusions are also applicable in many areas to the museum profession in Australia as a whole.

It analyses the current provision of training, education and professional development in the museum profession in Western Australia, considers whether currently available training meets the needs of the profession, identifies training needs for the next decade and beyond, and offers options to

meet these needs. The report also considers the issues of industry accreditation and professionalism, and gives a comparative analysis of accreditation processes in use in the areas of the arts and culture industry.

One of the findings of the report is that development of training for the museum profession in Australia is largely state-based. The report concludes that 'Although this has encouraged a degree of self-sufficiency and co-operation between training providers (particularly in Western Australia) it has hindered the development of a comprehensive national framework for museum education and training'. It proposes that 'the diversity of industry training requirements and the scarcity of resources available to support training and professional development can best be addressed through development of a national perspective and provision of national standards and programs', and recommends the development of a national

museum training agenda, through the Professional Development Sub-Committee of Museums Australia National Council.

The report also highlights a bias in museum funding in Australia 'towards collections rather than people', and that 'museum training and professional development in Australia have conventionally been directed towards institutional standards and accreditation'. The report recommends that the museum sector should 'encourage the provision of both institutional accreditation along with individual training'.

One area of concern raised by the report is the low number of Indigenous Australians working in Western Australian museums and cultural institutions generally. The report notes that 'One of the most vital changes in the content and orientation of Australian museums over the past two decades — the desire to give proper recognition of the history and culture of Indigenous Australians — lacks

conviction and meaning unless matched with a commitment to employ Indigenous Australians in museums'. It suggests that a traineeship program, involving major cultural agencies and supported by the Department of Culture and the Arts, be established to encourage training and employment of Indigenous Australians in Western Australian museums.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIA BRANCH OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE REPORT WIDELY CIRCULATED, AND ENCOURAGES INTERESTED PEOPLE TO OBTAIN ELECTRONIC COPIES, WHICH ARE AVAILABLE FROM ELIZABETH HOF AT MA_WA@MUSEUM.WA.GOV.AU

NEW MINISTER FOR THE ARTS AND SPORT

Senator Rod Kemp has been appointed to the junior portfolio for Arts and Sport after the November 2001 federal election, replacing Peter McGauran. He has responsibility for policy matters relating to the arts and sport, and his portfolio includes national cultural institutions.

Senator Kemp, a Victorian, and brother of Minister for Environment and Heritage Dr David Kemp, was elected to the Senate in 1990, and was Assistant Treasurer from October 1996 to November 2001. Before entering the federal parliament he was Director of the Institute of Public Affairs from 1982 to 1989.

Senator Richard Alston remains the senior Minister in the portfolio of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

APT AT QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY

The Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, the Queensland Art Gallery's flagship contemporary art event, will open at the Gallery on 12 September 2002, and run until 26 January 2003.

The Gallery has already secured participation from renowned international artists Nam June Paik, Lee U Fan and Yayoi Kusama, and will show works of the late Montein Boonma. A team of five Queensland Art Gallery curators, headed by Director Doug Hall, is selecting works by Asian and Pacific artists, to provide an in-depth insight into each artist's active career. A full list of participating artists will be released in February.

'APT 2002 will continue the Triennial's reputation for promoting new ideas, stimulating discussion and presenting new ways of considering contemporary art', said Mr Hall.

MUSEUM VICTORIA GAINS MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ART COLLECTION

Spirit Country, the Gantner Myer Aboriginal Art Collection, now on display at Melbourne Museum, then touring to Queensland, China and Japan, will soon become part of Museum Victoria's collection.

The collection, which includes works by Ginger Riley Munduwalawala, Queenie McKenzie, Emily Kame Kngwarrey, David Malangi, Uta Uta Jangala, Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula, Jarinyanu David Downs and Rover Thomas, was formed over four years by Sarah and Baillieu Myer and Carrillo Gantner, with support from Neilma Gantner. Curator Jennifer Isaacs provided guidance in the collection's development.

The group of paintings, sculptures and woven works reveal the best contemporary Aboriginal art practice in the principal art centres of Indigenous Australia, from the desert, the Kimberley and the Top End.

Spirit Country was first exhibited at the Legion of Honour Museum in San Francisco, and several works have already been donated to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Those on display in Melbourne Museum will be passed to Museum Victoria to form part of the permanent collection.

DON'T MISS OUT — REGISTER EARLY FOR THE MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN ADELAIDE

Once Upon Our Times: Exploring the role of cultural institutions in creating, perpetuating and selling social, political and national myths

Museums Australia National Conference, 18–22 March 2002, Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia. Standard registration fee closes 25 February 2002.

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VASA AT MELBOURNE MUSEUM

One of the greatest ships ever built in its time, the seventeenth-century Swedish royal warship *Vasa* never completed a voyage. Like its English counterpart, Henry VIII's *Mary Rose*, it sank on the first leg of its maiden voyage in 1628.

The *Vasa* was commissioned by the Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus II, at a time when Sweden was at war with Poland, as one of four new warships.

The *Vasa* took over three years to build, and its first departure was watched by excited crowds, whose joy at the ship's launch turned to despair as the great warship sank to the bottom of the Baltic Sea less than one nautical mile from the dock.

Vasa had been built using the timber from 1000 oak trees and carried sixty-four large cannon and two gun decks — and the combined weight of these is thought to have sealed its fate. It was simply too heavy to float.

Located by divers in 1956, the wreck of the *Vasa* was lifted to the surface of Stockholm harbour in 1961. Its hull was in good condition, and had enabled many objects to be preserved, ranging from ornate sculptures to beer barrels still containing liquid.

Visitors to Melbourne Museum can see an exhibition of more than seventy original artefacts from the ship in *Vasa — Strange fate of a King's warship*, on show from 26 February to 28 April 2002. These include cannon balls, sailing equipment, ornamental carvings and the personal belongings of the crew of the ill-fated *Vasa*.

PUTTING THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY IN YOUR INBOX

In early 2001, the Queensland Art Gallery embarked on an ambitious audience development project which sought to employ the desirable qualities of email technology (its speed, cost-efficiency and directness) to promote the Gallery, its exhibitions and programs to a mass audience.

The project team quickly developed a comprehensive rationale to avoid the undesirable qualities of email. Strategies included limiting message frequency so as not to 'bombard' subscribers; presenting content in a short, punchy style with a 'personal' as opposed to 'institutional' voice; and maintaining security on subscriber details to ensure the confidentiality of information supplied. Based on these aims, artmail@qag, the Gallery's free email information service, was launched in March 2001.

It was important for the Gallery to keep the subscription process as simple and inviting as possible. While providing the option of registering name, postal address and special interest categories, all that is essential to become an artmail subscriber is a nominated email address. Members of the public can subscribe either online via the Gallery's website or by filling in a registration form which can be picked up in the foyer of the Gallery or from cafés, cinemas and libraries both in metropolitan and regional Queensland.

In the lead-up to the 2005 opening of the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, one of the Gallery's ongoing aims is to generate community awareness and support of this exciting project.

As such, updating subscribers on developments

towards the new building has been one of artmail's most important roles, and interest in the new Gallery is one of the three special interest categories from which subscribers can choose. Two other projects of primary focus for the Gallery — Asia-Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art and family events and children's exhibitions — make up the other two current categories. The use of these categories assists in matching email content with targeted recipients.

From humble, text-only beginnings, images and colour are now effectively employed in artmail communications. Although links back to the Gallery's website remain useful, the appeal and instant impact contained within the artmail itself is regarded as integral to prompting interest and action on the receiver's part. The design of artmail content is something we will continue to develop as our ability to utilise the burgeoning technologies available increases.

In the eight months since its launch, artmail has attracted over 5000 subscribers from more than thirteen different countries. Each message sent prompts many replies, facilitating a new and rather unique two-way channel of communication between the Gallery and individual members of our audience.

The project has boundless potential to generate substantial increases in visitor numbers and broad positive advocacy for the Gallery within both community and corporate sectors. As the artmail subscriber base continues to grow, the Gallery will continue to nurture and develop this exciting project.



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MELBOURNE

TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE

Museums are often defined as institutions that 'collect, conserve and display'. This apparently simple notion covers an interwoven range of professional activities which are then overlaid by a complex layering of theories and paradigms. The definition is being challenged by managerial imperatives of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and by theoretical and practical concerns about the nature of 'collecting'. The meaning of the collection, its role in public life, its audience, and even its existence are being challenged by professionals within museums, by governments and by the public. In a pluralistic society broad representation is sought within the museum, often in ways which may seem inimical to conservation and collections management practice as it has existed.

The size, nature and conservation requirements of collections in Australia have been under scrutiny throughout the final decade of the twentieth century. Like the Piggot Report of 1975, Margaret Anderson's reports on the state of museum collections within Australia, *Heritage Collections in Australia* (1991, 1992, 1993) highlighted the need for a co-ordinated response by state, federal and local governments, and key stakeholders. Acknowledgment of this need, and the desire to address it, led to the creation by the Cultural Ministers of the Commonwealth and states of the Heritage Collections Committee (HCC), later the Heritage Collections Council. From 1993 to 2001 a range of programs and publications was developed by the HCC to help museums and collections managers take a more structured approach to caring for their collections. These include *reCollections*, focusing on collections care and management, *Be Prepared* on disaster preparedness, and *Significance*, which provides a structured methodology to assess objects to ascertain and justify the level of care and attention necessary to store, conserve and interpret them. Australian Museums On Line (AMOL) brings Australia's heritage collections, and methods of caring for them, to a national — and international — audience.

Prioritising our limited museum resources (staff, budget and infrastructure) is critical, but has the priority for collections shifted? Museums have to justify their spending priorities to governments, in an era of ever-shrinking resources, and governments, now more than ever, are measuring success in terms of sports and performing arts indices, the 'bums on seats' index. A senior member of the arts community, in a conversation recently with Robyn Sloggett, commented that conservation concerns governments as it is perceived to be akin to the hospital sector, that is, a bottomless pit of need. A senior government

adviser noted that a key concern for governments in the management of arts budgets is the need for large organisations to continually update large storage facilities to handle accumulated collections. Staff in some institutions have also noted that some trustees appear to favour cutting back on acquisitions.

The message is evident: collections and their needs are seen as increasingly resource-hungry activities. The public face of the museum, revealed through exhibitions and other public programs, increasingly determines collecting policy. Acquisition is now more likely to be exhibition driven. Curators, in a resource-poor environment, have to make strong intellectual arguments for acquiring relevant objects with no immediate prospect of exhibiting them or otherwise using them to promote the museum's mission. These trends should not necessarily be viewed as negative. Applying intellectual rigour to existing collections, and placing new ones on a sound theoretical base, are essential aspects of museum management. Broadening ideas of what a collection is, and what it should contain, can add to its intellectual impact. Collecting initiatives are now informed by an increased emphasis on gathering information about the object, to establish provenance and context, and deepen its meaning. The value and significance of *in situ* collections, representing a totality of one type of experience, mean that some collections do not move into a formal museum setting at all.

The scope of 'collected' material is widening as resources are shrinking, and now include intangible as well as tangible heritage, as UNESCO's recently published list of endangered heritage indicates. Doreen Mellor, manager of the National Library of Australia's 'Bringing Them Home' project on the Indigenous Stolen Generation, makes the case for oral history records as artefacts:

'Spoken views and recollections have become increasingly important as a research resource, and as a way of understanding the past and its influence on the present and the future. More precisely than other collected items, they have become artefacts of memory.'

Including multiple viewpoints and practices within the museum, as part of its mission to represent all sectors of society, may mean re-examining some long-cherished practices, including the sense of exclusive ownership by the museum of the objects in its collection. Many museums now share their collections with members of originating community groups, who may take objects relating to their community from the museum

for ceremonies or special events. Joint management of the objects with these communities is also now a common practice in museums in Australia and overseas.

Strategies are now being developed to justify the cost of housing and conserving collections by providing access to them to a wider community. Virtual collections available on-line meet this requirement, and they are being structured for access in increasingly sophisticated ways. Fiona Cameron's article on 'Themescaping Virtual Collections' (pp.16-17) outlines some of these. Brian Crozier's article on 'Community Collecting' (pp.9-10) suggests identifying and registering significant objects in a community, but leaving them with their owners and accessed by the museum when required.

All these initiatives help us to treat collections more strategically. But we also need to ask a number of questions about the ultimate purpose of our collections and their interpretation. What plans do we have as a nation to build the national story through collection building? What is the role of — and discussion between — public institutions as to how their collections will help to build a sense of Australian identity?

During recent policy development forums in Victoria comments such as 'museums are the churches of today', or 'one of the key roles of the museum is to function as the new public space where single fathers interact with their children on access days', were cited when the purpose and meaning of museums was being discussed. But are these really defining statements? How do we differentiate museums from shopping centres, skate parks and other public spaces? What is the role of the collection in this? Apart from building and describing identity, what is the role of collections in developing intellectual and cultural capital?

If we focus on museums as spaces then what is the role of the blockbuster, and what becomes possible? What does it mean for Museum Victoria to host an *Italian Masterpieces* art exhibition? In an article in the *Age* Dr Philip Jones, senior curator of anthropology at the South Australian Museum, noted:

'Museums have just experienced a quantum leap in funding for new Aboriginal exhibitions, but the resulting displays have highlighted the already familiar. Rather than provoking new questions about the Aboriginal past, they have tended towards predictable didacticism and market hyperbole ... Teams of contract curators and researchers were employed to get these institutions over the line for their grand openings, but when contracts expired fewer permanent staff than ever remained to cope with record levels of public interest ... The pool of trained, knowledgeable curators has now diminished to its lowest level for many years.'

What has happened to the status of collections curator versus the designer and curator of exhibitions in museums? How does information about the collection get out to the public if a museum has only a website and exhibition area? Should we expect serious publications from museums? Can and should cultural collections be expected to act as verifiers of statements/positions/politics and so on? What is the research value of collections today?

We hope that these questions about the role and nature of collections in our museums will inspire members of *Museum National* Australia to think and write about them for *Museum National*.

This article was compiled by members of *Museum National's* Editorial Committee, Robyn Sloggett and Linda Young, with editor Rostyn Russell.

MPRG

Mornington Peninsula
Regional Gallery

AUTUMN | 26 FEBRUARY – 14 APRIL 2002

Paper as Object

A Noosa Regional Gallery Travelling Exhibition, supported by Cotton Australia and toured by the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland.

AUTUMN | 26 FEBRUARY – 14 APRIL 2002

David Larwill: Stuff that matters

Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Travelling Exhibition

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FIFTY YEARS OF ROCK'N'ROLL

An exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, *Spinning Around: 50 Years of Festival Records* celebrates Festival Records' fiftieth anniversary. It tells the story of the company, music, technology and stars in the context of the Australian recording business, as well as through the eyes of fans.

Spectacular interactive displays allow visitors to re-mix a classic track, be a DJ, play the drums and create music on a sequencer. They can also select tracks to compile their own take-home CD.

SPINNING AROUND IS ON EXHIBITION UNTIL 28 JULY 2002.

Festival's catalogue for 1953-54. In its first two years Festival developed a large catalogue of popular jazz, swing, show tunes, square dance and stage musicals and became Australia's second largest manufacturer of gramophone records.

Courtesy of Festival Mushroom Records

COMMUNITY COLLECTING

Museums are a bit slow to take up ideas which are often well established in other fields. Libraries have had their own standard classification scheme for many years. The natural historians have had their own taxonomic systems for even longer. Museums have still to come up with theirs.

In the same way, the idea of establishing a central record of collections held by other people is an old one among archivists, but museums are only just catching up. Most people now know about Australian Museums On Line, and its online register of objects kept in museum collections across the country which can be searched virtually as one collection. The Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) is another example.

I would like to apply this idea to local museums and to objects held by private individuals, and call the idea 'community collecting'. It's a simple notion in principle, but there are quite a lot of angles which I'm still thinking about, so don't assume you're getting a finished theory here — this is very much a work in progress.

'Community collecting' deals with the theory and practice of keeping records on objects of interest to your museum that are

not owned by the museum, but are borrowed by your museum when needed. When you don't need them, they stay with their owners. The idea falls into three parts.

First, identify objects held in the community that are relevant to you. This means that, like objects you collect directly and store, they relate to your collection policy or to a specific project. While you certainly save space with community collecting, this is still a labor-intensive business, and there is no point wasting time on things that are of no use to you. It doesn't mean you necessarily have to spend a lot of time searching: a lot of objects come in and out of museums from time to time that are not part of the collection. People lend you things for assessment or for an opinion, or they ring you up for your advice. They ask you what things are worth, or they simply want you to know that they have things that might be important.

I recently had a call from someone who had bought what turned out to be an illuminated address by the suffrage campaigner Emma Miller to the premier of Queensland after women had been given the vote in the state in 1905, thanking him on behalf of the women of Queensland. This is a significant object in an area which is poor in objects. He didn't want to give it to us, just tell us he had it. A lot of objects go floating past — it's just a matter of deciding that you need to remember them.

The second step is to record the objects you have identified. This is not really different from the normal recording process. We

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COMMUNITY COLLECTING
INVOLVES ESTABLISHING A
DATABASE OR REGISTER OF
SIGNIFICANT OBJECTS THAT
COME YOUR WAY

started doing this some time ago at the Queensland Museum. Though we haven't got very far with it yet, here's where we're up to. The record sheet from our External collection database is exactly the same as what we use for our normal in-house collection, though the acquisition information in this case refers to the current owner, not the previous one. The only difference is in the designation of the collection — EXTNL. The sheet records how we came to record the object, and includes a photo and the owner's contact details. A significance statement would be an important inclusion.

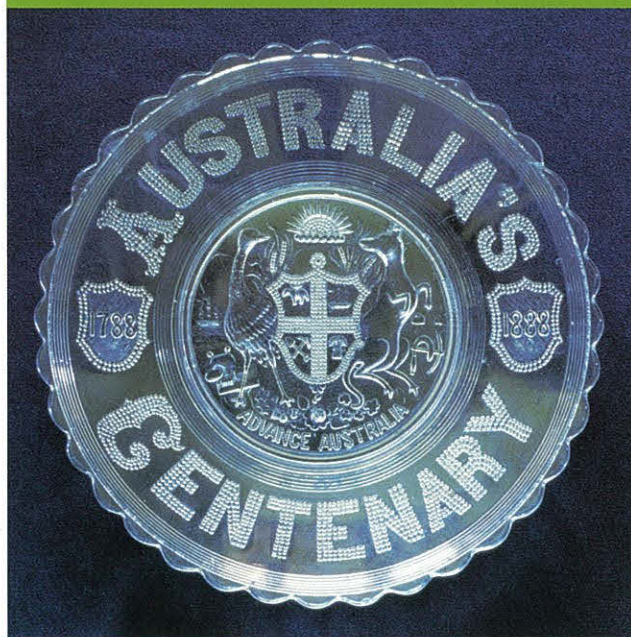
The third and most important part of the process is getting the object into your museum when you need it. You must be able to use it, then return it to where you borrowed it from.

This notion dawned on me at Surat, a small town in south-west Queensland of about 600 to 800 people. Surat's Council started its own cultural centre using the old Cobb and Co. changing station store. The cultural centre had its own museum which, quite rightly, was tightly focused on its own community. It was, therefore, only a short step to borrowing whatever it needed whenever it put on an exhibition. I realised that the record of these loans was a growing record of significant objects held by private individuals — an external collection.

The thought then was, the museum could not only develop this record into an external collection, it could also 'collect' the owners, who could become a sort of friends group, who could be targeted with conservation advice and assisted to record their own memories about their objects. I thought some form of formal relationship was needed, so I suggested to Surat that they ask their owners if they would be willing to have their objects registered with the museum, with some definition of the relationship. Areas needing agreement would typically be those that concern all museum management — safe storage, access (by the museum and outsiders), and the documentation of the object.

The answer was no, they wouldn't — a formal agreement of this kind was more than the owners had bargained for. Lending objects was one thing: having a formal relationship was something else. Nonetheless, with or without this, Surat continues to have a growing record of objects it has borrowed, a steadily developing index to culturally significant items held by the community. These objects remain accessible — access is not a problem. So the third part of the community collecting idea is achieved — the objects can be borrowed when needed.

There are obvious advantages to community collecting. The most obvious is that you effectively extend your collection, but you don't have to store the object. Someone else does it for you, though you may be able to give them some useful advice on how



This souvenir plate from 1888, now in private hands, could be registered with a museum as part of a community collection. Photograph by David Young.

to do it. You can then put more effort into what really counts in your public programs, in documenting the object.

The downside is that you don't control the object. This is not a substitute for collections, but a supplement. The owner can leave, sell, or destroy the object without any reference to you. On the other hand, if you've indicated an interest in it, perhaps it might be offered to you if the owner no longer wants it. And if your interest has heightened the owner's sense of the object's significance, some advice on its conservation, care and documentation may be well received. Forwarding the relevant information sheets from the series produced by AICCM would be a first step.

Perhaps more difficult than the pros and cons is the question of the mechanics. Surat had problems establishing a formal connection with the owners of their objects. This may be a problem if you want to develop your owners as a client base, but it may depend on how you go about it. Anyone who lends you things has already established a relationship with you, and there may be things that can be done with that, without doing anything more formal.

At its simplest, which is entirely practicable for any community museum (in fact, Surat has pretty much proved the point), community collecting involves establishing a database or register of significant objects that come your way. This is really a matter of collecting a little more information than one might do just to borrow something. A statement of significance would be useful, and a photo. None of this involves any special relationship with the owner. And when you want to borrow the object you negotiate, case by case.

I don't know all the answers to this yet, but it seems to me worth pursuing.

This is an abridged version of a paper presented at the MAQ State Conference, Cairns, 15–16 September 2001. A full version can be accessed at http://www.maq.org.au/programs/conf01/proceedings/brian_print.html

DR BRIAN CROZIER IS SENIOR CURATOR, SOCIAL HISTORY, AT QUEENSLAND MUSEUM



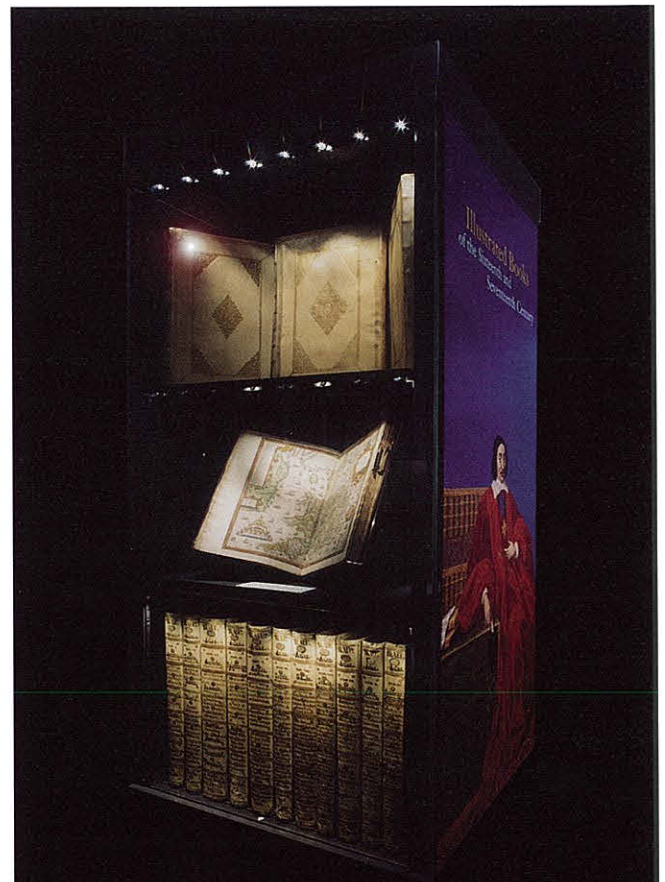
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STAR POLES FROM
ELCHO ISLAND**

Australian National
Maritime Museum,
27 February 2002–21 July 2002

Banumbirr are a sacred feathered pole used by the Yolngu people of north-east Arnhemland in mortuary ceremonies. The tufts of feathers represent the Morning Star, which journeys over the Sea Countries of Northern Australia. The Banumbirr in this exhibition are from Elcho Island.

Artist:
Wilson Lanydjurra
Object: Pole
Clan: Malarra
Moiety: Dhuwa
Date: c1999

Courtesy of the Australian National Maritime Museum



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'RLS' MUSEUMS

IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australia, like all other states, has no shortage of 'RLS' (regional, local, specialist) museums, which for the sake of brevity will be categorised below as local museums. Every country town of any size has one. Many have two or more — usually a specialist and a local. The specialist museums can be intriguing, on subjects ranging over national banking and currency, militaria, coins, dolls, costume, trains, country music, horses, and general collections of bits and pieces. The photograph accompanying this article, taken in a specialist museum, is one of my favourites. It's not often that the former History Trust Director, Peter Cahalan, is lost for words but this place, where narrow walkways offered the only space not completely crammed with stuff, had him absolutely stumped.

I started working with local museums in 1976. My job then was to visit all such museums in South Australia, assess what they needed and then see what I could do unassisted to help them. It took me about eighteen months to achieve the first two objectives. I was still working on the third, having achieved some modest assistance in the meantime, when I resigned from the History Trust of South Australia several months ago.

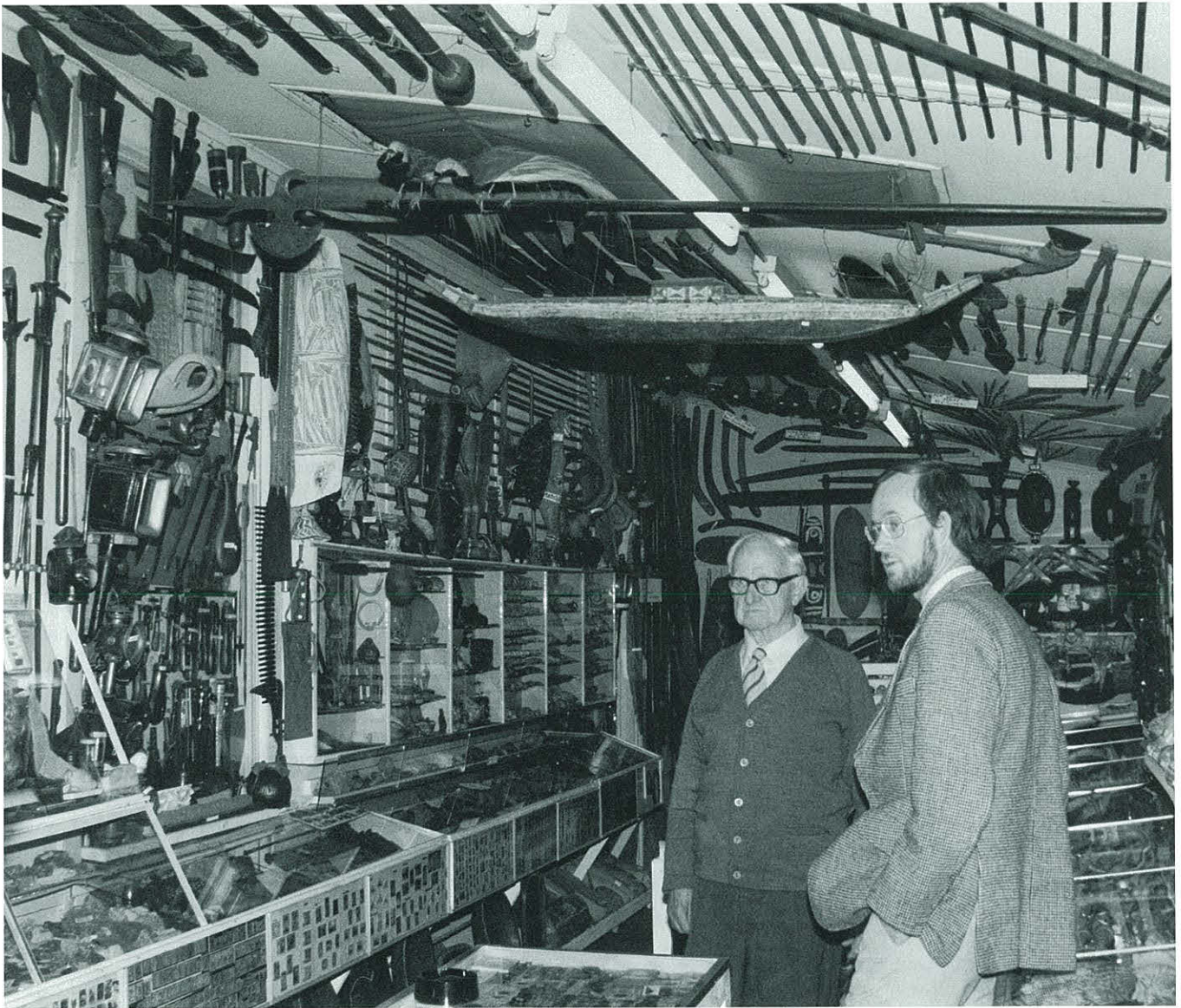
We've all seen local museums which amaze and horrify, whose owners or managers have no interest in museology and merely want to show their collections. Probably around twenty per cent of the total in South Australia and elsewhere fall into this category. Unfortunately they give local museums generally a bad name. A few of them are working towards their own salvation but most of them are beyond redemption. They will either collapse and disintegrate, or come good, in their own good time. They provide two things: (i) some valuable items among their collections which need to be acquired by good museums in public ownership when they come up for auction, and (ii) some entertaining after-dinner stories. Otherwise forget them.

The remaining majority of museums vary. Some are surprisingly good, especially when you consider that they are run by volunteers who had to scrounge for resources and train themselves or find training as they went. In South Australia, much of our history is represented in these museums — far more than is covered by any state agencies. Objects associated with

Charles Sturt and his epoch-making trip down the Murray in 1829–30; items which revolutionised agriculture in Australia such as the stripper and the stump jump plough; railway locomotives, rolling stock and realia from the state's three gauge systems; trams; objects associated with the soon-to-be canonised Mary MacKillop and her colleague Tenison Woods; objects left behind by early sealers, whalers and early settlers on Kangaroo Island; relics from the days of copper and opal mining, or the development of telecommunications; items reflecting domestic life in a variety of settings but particularly without electric power or running water. If you want to find out about any of these, a local museum is a good place to start.

Exhibitions in these local museums also vary. In generalising about them, I would describe them as unassuming and unpretentious. Local museums now are much more conscious about the context of objects than they were twenty years ago. They have made a considerable effort to be clear about the messages they are trying to communicate to the public and how to do this effectively. Labels and captions might sometimes still be handwritten, together with photographs and other graphic material being directly mounted on panels rather than silk screened or computer-generated. The showcases might have come from the old jewellery store, rather than being specially built for the purpose. But the stories are still fascinating and well

LOCAL MUSEUMS NOW ARE MUCH MORE CONSCIOUS ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF OBJECTS THAN THEY WERE TWENTY YEARS AGO. THEY HAVE MADE A CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO BE CLEAR ABOUT THE MESSAGES THEY ARE TRYING TO COMMUNICATE TO THE PUBLIC AND HOW TO DO THIS EFFECTIVELY.



told. High-tech and sophistication aren't a part of local museums' armoury, nor do they need to be. As the song says, you don't need to be a weatherman to know the way the wind blows.

By preserving, researching and presenting these items to the public local museums are providing a signal service — one which has not been appropriately recognised at any level of government. They need more resources — not just from grant programs which always have strings attached, but enough ongoing funding to allow them to operate from day to day. The volunteers who run them are ageing and having difficulties in finding replacements. It's also difficult for them to keep up with the growing complexity of issues surrounding the running of organisations such as museums: electronic technology, corporate planning, disaster planning, occupational health and safety, writing grant applications and acquittals etc. So people with the appropriate skills are always in short supply. It's no wonder the quality of these museums is uneven.

I am looking forward to the forthcoming report by Deakin University on the needs of museums, particularly RLS museums. I am sure it will emphasise the need for resources in the form of funding, training and paid staff, this last if not in every museum

then at some sort of regional level. I believe also that a national accreditation scheme is essential. Another thing people from local museums would appreciate, which might not get a mention in the report, is recognition and respect from their professional museum colleagues. Many, probably most, go out of their way to provide this. But there are some who manage to turn the curled upper lip into an art form. They regard all local museums as amateurish and irrelevant, thereby belittling the conscientious efforts of people who work in local museums and in the process, belittling themselves.

One other important characteristic of local museums is that there are several of them in every electorate. Museums Australia could be making more of this, as could the Community Museums SIG (of which I am the chair). We're working on it!

GEOFF SPEIRS WAS MUSEUMS OFFICER OF THE HISTORY TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA FOR OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. HE IS NOW A MUSEUM CONSULTANT

Former Director of the History Trust of South Australia, Peter Cahalan, with the owner of a private museum (now closed) and his collection.
Courtesy of the History Trust of South Australia

STORIES OF VISION

IN HERITAGE COLLECTION

Heritage collections can show up in very unexpected places. A prime example of this is the Tilly Aston Heritage Collection, owned by Vision Australia Foundation (formerly the Association for the Blind), an organisation that has operated as a service provider and advocacy body for blind and vision-impaired people since 1895. The collection represents much of the history of blind and vision-impaired people in Victoria, particularly focusing on the key role Vision Australia Foundation has played in obtaining improved rights and services for its members. The Foundation's history has not been widely known, but nevertheless it was at the forefront of worldwide change, with a legacy that lives on today.

Before the early 1900s, blind people suffered from considerable social and economic disadvantage. The law stated you could not vote if you could not write your name, effectively disenfranchising many blind people. There was also no pension for blind people who lost their sight after the age of sixteen, and Braille material was very scarce and expensive. Many blind people thus lived in poverty and social prejudice was rife.

Born in 1873, Tilly Aston became the first blind woman admitted to the University of Melbourne but left before the end of her second year owing to a lack of Braille material. The experience inspired her to form the Victorian Association of Braille Writers in 1894, responsible for establishing Australia's first Braille Library. Tilly went on to co-found the Association for the Advancement of the Blind (now Vision Australia Foundation) to fight for improvements in rights and services for blind and vision-impaired people. Through her endeavours, the organisation successfully obtained transport concessions and a pension for all blind people. It was also at the forefront of international change as the first organisation in the world to obtain voting rights for all blind people and free postage of Braille material. In 1990 the Braille and Talking Book Library merged with Vision Australia Foundation.

This rich history is well documented by a large and diverse heritage collection consisting of photographs, memorabilia, archives, artworks, trophies and audiovisual material. Some of the highlights include photographs and personal effects that belonged to Tilly Aston, such as a beautiful beaded evening purse and a crocheted tray cloth (both created by her). Throughout her life, Tilly wrote many books of poetry and her memoirs based on her experiences as a blind woman in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Rare autographed copies of her books are held in the heritage collection, in addition to an early recording of her reading her poetry.

Also in the heritage collection are instruments used in Braille and audio production representing the rapid rate of technological change that occurred over the last century. Instruments range from early wooden Braille frames to small Braille machines. A Braille printing press was invented in 1934 by Minnie Crabb, at the time chief librarian of Vision Australia library. The press radically improved the availability of Braille materials by enabling quick production and duplication and reducing the need for manual transcription. It is now displayed at the Vision Australia Library in full working order.

Blind cricket was invented in Melbourne in 1922 and is now played internationally with world championships regularly held. Vision Australia Foundation was responsible for obtaining the world's first sports ground for blind cricketers at Kooyong, where matches are still played. Included in the heritage collection is the first cricket ball bowled on this ground in 1928. It is a hollow cane wicker ball with metal pieces inside that make a sound when thrown, enabling blind cricketers to track the ball's location.

PROMOTING THE USES OF THE HERITAGE COLLECTION
ENGENDERS A CULTURE WHERE STAFF CAN SEE THE
BENEFIT OF PRESERVING AND MAKING ACCESSIBLE THE
ORGANISATION'S RICH AND GROUNDBREAKING HERITAGE.

Works of art are also included in the collection, and honour individuals who have made lasting contributions to improving the lives of blind and vision-impaired people. Stunning stained glass windows and a bust of Louis Braille (the inventor of Braille) look out over the new Vision Australia Library, whilst other stained glass windows honour famous British writers, including Shakespeare and Milton. These windows were commissioned with the support of donors and members of the Vision Australia Foundation in the 1920s.

As the collection has grown, its significance has also developed, taking on increased contemporary relevance. It is an important tool for educating the community, staff, members and volunteers on the history of vision-impaired and blind people in Australia, provoking discussion on the nature of vision impairment and ways in which its impact can be reduced. Through its need to make the heritage collection accessible, Vision Australia Foundation has taken on a much stronger role,



advocating greater accessibility in the cultural sector and providing a broad range of advice and services to assist organisations to achieve this goal.

As Vision Australia Foundation develops, so the collection continues to grow and reflect these changes. Procedures have been established to ensure the

contemporary history of Vision Australia is systematically recorded and preserved. Promoting the uses of the heritage collection engenders a culture where staff can see the benefit of preserving and making accessible the organisation's rich and groundbreaking heritage.

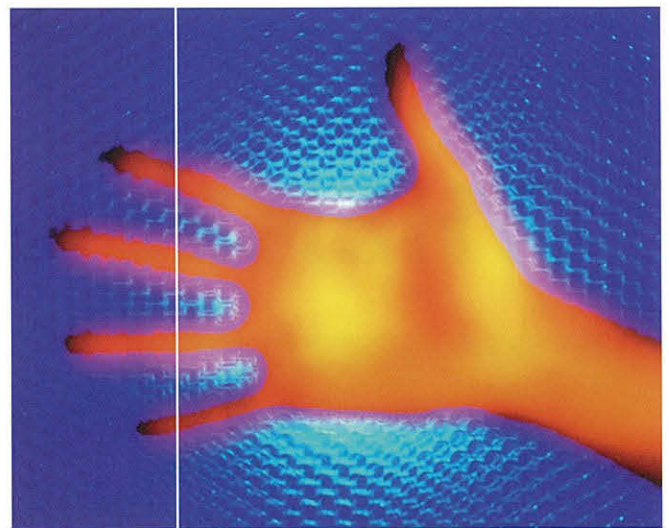
Much of the collection is now on display at Vision Australia Foundation in Kooyong, and is available for viewing by prior appointment with Vision Australia's curator by calling (03) 9864 9649. Further information on the collection is also available on-line at the Australian Museums On Line website (www.amol.org.au) and at the Vision Australia Foundation website (www.visionaustralia.org.au).

ANNA FAIRCLOUGH IS ARCHIVIST/CURATOR AT VISION AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION

Vision Australia Foundation works to reduce the impact of sensory, mobility loss and disability on individuals and provides a wide range of accessibility services and advice to cultural institutions.

Above: Stained-glass window depicting blind English poet, John Milton, in the Foundation's Library

Below: Evening purse created by Tilly Aston
Courtesy of Vision Australia Foundation



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THEMESCAPING

VIRTUAL COLLECTIONS

AS MUSEUMS EMBRACE THE WORLD WIDE WEB THERE IS AN EXPECTATION THAT INSTITUTIONS PUT THEIR COLLECTIONS ON-LINE AND THE CONTENT BE MEANINGFUL AND NAVIGABLE.

This has led to a new role for collection automation systems from documentation to content-rich knowledge bases addressing the pedagogic needs of diverse audiences. Two issues have emerged. Delivery systems now available on the web have outstripped the content currently held in collection databases. The other issue facing museums is whether the data stored in these systems and the way objects are documented by museum staff really engage on-line audiences.

In recent years thematic interfaces to museum collections have become more prevalent in an attempt to exploit the narrative relationships between objects and make collections information more engaging to a range of users. The most popular solution is a stories/themes approach. Digital objects are presented in a linear hierarchical narrative of theme/sub-theme. This solution employs a static HTML approach, utilising traditional museum metaphors such as object labels, graphics and didactic text panels, but is light on interactivity and hyperlinks. Typically it privileges one thematic interpretation over another, while limiting the interpretive potential of digital collections, their thematic possibilities and relational connections. Contextualising objects according to ideas rather than physical and functional taxonomies, however, represents a significant paradigm shift. Examples of this approach include:

American Strategy, <http://www.americanstrategy.org/> National Maritime Museum, <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/>; The J. Paul Getty Museum, <http://mcweb.getty.edu/art/collections/>; Museum of English Rural Life, <http://www.ruralhistory.org/index.html>; and Picture Australia, <http://www.pictureaustralia.org>

The other common approach is the searching interface. Generally this solution is more useful to specialists who have an interest in fielded data. Without a clear understanding of the information available, the way data is modelled, and the search terminologies used to access material, an approach such as this is of little use to non-specialist users.

Solutions to date have relied on the translation of the real museum environment into the virtual world. The web however is different — its relational, free-form and multi-dimensional characteristics offer numerous ways to enlighten users about museum objects through the creation of serendipitous thematic possibilities. By freeing objects from traditional narrative and navigational structures, thematic access to collections can encompass a more dynamic browser-based approach. It also enables the establishment of new relationships between users and collections while allowing greater interpretive autonomy. Whereas real collections operate to a greater or lesser extent on the visceral thrill of being in the presence of the original, with the digital world the information potential of objects predominates.

The second generation of on-line collections is witnessing a trend to tailored and adaptive responses to different usage situations. This represents a transition to a framework where the user can create new organisations of information and contribute to the development of the knowledge environment. For collections documentation and metadata description this involves building a network of relationships for and between objects. Information and virtual objects can then be filtered and pulled from a database through a range of thematically-based searching categories along with other media, and configured in ways determined by the user.

With the EMP Digital Collections (the collections of a popular music museum, Experience Music Project, in Seattle, Washington <http://www.emplive.com>) objects can be searched, retrieved and clustered under categories such as Object Name, Music Styles, Era and People. The interfaces, however, are complex to use and require an array of plug-ins that is daunting for most users.

Another approach is that taken by the Hypermuseum (<http://www.HyperMuseum.com>), a gateway to cultural resources held in European museums and financed by the European Commission. In this model relationships between objects are suggested and derived from the metadata that describes them such as Dublin Core, the Z39.50 profile as well as background ontologies in databases.

Thematic relationships are recovered by various free text and search query methods based on word meanings and forms through the use of lexical databases. This enables users to mine the assets in the digital collection by a diverse range of word relationships. Users can then select digital objects and associated graphics to generate their own themes. Lexical databases, however, only work for native English speakers because they are constructed on the basis of thought and language patterns. The interfaces are also difficult to access, and again users need to know what they are searching for. The beauty of this concept is that it enables existing data systems to be reused without the need to convert or standardise.

So what will the next generation of on-line digital collections look like? Museums need to work with emerging communities of users in developing concepts and content that will lead to intelligent user interfaces and better presentation capabilities.

Future thematic interfaces will exploit the information potential of objects. More complex and sophisticated technologies will enable the creation of multifarious spatial relationships and narrative structures between things.

WITH THE EMERGING LANDSCAPE OF DYNAMIC ON-LINE OBJECTS, THE APPETITE FOR THE REAL WILL ONLY EXPAND AND DEEPEN AS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES BECOME MORE INTERESTED AND BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH MUSEUM COLLECTIONS.

Enriching the data currently available in collections management systems will also be a key issue. This involves the reconceptualisation of databases, the types of information held, and fields included in the light of user research. Investments made to date with the digitisation of records, images and multimedia will be reused to suit these new needs.

Future applications for data provide an opportunity to marry contemporary material culture interpretation with new technologies. New fields could potentially connect objects with a whole range of social, historical, technological, artistic, cultural and disciplinary contexts. In conceptual terms this involves the virtual layering of meanings and contexts of objects that can subsequently be configured in different ways in a live environment. Establishing relationships between objects on the basis of extended fields and additional ontologies could form the basis of retrieval methods. Developing concepts on what and how this metadata is to be handled and standardised will be a continuing issue.

The building of museum collection management systems as knowledge bases provides an opportunity to store the wider intellectual assets of a museum. Museums create all kinds of enriched data — historical narratives, images, video, audio,

graphics, artworks for use in exhibitions, publications, marketing and educational materials. All these components could be indexed, managed and delivered by database tools while contributing to the creation of relational thematic linkages and multimedia presentations.

The rethinking of collection management and multimedia delivery systems to provide effective access to multimedia contents will have major implications on how collections information can be configured and interpreted. In addition the emergence of more creative content environments and the impact of games technologies, in particular 3D visualisations, will eventually be applied to museum automation systems in an on-line environment. These are expected to become cheaper and more persuasive, leading to the creation of complex cultural interpretations such as highly detailed and dynamic visualisations and navigation environments that have strong popular appeal.

New searching and browsing options will emerge to suit different target groups while providing a variety of entry points to collections. This may evolve as a series of options, from structured thematic narratives to a series of free-form and more structured browsers. Rather than large additional investments, data could be repackaged in different ways to address the needs of these broad user groups. This, combined with the range of entry points, will allow users of different ages and abilities, learning styles and levels of familiarity with computers to gain access to collections.

Personalisation searching mechanisms popular in e-commerce environments, as seen with amazon.com, will be applied to online collections. This will enable searching to be customised to the user's interests with theming constructed by suggested terms, topics and relationships between objects.

The tension between the potential richness of the content and the relatively poorly resourced institutions that are the trustees of collections was raised as a key issue at the Digital Libraries Research for Access to Cultural and Scientific Resources meeting in Luxembourg in 2000 (IST European Commission, <http://www.cordis.lu/ist/ka3/digicult/en/report.html>).

Developing knowledge bases can be viewed as an incremental process. With the emerging landscape of dynamic on-line objects, the appetite for the real will only expand and deepen as people of all ages become more interested and better acquainted with museum collections. Convincing management of the educational and marketing value of such initiatives, and to resource such projects, will be one of the most fundamental strategic issues for the future.

This paper is based upon work funded by the Australian Research Council Strategic Partnerships with Industry Grant scheme with partners Powerhouse Museum and Vernon Systems Ltd. Its objective is to develop new interfaces and searching mechanisms for web access to collections databases. A fully referenced version is available from the Editor, *Museum National*, email editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

DR FIONA CAMERON IS A RESEARCH FELLOW, HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

COLLECTIONS AND COMMUNITIES

A new program which aims to increase the accessibility of gallery collections is being piloted in Australia by The Ian Potter Foundation in partnership with the Art Gallery of Western Australia (Perth), Heide Museum of Modern Art (Melbourne), the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (Launceston) and the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney). The Art Museum Collections Accessibility Initiative (AMCAI), established by the Wallace-Readers' Digest Funds in New York, aims to 'help art galleries find ways to attract and serve a diverse mix of visitors through a range of innovative programs tied to their permanent collections'. At the core of the AMCAI philosophy is the recognition of art galleries as public assets for which everyone should be able to feel a sense of ownership and belonging.

The success of AMCAI in the United States has opened the minds (and doors) of both art galleries and arts funders to a recognition of alternative, community-based approaches to audience development. One of the key lessons to have emerged from the research undertaken in America, and in embryonic form in the work currently being done in Australia, is that audience participation and an integrated approach to public programs must be central to any long-term marketing strategy. Generating community support for the arts is also essential to the maintenance of government funding for the sector.

AT THE CORE OF THE AMCAI PHILOSOPHY IS THE RECOGNITION OF ART GALLERIES AS PUBLIC ASSETS FOR WHICH EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FEEL A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND BELONGING.

Funding of \$300,000, paid over a three- to five-year period, has been granted by The Ian Potter Foundation to each of these four Australian institutions for their AMCAI project. The collections of these galleries are at the centre of four distinctive programs that aim to attract audiences who do not regularly utilise these public resources. In the first twelve months we have begun to see each of these programs take shape, and some exciting results have emerged.

The relevance of a collection to its audience is one of the key issues to have emerged through research undertaken in the initial year of AMCAI. Preliminary focus groups, surveys and community consultation have shown that people entering a gallery for the first time need to feel that the collection has some significance for them. This understanding permeates the structure and aims of each of the four projects.

PEOPLE ENTERING A GALLERY FOR THE FIRST TIME
NEED TO FEEL THAT THE COLLECTION HAS SOME
SIGNIFICANCE FOR THEM.

The Art Gallery of Western Australia is using works by indigenous and local artists in its collection as the focus of a program entitled @rtX, building a relationship with youth in two culturally diverse areas of Perth. The Art Gallery of NSW is addressing the fact that, despite its significant collection of Asian art, the Asian community is often not visible in the gallery. This has been coupled with research on how technology could be better used to draw young people to attend exhibitions and events. The AMCAI project at Heide is seeing the conservation, documentation, exhibition and publication of works in the collection of four artists at the cornerstone of the gallery's history: Tucker, Hester, Vassilieff and Nolan. Restored sculptures in Heide grounds have been popular among families picnicking in the gardens and a valuable way to welcome new audiences to the gallery. Parallel research by Heide staff is investigating potential relationships with the diverse ethnic communities in the local region. The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery has undertaken an extensive community development program in which a youth gallery has been constructed to provide a space in which local young people can spend time considering and discussing the collection.



One of the most interesting discoveries that emerged in a recent roundtable discussion by AMCAI participants was that people want their visit to galleries to be experiential and to connect with their emotions. Surveys and consultation undertaken by all four galleries have demonstrated that the appearance of the staff and gallery spaces, the design and content of wall texts, the use of technology and places in which to sit and relax or talk are important factors that significantly influence the response of people unaccustomed to visiting galleries. For example, consultation with youth groups identified one important aspect for young people is that they are able to relate to the front-of-house staff, and the Art Gallery of WA is proud to have acquired its first volunteer with a facial piercing!

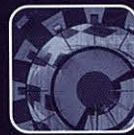
The barrier of language arose as another important issue encountered by each of the institutions. That wall texts are an important means through which collections can be made more accessible was a point reinforced by the research. It was found that some of the target communities, particularly youth, look to wall texts rather than catalogues to provide insight into an exhibition. The use of jargon and not providing texts in other languages are among the greatest barriers to understanding the relevance of a collection and are often deterrents to revisiting.

The experiences that have emerged to date reinforce the principal philosophy of the AMCAI program: that community participation is fundamental in encouraging new audiences to utilise galleries and their collections. This means that people must be given sense of ownership of the space, and relevance of the collection and activities. Of course, no cultural institution can be all things to all people, and the clearly defined target groups of these four galleries have helped them understand ways in which particular communities can be involved. Staff from all four galleries agreed with the lesson from the USA, that building relationships with community leaders and establishing focus groups are enormously effective in both finding out what a particular community expects of their gallery, and in acting as a lever for encouraging that community to engage.

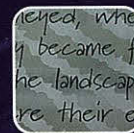
For further information on AMCAI in Australia, please see the website of The Ian Potter Foundation: www.ianpotter.org.au/majorinitiatives/amcai
Publications outlining the findings of the US program are available on the Wallace-Readers' Digest Funds' website: www.wallacefunds.org

KYLIE McRAE IS ADMINISTRATOR OF THE IAN POTTER FOUNDATION, MELBOURNE

Children from North Balwyn Primary School paint their own 'Heidelberg landscape' following a visit to the *Heidelberg to Heide* exhibitions
Courtesy of The Ian Potter Foundation



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A FRAMEWORK FOR HERITAGE ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

MICKEY DEWAR DISCUSSES THE APPLICATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION'S AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEMES TO NORTHERN TERRITORY MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS.

I attended the Museums Australia Conference in Canberra in April 2001, and heard a short presentation on an Australian Heritage Commission initiative to develop a framework for use in heritage assessment and management. The Commission has produced a short book entitled *Australian Historic Themes: a framework for use in heritage assessment and management* that it believes is highly relevant to people in heritage and museums.

We are the only nation to occupy an entire continent: the diversity of our experience can be linked through a thematic framework. Although heritage management takes place at a national, as well as state, territory, regional and local level, this framework has been designed for use across all areas. The benefits of using nationally recognised themes are: to help think about historical process in assessing places; emphasise history rather than simply fabric or structure; form a useful basis for research; assist in preparing interpretive text; justify and provide evidence of significance; provide a standard of historical significance apart from local pressures of use or need; identify the significance of place; and develop consistency in use of themes associated with sites.

The theme groups outlined in the framework are:

1. Tracing the evolution of the Australian environment
2. Peopling Australia
3. Developing local, regional and national economies
4. Building settlements, towns and cities
5. Working
6. Educating
7. Governing
8. Developing Australia's cultural life
9. Marking the phases of life

The theme groups are not in any kind of order, and one place could have a number of themes associated with it. In addition to the major themes, there are a number of sub-themes outlined in the framework. The book is easy to follow, with a central fold-out section that clearly sets out the themes and sub-themes. There are also notes about a case study undertaken in Albury and how the framework was used.

A possible way in which a theme could be expanded, using the example of The Residency, Alice Springs, is illustrated in the table below.

The Australian Heritage Commission believes that the national framework could be helpful because it expands the way that researchers look at sites. The example cited certainly supports this. I wrote the interpretive material for The Residency, Alice Springs, and focused almost entirely on the legislative, administrative and later, vice-regal aspects of the building's history. I did not really take the sub-theme of administering Aboriginal affairs into account. This does not mean that people have to use the suggested framework of sub-themes in everything they do relating to the site. Interpretation and exhibition is the choice of the curator, in consultation with the community. It is useful, however, to consider aspects of human history that might be less commonly applied to the site as a result of convention, custom, or in my own case, a personal research interest in Northern Territory legislative history.

How do the themes suit us in the Northern Territory?

As always with the case of attempting to develop national guidelines, they do not exactly fit the circumstances of a particular region. In the Northern Territory, for example, our history never quite seems to match the national model (our pioneers are Aboriginal and Chinese as well as Anglo-Celtic; our experiences of direct attack during World War II; nineteenth-century attitudes to a White Australia and so on).

Perhaps not surprisingly then, it is in the area of Indigenous-settler relations that I believe there are important omissions that may perhaps, not be as relevant for longer established, more populous areas of settlement. Unlike settlement elsewhere in Australia, in the Northern Territory until World War II there were always more Indigenous people than settlers and this, coupled with climatic unfamiliarity, may have significantly changed our regional patterns of cross-cultural interaction.

| THEME GROUP | THEME | SUB-THEMES AS OUTLINED IN THE FRAMEWORK | POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL SUB-THEMES TO SUIT LOCAL VARIATIONS |
|-------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| Governing | Administering Australia | Developing local government authorities Administering Indigenous Affairs | Division of the Northern Territory into Central and Northern Australia Royal Commission into Coniston Massacre |
| | | | |



Kitchen entrance,
The Residency, Alice Springs
Courtesy of Mickey Dewar

I do not disagree with the Australian Heritage Commission's focus upon the negative sub-themes of European occupation of the Aboriginal continent. Few people would argue that European arrival in Australia benefited Indigenous people, but instead brought introduced disease, occupation of land, usurpation of resources, as well as direct cultural and physical conflict.

In the framework, though, examples of economic and social co-operation and accommodation are not recognised in the sub-themes. In the Northern Territory,

I think, this is a significant omission. The role of Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry, or in Coast Watch during World War II, could not be addressed under a specifically Indigenous criterion. I would argue that such endeavours provide a particular and interesting aspect of contact history where the role, industry and mechanism of the process was almost totally undertaken according to Indigenous rather than settler terms of reference. Although in any national criteria it is not surprising that contact history is represented in wholly negative terms, I know of many Territory historians, both Aboriginal and others, who would consider this approach an omission, at least with regard to local history. It may be, though, in the national scheme of things, that such types of interaction, so regionally specific, are simply regarded as too atypical to include.

Why bother with a national framework?

It would be extraordinary if the national heritage body had developed a framework that would be appropriate for all regions. My comments on the themes do not negate the value of such criteria — for all the reasons outlined above — and because it is important that regional communities engage in dialogue with national organisations and each other about their role and criteria for looking at history and place.

Moreover, such a framework has a spin-off effect in that, in the same way that development of heritage criteria for buildings and place has assisted in the way museums and other organisations view objects in their collection, so this framework may be used to develop a nationally recognised set of criteria for assessment of objects.

How to get a copy

Contact the Executive Director, Australian Heritage Commission, GPO Box 787, Canberra ACT 2601, website www.ahc.gov.au or phone: 02 6274 2111, fax: 02 6274 2090. Those with an interest in heritage, heritage management, history and museums should obtain a copy and read it. It is vitally important for national organisations to hear the voices of their constituents, to enable a better representation of subject. Anything that helps us to think constructively about ways in which we relate to buildings, objects and their human history is worth pursuing.

A fuller version of this article first appeared in the *Regional Museums Newsletter* in issue no. 10, August 2001, pp.8–10.

DR MICKEY DEWAR IS CURATOR, TERRITORY HISTORY, AT THE MUSEUM AND GALLERY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, DARWIN

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MARTIN PORTUS

TO MARS

AND BEYOND

SEARCH FOR THE ORIGINS OF LIFE



The largest exhibition on space exploration seen in Australia opened at the National Museum in mid-December.

Starting with ancient fossils and finishing with the latest in robotic technology, *To Mars and Beyond* reveals the fascination with space of humankind — from Dreaming stories and early astronomy to the space race, and the construction of the futuristic International Space Station.

The exhibition was curated by Professor Malcolm Walter, director of the Australian Centre for Astrobiology at Sydney's Macquarie University, who worked with the NASA program exploring Mars for more than a decade.

A striking aspect of this exhibition is the contribution of space scientists, who have taken on such curatorial roles. The Australian Centre for Remote Sensing (ACRES) provides live remote sensing satellite signals via the Internet for public viewing in the exhibit — an Australian, if not a world first.

Visitors can 'travel to Mars', sitting in a 3-D virtual-reality theatre fitted out as a spaceship — an exhibition highlight devised by scientists at Swinburne's Centre for Astrophysical Supercomputing.

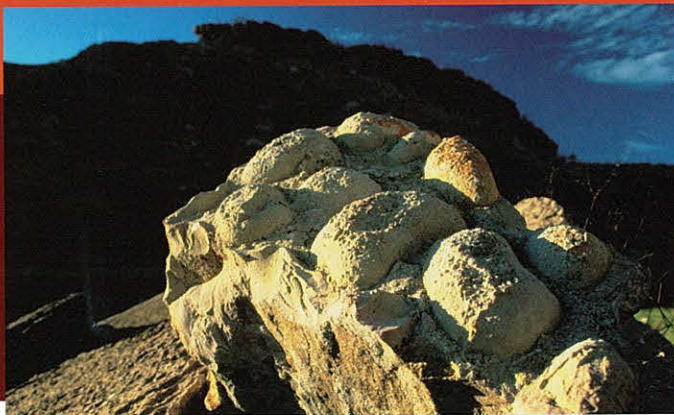
Britain, the US and Russia are prime lenders to the exhibition, but *To Mars and Beyond* also highlights the significant post-war role of Australia in rocketry and space exploration.

It also explores some of the earliest creation stories, including an Aboriginal legend surrounding a large impact crater at Gosse Bluff in Central Australia.

Isaac Newton, by calculating the speed needed to escape Earth's gravity and remain in orbit, was instrumental in expanding understanding of the universe. Newton's original telescope and his writings are on loan to the exhibition from the Royal Society in London. Newton also enunciated the scientific principles of modern-day rocketry. The exhibition explores the development of rockets — from humble beginnings in ancient China to launches reaching the far corners of the solar system, including examples of rockets launched from Woomera in South Australia.

The launch in 1957 of the USSR satellite Sputnik 1 — which is on display — spurred the US government to establish in 1959 the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA). The Russians were the first to place a human into orbit, but of course the Americans were the first to visit the Moon.

TO MARS AND BEYOND REVEALS THE FASCINATION WITH SPACE OF HUMANKIND — FROM DREAMING STORIES AND EARLY ASTRONOMY TO THE SPACE RACE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FUTURISTIC INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION.



Visitors can watch Neil Armstrong uttering his memorable words, 'That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind' — which first reached the world through Australia's Honeysuckle Creek tracking station and the Parkes CSIRO radio-telescope.

Scientists believe that around 2.5 million years ago the red planet was not unlike Earth. There are proposals to change the Martian atmosphere, in the event of a repeat of such catastrophic events on Earth which caused the extinction of the dinosaurs sixty-five million years ago. Visitors are excited by the exhibition's virtual voyage to a potential future home for earthlings.

The exhibition also features extensive photography taken from Earth-based telescopes and satellites, and a display on the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) program, through which visitors listen to radio signals received from space, to judge whether there may be intelligent life on another planet.

To Mars and Beyond also features live images of Earth from satellites, the direct feeds responsible for our all-important weather reports, and an interactive display which zooms — through satellite images — from space to your own backyard. The exhibition runs to 26 May 2002.



MARTIN PORTUS IS A MANAGER AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

Left: *Milky Way Dreaming*. *The story that I am telling is about my fathers in the Dreamtime who made the stars travel across the sky* (Paddy Japaljarri Sims).

Door 29 by Paddy Japaljarri Sims, Yuendumu, 1983

South Australian Museum Collection

Top: Artist's concept of possible exploration programs on Mars. Here the descent of the first Mars expedition is abruptly slowed by the deployment of the spacecraft's main chutes. Their destination, the floor of Ganges Chasma, could hold the answers to questions about Mars' geological, hydrological, and even biological evolution

Image by Pat Rawlings/Courtesy NASA

Above left: Fossil stromatolite, 2.7 billion years old, Western Australia 2.7m x 2m x 0.8m, weight: 8 tonne.

Photo: Brendan Bell, National Museum of Australia

Above right: Astronaut's footprint on moon

Photo: Photodisk Spacescapes

2001 saw the passing of two prominent individuals whose careers intersected with, and informed the thinking of, the wider Australian cultural heritage community.

Dr Kay Daniels

Dr Kay Daniels, who died on 17 July 2001, was a feminist and an historian, whose teaching at the University of Tasmania inspired her students from 1969 to 1983, while her published works on women's history reached a far wider audience, and are regarded as pioneering works in that field. She was appointed by the Hawke government in 1984 as Chairperson of the Committee to Review Australian Studies in Tertiary Education, stimulating a heightened emphasis on Australian content in tertiary curricula. She then moved to


Canberra as a senior bureaucrat, and conducted highly regarded policy work in, among other things, heritage conservation, intellectual copyright and moral rights. Kay Daniels was described by author and historian Richard Flanagan as a 'key figure in that generation that revived a sense of pride in Australia that was imbued with a sensibility at once nationalistic, radical and generous'. In recognition of her contribution to the institution, and to Australian scholarship and society generally, the University of Tasmania awarded her an honorary Doctorate of Letters the day before she died.

Professor Rhys Jones

Professor Rhys Jones, who died on 19 September 2001, was a key contributor to the study of Aboriginal society. After studying archaeology at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he emigrated to Australia in 1963, and was appointed Teaching Fellow in Sydney University's Anthropology Department. He moved to the Australian National University five years later, and retired in June 2001. Rhys Jones's research into the Tasmanian Aboriginal people overturned pre-existing ideas about their origins. A documentary made with Tom Haydon in 1977, *The Last Tasmanians*, exposed the genocide of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people to a world audience. In the late 1970s, with partner Betty Meehan, he

turned his attention to the Anbarra community of Arnhem Land, and was among those who proposed a much earlier date for Aboriginal occupation of Australia than had been believed previously. Former ANU colleague Les Hiatt said of Jones that he 'was without peer in this country as a lecturer able to convey the excitement of archaeological discovery to large audiences; and through his public addresses and television interviews he played a vital role in creating a national consciousness of the antiquity of the Indigenous population, the complexity and sophistication of its adaptation to the Australian continent and the profound tragedy of its displacement, demoralisation and destruction'.

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MIGHTY SMALL FILM...

A report from Portland 2001, 11th annual conference of Association of Moving Image Archivists, AMIA, 6-10 November 2001.

For the first time in its history, AMIA included a themed stream of sessions in its 2001 conference. The subject was small gauge film, and the sessions covered a wide gamut of issues from the technical to those relating to acquisition and public use. Small gauge films include home movies, student films, experimental and art films. Steve Ankar from the San Francisco Cinematheque argued that small gauge films, such as 8mm, are critical to the history of cinema as they provided the only access to moving images in the home, before television, and are still a primary way in which families share their heritage. Advocates suggested that acquisition of this material should not be narrowed because not enough is yet known about how much and what sort of material is 'out there'. ScreenSound Australia was recognised for its long-term active work in collecting this area.

The conference was attended by over 500 moving image archivists and related professionals from the US, Canada, Australia, the UK, France, New Zealand and other countries.

In addition to the major stream relating to small gauge films, there were basic training workshops and sessions devoted to disaster management, digital content management, cataloguing and preservation. The 2002 conference will be held in Boston and will include a major stream on Digital Issues.

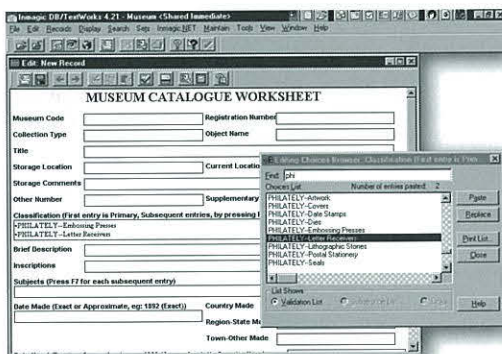
AUTHOR SUE TERRY IS MANAGER, DOCUMENTATION DEVELOPMENT, AT SCREENSOUND AUSTRALIA

WATERMARKS AT AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

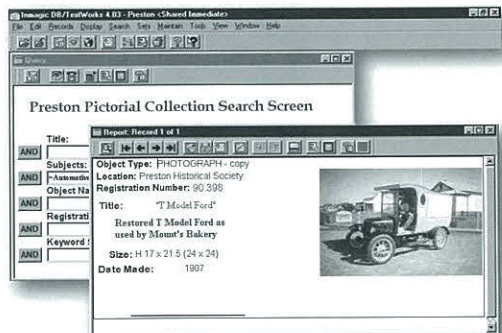


The Australian National Maritime Museum, in its biggest project since it opened ten years ago, has opened a new exhibition in the space previously occupied by the America's Cup-winning yacht, *Australia II*, now back in Western Australia. *Watermarks — adventure, sport and play* is a celebration of Australia's love affair with the water.

The Australian champion fours team of 1934: Angela Mann (stroke), May Agnew (3), Van Williams (2) and Esme Riley (bow).
Photographer unknown. Reproduced courtesy of May Agnew



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CAROL SCOTT

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Museums Australia is starting the New Year with a new series of strategic directions. At its meeting in Canberra on 26 November 2001, the Museums Australia Council devoted considerable time to a planning session that identified four key issues for action. These issues are:

1. the strategic positioning of museums in our society and the need for appropriate policy and adequate funding to enable them to fulfill their important role;
2. the needs of regional museums and galleries especially in terms of professional development and access to technology;
3. career planning for the museum sector; and
4. the issue and impact of copyright.

In some cases, particularly the key area of professional development for regional museums and galleries, activity is well advanced. Currently the revision of the popular technical manual *Museum Methods* is progressing, the partnership with Regional Arts Australia to develop the training program funded by FACS and DOCITA has advanced to Curriculum Development stage and a special workshop for the regional sector on collection development, management and promotion will be offered at the Museums Australia conference in Adelaide.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

The Council has also reviewed membership benefits, the cost to the Association of servicing the different categories of membership and an appropriate pricing structure. Membership benefits for individual members now include:

1. four issues per year of the association's magazine, *Museum National*, and appropriate state branch magazines and newsletters;
2. discount fees at members' rates to attend national and state branch Museums Australia conferences;
3. free entrance to participating Australian museum and galleries;
4. discount rates on Museums Australia publications;
5. discounts to professional development workshops run by the National Office, state branches and Special Interest Groups; and
6. as a result of support for the Council of Australian Art Museum Directors, concession rates to major temporary exhibitions at major participating Australian art galleries.

Membership benefits to category 1 and 2 institutional members now include:

1. all of the benefits available to individual members; and
2. *membership rates* for up to four people to attend the annual national Museums Australia conference.

Membership benefits for category 3 and 4 institutional members now include:

1. all of the benefits available for individual members; and
2. *membership rates* for up to ten staff to attend the annual national Museums Australia conference.

Membership benefits for category 5 and 6 institutional members now include:

1. ten copies of *Museum National*;
2. the option to purchase additional copies of *Museum National* at cost price;
3. discount rates on Museums Australia publications;
4. Museums Australia memberships for the use of institutional personnel; and
5. *membership rates* to the annual conference for as many personnel as the institution wishes to send.

Members were informed of the new fee structure, outlined on page 27, in a letter from the President in early December.

Carol Scott
President
Museums Australia

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AGM MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

9.00am
Friday 22 March 2002
Adelaide Convention Centre

AGENDA

1. Attendance
2. Minutes of previous AGM, 25 April 2001
3. President's report
4. Treasurer's report
5. Standing Committee reports
6. Constitutional amendments
7. Appointment of Auditor
8. Resolutions
9. Any other business

Members should note that resolutions to be put to the meeting should be typed out in full, moved and seconded, and delivered to the Hon. Secretary on the day before the meeting.

Ann Delroy
Hon. Secretary
Museums Australia

NEW MEMBERSHIP FEES

| CLASSIFICATION | MEMBERSHIP FEE | GST | FEE + GST |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------|------------|
| Individual | \$90.00 | \$9.00 | \$99.00 |
| Concession | \$50.00 | \$5.00 | \$55.00 |
| 1 Org — All Voluntary Staff | \$90.00 | \$9.00 | \$99.00 |
| 2 Org — Less than 5 staff | \$110.00 | \$11.00 | \$121.00 |
| 3 Org — 6 to 20 staff | \$190.00 | \$19.00 | \$209.00 |
| 4 Org — 21 to 40 staff | \$750.00 | \$75.00 | \$825.00 |
| 5 Org — 41 to 100 staff | \$1,850.00 | \$185.00 | \$2,035.00 |
| 6 Org — 101 & over staff | \$3,000.00 | \$300.00 | \$3,300.00 |

NEXT ISSUE

MAY 2002

Once Upon Our Times: exploring the role of cultural institutions in creating, perpetuating and selling social, political and national myths.

Papers from the Museums Australia National Conference, Adelaide, 18–22 March 2002

AUGUST 2002

Natural heritage and museums

Special section on volunteers

Suggestions about images and articles welcome.
Contact Editor, editor@museumsaustralia.org.au

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REVIEWS

TRACY BRADFORD

HISTORICAL RECORDS

Managing Historical Records Programs: a guide for historical agencies. By Bruce Dearstyne. Walnut Creek CA, Altamira, 2000. ISBN: 0 7425 0283 X

An awareness and appreciation of the past are central to understanding the present. Historical records are the basis for sound historical research, which leads to this awareness and appreciation. Those charged with responsibility for such records, then, have a vital role to play as custodians of society's collective memory. Archivists, curators and librarians — professional and volunteer — work in government, corporate and community settings to ensure that institutional and legislative requirements are adhered to, research needs satisfied and the cause of history promoted.

Juxtaposed against the importance of historical records is the lack of support for programs and institutions which manage such records. While some large government and corporate institutions operate programs with relatively generous resource allocations, large numbers of small and medium sized organisations struggle to gain adequate funding and support for such programs. Many of these — including schools, historical societies, community museums, and the like — operate on shoestring budgets and are often run by volunteers with little or no training.

Managing Historical Records Programs: a guide for historical agencies is intended as a tool for those who have responsibility for the

management of historical records collections. Specifically, its audience is those who manage such records in small and medium sized non-government organisations, particularly historical societies, museums and other historical programs encompassing, for example, collections maintained by schools, religious organisations, community groups, service clubs, sporting clubs and businesses.

Dearstyne's goal is to foster 'stronger, more vibrant historical records programs', and he outlines strategies for those seeking to establish a program or simply wishing to strengthen an existing one. While he provides an introduction to archival theory and principles, his main focus is to provide practical advice, which can be applied in everyday situations. After setting the scene with some advice on establishing and managing a program, Dearstyne devotes chapters to issues including the selection of records for retention, the arrangement and description of records, preservation and the provision of access and reference services. Each chapter ends with a checklist, which summarises the main points and provides some benchmark standards against which readers can compare their programs. These are complemented by a substantial set of appendices and examples of forms, which can be adapted to suit individual requirements.

Given its American origin, a number of sections in the book are not particularly useful to Australian practitioners, including the sections on suppliers of archival equipment and services and sources of assistance. With regard to the latter, however, many of the

principles apply regardless of the setting, and ideas relating to networking, sharing knowledge and seeking out grant funding are well worth exploring. Local practitioners can fairly easily seek out information on sources of assistance closer to home to complement the advice given by Dearstyne. Professional peak bodies such as the Australian Society of Archivists, Museums Australia and the Australian Library and Information Association provide information and advice, while grant funding can often be obtained from local, state and federal government sources.

Dearstyne includes a useful bibliography, which is well worth perusing. Many of the publications referred to are readily available in Australia. Of most use in the Australian context is *Keeping Archives* (2nd ed.), edited by Judith Ellis and published by the Australian Society of Archivists in 1993. Dearstyne himself describes this as 'the most comprehensive single-volume presentation of archival principles and techniques'. Together, the two texts should provide most people with everything they've ever wanted to know about managing historical records programs.

TRACY BRADFORD IS COUNCIL ARCHIVIST, PARRAMATTA CITY COUNCIL, BASED AT THE PARRAMATTA HERITAGE CENTRE. SHE HAS BEEN MANAGING HISTORICAL RECORDS FOR FOURTEEN YEARS



Working with a historical records collection
Courtesy of Tracy Bradford

MOYA M^oFADZEAN

IMMIGRATION

The Changing Face of Australia: a century of immigration 1901–2000. By Kate Walsh. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2001. ISBN:1 86508 408 5

In undertaking to tell the story of twentieth-century Australian immigration through photographs, Kate Walsh, curator of Adelaide's Migration Museum, tackles a mammoth project. The histories and impacts of immigration are indeed the histories of Australia. Nevertheless, she makes a fine fist of the task. The photos provide the primary means of communication but the accompanying text takes the book from being pure chronicle to demonstrating how and why the face of Australia has changed.

Such a collection of imagery has been long needed. Walsh rises to the challenge of striking a myriad of representational balances — gender and age; cultures; temporal moments; urban, rural and geographic localities; groups and individuals; types of work; official, amateur and personal images. All while

trying to find photographs which have an adequate and accurate provenance.

The book contains around 500 photos drawn from public and private collections. It would be good to see more local and community sources represented. A very useful source listing of all the pictures is at the end of the book, including additional information about various images if not covered in the body text.

Walsh's stated aim is 'to reveal some of the moments and issues in Australia's immigration and settlement experiences at a government, community, family and personal level' — and this she has certainly achieved. In fact, it is astonishing how much is covered in a predominantly visual presentation. The impact of immigration on Indigenous Australians is acknowledged, with images that reflect this.

Walsh recognises the complexities and limitations in using photos to tell stories, highlighting such issues as the photographer's hidden intent, absent or inaccurate provenance, and the celebratory nature of photography, which make a balanced view difficult. These are important points to keep in mind when considering the photographs, so many of which are by nature government propaganda or 'successful' representations of family or community endeavour.

The book is divided into chronological, thematic chapters, each including an historical overview of immigration during the period, a more specific contextual block of information about a key subject in a photograph, and detailed image captions about the people featured. The images are effectively used to draw out a myriad of changing immigration policies, as well as to contextualise the

circumstances in people's countries of origin that encouraged them to emigrate.

A few more domestic or 'behind the scenes' images would strengthen what is still predominantly a collection of formal or official imagery — but these are the hardest to find. The identities of subjects are included wherever possible, which personalises the photos and emphasises that these are real people. The occasional personal 'snapshot' stories are a nice touch.

Early references to nineteenth-century non-British immigration challenges any lingering assumptions that it is a purely twentieth century phenomenon. The effort to pull apart 'British' immigration is appreciated, demonstrating the cultural complexities that this amorphous definition often disguises. The reflective final chapter, covering reunions, community cultural preservation activities, and issues of republic and reconciliation, is a clever way to pull together the multiple threads of such a vast subject.

The graphic design can be confusing, with the different hierarchies of information, varying page layouts and font sizes. Green sections provide 'focus' stories but the nature of the stories lacks consistency. The storylines are at times disjointed, particularly in the last chapter, which feels a little patched together as Walsh attempts to cover as many themes as possible.

However, this is the strength and value of *The Changing Face of Australia*. It does not attempt to be exhaustive or conclusive. Rather, it provides an invaluable introduction to a complex, often controversial, subject that is at the heart of any discussion about Australia's social history. The photos are fascinating, diverse

and cleverly utilised to explore political and cultural issues through visual means. *The Changing Face of Australia* will provide a valuable resource for everyone interested in, or working in the area of, Australian political, cultural or social history.

MOYA MCFADZEAN IS SENIOR CURATOR IN THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY AND TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF MUSEUM VICTORIA

JOHN NEYLON

EDUCATION

Museum and Gallery Education: a manual of good practice.

Edited by Hazel Moffat and Vicky Woollard. Walnut Creek CA, Altamira, 2000. ISBN: 0 7425 0408 5

Imagine that you have just embarked on a career in museum education. You are on your own or appointed in charge of a group of fellow professionals who have been around the block a few times and know all the answers. There are things, which you know in your heart of hearts, need addressing. Perhaps it is a renewed sense of purpose. A three-year plan. A system for evaluating performance. A fresh approach to developing resource strategies. A way of encouraging families to visit the museum.

Well, this publication could be the resource you need to get you started and keep you on track. *Museum and Gallery Education* is a deceptively compact publication, which would be easily lost in a bookshelf crowded with museology titles. But its clever blend of theory and practice should strike an appropriate

chord with busy professionals who are usually more eager to listen to the hard-won experiences of fellow professionals than the airy arguments and rhetoric of academics. It doesn't take sides or assume that everyone is starting from square one.

If anything, however, it does look to be pitched at museum educators who work in isolation or in quite small teams. The tight editorial style extends to providing key point summaries for articles and case studies.

This ensures that the users of what the editors describe as a 'manual' get taken to the heart of the matter in the complementary areas of developing policy and education strategies; creating exhibitions for learning; working with diverse communities, children, young people and families; establishing outreach projects, evaluation, training and development for museum staff; influencing and implementing national strategies and developing international links.

A 'Making this manual work for you' overview is an excellent frame of reference because it pulls together a diversity of case studies to encourage the reader to think in terms of the big picture and of issues currently facing anyone working in the profession today. In this section can be found what the editors call 'subsidiary themes', among them relating theory to practice, developing new audiences, new technologies and projects relevant to smaller museums.

I joined the profession when museum education was entering a boom period, and stayed long enough to experience how hard-won achievements could be devastated by economic rationalism. So I look at this publication not as someone who necessarily wants a whole

bundle of new ideas, but an auditing system or checklist which provides me with a framework for getting things back on track in terms of securing support for programs that have been in place for a long time but perhaps are taken for granted.

I found such support and reference in Sue Wilkinson's article 'Developing a policy for an education service'. There are no surprises in the text, just a cool-headed assessment of the core components and processes of policy development. This article, plus Jean-Marc Blais' 'Creating exhibitions for learning', make the resonant point of getting everyone on staff to recognise that education means everyone, not just a designated 'education officer'.

The book includes a very useful glossary, and useful checklists of funding sources, museum site addresses and a select bibliography. On a re-read, the case studies could have been bracketed, leaving the key thematic texts to flow without distraction. But treat the reading like the experience of being at a particularly lively conference with all kinds of interesting speakers claiming attention, and this compact manual delivers.

JOHN NEYLON IS EDUCATION OFFICER AT THE ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND ART CRITIC AND REVIEWER FOR THE *ADELAIDE REVIEW*. HE IS CURRENTLY WRITING A BOOK ON ADELAIDE-BASED INTERNATIONAL SCULPTOR, GREG JOHNS, TO BE PUBLISHED BY MACMILLAN IN 2002

Significance can be obtained from the Heritage Collections Council Secretariat, Cultural Development Branch, DCITA. GPO Box 2601, Canberra ACT 2601; hcc.mail@dcita.gov.au. It can also be downloaded from <http://amol.org.au/newproducts>

LYNDA BLACK
KAYE DIMMACK
JAI PATERSON

SIGNIFICANCE

Significance: a guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections. By Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, Heritage Collections Council, 2001. ISBN: 064275094 7

This volume is an important undertaking for the museum industry, and the HCC is to be congratulated on such an initiative. Prepared by heritage consultants Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, the assessment criteria were developed and extensively tested in a series of workshops throughout Australia. *Significance* will be added to the increasing number of benchmark publications (such as *reCollections* and *Be Prepared*) aimed at providing a co-ordinated and consistent approach to the management of Australia's dispersed cultural heritage collections.

Significance aims to provide specific curatorial guidelines to assist custodians of movable cultural heritage (across all museum sectors); it attempts to do for movable cultural heritage some of what the Burra Charter does for heritage buildings and sites. It is a key document which defines criteria and provides step-by-step practical guidelines.

The primary criteria of significance — historic, aesthetic, scientific and social — are perhaps rather basic, and can be stretched to claim that almost anything is significant. In particular, the comparative criterion of 'interpretive potential' seems a grab-bag category: what kind of heritage object contains no interpretive potential at all? If the purpose of significance

assessment is to encourage museum people to be more critical about what enters the collections, interpretive potential will always be an out to rigorous justification.

Nonetheless, the aim of the assessment of significance — to make us think about the meanings and relevance of heritage objects in public collections — is important and valuable.

The applications of significance assessment include collection management (for policy, planning, grant applications); collection development (acquisition or deaccessioning); conservation/preservation (prioritising, allocation of funds); access (interpretation, disaster preparedness, storage and display).

The publication is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One deals with the question, 'What is significant?', and discusses who the publication is for, how and why it should be used and the background to its development. Chapters Two and Three define the meanings and values of significance, and detail the step-by-step assessment process. Various case studies are included. Chapter Four sets out the criteria (primary and comparative), interspersed with case studies. Chapter Five outlines the applications of significance assessment in terms of documentation, context, acquisitions, deaccessioning, intact and *in situ* collections, return of objects to a place of significance, conservation, decision making, and exhibition policies. Chapter Six discusses the assessment process for a whole collection, followed by a case study working through the eight key steps. Chapter Seven details the options of implementing the process in a museum; ranging from trialling the process, implementing it partially into policy and

procedures; testing by applying to the most important objects in the collection; or testing by assessing before starting conservation work. Finally, an Appendix includes a 'significance assessment checklist', a glossary and a select bibliography.

To some extent, what the finished publication gained in aesthetic presentation it lost in purpose and function from the original draft version. The all-so-important easy reference assessment criteria are difficult to see at a glance, being printed in tiny white letters on a dark background, and spread throughout the book. The step-by-step checklist is lost, again in small print on a dark background, hidden behind a flap on the front cover. The suggestion to photocopy produces a dark image, difficult to see or read without magnification. Both criteria and checklist would be better included earlier in the volume, and printed on white paper so as to allow a reasonable photocopy to be made. Otherwise, the general layout and ease of access is quite good, though the font size should be larger to cater for those whose eyesight is not one hundred per cent.

On the same topic of problem design, it is a mystery why the title of the book is enclosed in brackets. Ironically, this seems to make it insignificant!

Significance is a worthwhile publication that will be judged as a key resource for some time. It would, however, benefit from some redesign. As it will no doubt be republished in the future, these design issues should be addressed.

LYNDA BLACK IS THE PAPER CONSERVATOR, KAYE DIMMACK IS THE LIBRARY COORDINATOR AND JAI PATERSON IS THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT RESEARCHER AT THE QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY, LAUNCESTON

JOANNA NEWMAN

THE OTHER SIDE

The Other Side of the Ditch: a cartoon century in the New Zealand–Australia relationship, National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa, Wellington: November 2001–February 2002

issues over which we have met or faced off against each other. As Ian Grant writes, 'A collection of editorial cartoons, with their "unofficial" insights about an event, a period, a trend or attitudes, can often be more rewarding and instructive than the study of official documents'.

The exhibition includes some very early cartoons, with the first from Melbourne *Punch*

contribute, but found they had never created a cartoon about New Zealand. As is typical in relationships between siblings, even though we are so close, we can find plenty of differences to highlight. New Zealand, being the smaller of the two and often feeling under-appreciated, unrecognised or inferior, seems to have had more to say about it.

met so far ...'. Another shows a couple of Kiwi blokes lounging on a beach in Queensland, commenting on the newly-introduced stand-down period for benefit receipt: 'Howard's getting Clark to pay our dole, mate.' — 'What?? Not in *@#*@ Kiwi dollars?'

The exhibition is cleanly laid out, with introductory texts for each section which explain just enough of the political and historical context to remind us of the inspiration for the cartoons, if we have forgotten, or to inform us if events happened before our time. The tone of these is also perfectly matched to the medium.

In this exhibition the creators and sponsors have, indeed, come up with a distinctive way of marking Australia's Centenary of Federation. At the same time as celebrating the talent of some great cartoonists, it presents us with a wonderful survey of our relationship and our life together here at the bottom of the world. Although New Zealand turned down the opportunity to federate with Australia in 1901, there can be no doubt about our true cultural and political closeness when you view this exhibition.

JOANNA NEWMAN MANAGES WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL'S ARCHIVES

The exhibition's opening panel, by Auckland cartoonist Malcolm Walker from his book *Erratic Scratchings*, 1984.

Courtesy of New Zealand Cartoon Archive



After the world events of last year it seems particularly healthy to have a good laugh over the follies of politics and nationalism — even if they are our own!

The Other Side of the Ditch, an exhibition mounted at the National Library of New Zealand, Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa Gallery in Wellington, provides this. The exhibition and the accompanying book by its curator (and founder of the Cartoon Archive), Ian F. Grant, arose from discussions with the Australian High Commission about how to commemorate the Federation of Australia in a distinctive way. With cartoons from the New Zealand Cartoon Archive collection and Australia's National Council for the Centenary of Federation as its principal sponsor, it takes a satirical look at the events and

AS IS TYPICAL IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SIBLINGS, EVEN THOUGH WE ARE SO CLOSE, WE CAN FIND PLENTY OF DIFFERENCES TO HIGHLIGHT.

in 1860, but the majority date from the last twenty-five years. The latest bring us right up to just before the exhibition opening. Most look at the relationship from the New Zealand point of view, because New Zealand seems to have been viewed by most Australian cartoonists over the last century as too insignificant even to poke fun at. A number of prominent Australian cartoonists were asked to

The cartoons exhibited cover everything from union, the Otago gold rush, trade and economic co-operation and differences, Federation, international politics and alliances, culture and language, immigration policies and airline problems. And, of course, sport. Sporting references, notably to the infamous underarm bowling incident, appear even in cartoons about trade policy. One or two cartoons can be described (albeit greatly diminished) without their accompanying drawings, to give a flavour of the exhibition. One depicts Paul Keating, on an official visit to New Zealand and a government with which he had little in common, saying 'I want to assure the citizens of this wonderful little country that I don't dislike all New Zealanders — only the ones I've

MOW AUSTRALIAN REGISTER

An Australian Register has been established for UNESCO's Memory of the World project. The Register will be called 'Memory of Australia'.

Following the success of the MOW Australian Committee in having two examples of documentary heritage of world significance (Captain Cook's *Endeavour* journal and the papers of Eddie Koiki Mabo (both held by the National Library) inscribed on the International Memory of the World Register, the Australian Register has now opened with these two entries.

A group of seventeen landmark constitutional documents illustrating the genesis of the Commonwealth of Australia, held by the National Archives of Australia and ScreenSound Australia, has also been inscribed on the Australian Register. Documents include Queen Victoria's Proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Australian Constitution, and the film footage of the Inauguration of the Commonwealth in Sydney on 1 January 1901 and the opening of the first parliament of the Commonwealth in Melbourne on 9 May 1901.



The logo of the Memory of the World program
Courtesy of the UNESCO Memory of the World Secretariat

2002 is the United Nations Year of Cultural Heritage

NEW SOUTH WALES BUSHFIRES THREATEN SOUTH COAST MUSEUM

The Lady Denman Heritage Centre at Huskisson was threatened by bushfires that devastated the Jervis Bay area in December and January. On Christmas Day the Centre lost some outdoor exhibits, including a whaleboat, and the mangrove boardwalk, native garden and landscaping were severely damaged. Fortunately the main museum building, and several relocated buildings including an old church and school classroom, were undamaged, as was the building housing Bidjigal Arts, Laddie Timbery's Indigenous arts showroom. The *Lady Denman* ferry, the centrepiece of the museum's collection, is now housed in a new exhibition area, after having been relocated there last year. Had the ferry been in its former location, it would have been directly in the line of the fire.

SUCCESS OF FREE ADMISSION TO UK PUBLIC MUSEUMS

Visitor numbers to the United Kingdom's public museums have doubled since the government abolished entry fees in the last budget. Key museums such as the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Imperial War Museum and the National Maritime Museum have seen visitor numbers surge since fees were abolished. The Victoria and Albert Museum leads the field with the largest increase, from 42,623 to 174,249 visitors in the year to December 2001. Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell is delighted with the result of fee abolition, which she says has 'democratised the nation's treasures'.



The Lady Denman Heritage Centre before the fires. The *Lady Denman* ferry is now enclosed in a special purpose-built exhibition area

UNESCO ORAL AND INTANGIBLE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

UNESCO has created another World Heritage List to join those recording internationally significant natural and cultural sites (the original World Heritage Register) and the Memory of the World Register for documentary heritage. Now nineteen examples of intangible and oral heritage have been similarly distinguished.

UNESCO defines oral and intangible heritage as:

'The totality of tradition-based creations of a cultural community, expressed by a group of individuals and recognised as reflecting the expectations of a community in so far as they reflect its cultural and social identity; its standards and values are transmitted orally, by imitation or by other means. Its forms are, among others, language, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts. In

addition to these examples, account will also be taken of traditional forms of communication and information.'

Examples listed include dance and music in the Garifuna language of Belize, the Oruro carnival in Brazil, Kuttiyattam Sanskrit sacred theatre, Sicilian puppet theatre and the mystery play of Elche in Spain. A further list of oral and intangible heritage will be released by UNESCO in May 2003.

JOURNALS AND MUSEUMS

Catch up on some in-depth reading about museums. The latest issues of *Humanities Research*, Vol VIII, No.1, 2001 and *Meanjin*, November 2001 are both devoted to a discussion of museum issues.

NOTICEBOARD

Once Upon Our Times: exploring the role of cultural institutions in creating, perpetuating and selling social, political and national myths

Museums Australia National Conference, 18–22 March 2002, Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia. Standard registration fee closes 25 February 2002.

All enquiries to:

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Raising the Curtain: performance in cultural institutions forum

Canberra, 28 February, 1 and 2 March 2002. Hosted by the National Museum of Australia, in collaboration with Old Parliament House, Questacon and the University of Western Sydney — School of Contemporary Arts, the forum will bring together representatives from a wide range of cultural institutions and the theatre industry from around Australia to discuss the use of performance and live interpretation in interpreting our culture and history. The keynote speaker is Catherine Hughes, Science Theatre Coordinator at the Boston Science Museum, and founder of the International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL), a non-profit organisation for museum theatre practitioners.

Full registration, including morning and afternoon teas,

forum dinner at the NMA and transport between institutions and hotels is \$280, concession \$250. An optional workshop facilitated by Catherine Hughes is being offered from 10am–2pm on Saturday 2 March, at a cost of \$75, including lunch. Space is limited to a maximum of two people from each organisation. A 'reserve list' will be created if more than two people from an organisation wish to attend. Enquiries to:
Louise Douglas
Manager, Public Programs
National Museum of Australia
Phone: 02 6208 5102
Email: l.douglas@nma.gov.au

Bookings by email.

Details required:

Names of individual/s
attending

Name of organisation
(if applicable)

Postal address

Telephone number

Registration rate required

Do you wish to register for
the workshop on
Saturday 2 March?

OZeCulture 2002: taking the next step

Sydney, 28–30 May 2002.

Following a highly successful
inaugural conference, the
Department of
Communications, Information

Technology and the Arts is holding a second conference focusing on the opportunities created by the Internet and digital media technology for arts production and the operation of cultural organisations.

To register for the conference, and for updates, please visit the conference webpage, <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/conference>. If you have any questions contact John Murray on 02 6271 1216 or email ozeculture@dcita.gov.au

New Concepts for Old Memories 2002 South East Queensland Small Museums Conference

Redcliffe, Queensland,
31 August 2002. The
conference is hosted by the
Redcliffe Historical Society.
They would like to hear from
web designers, marketers,
multimedia developers, and
small museums and those who
have had dealings with them.
Anyone interested in presenting
a paper should contact
Peter Appleton
Curator, Redcliffe Museum
Phone: (07) 3883 1898
Fax: (07) 3283 2226
Email:
Peter_Appleton@redcliffe.qld.gov.au

Sixth National Remote and Regional Museums Conference, Burra, South Australia

20–23 September 2002.

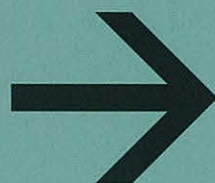
In 2002, the Year of the
Outback, the 6th National
Remote and Regional
Museums Conference will be
held in the heritage town of
Burra, on the outskirts of
South Australia's Clare Valley.
Initial enquires to Tony Dahlitz
Phone: (08) 8627 2026
Email: tony@kimba.sa.gov.au

MOVING ON

Michael Evans, formerly of
Sovereign Hill and more
recently Deputy Director of the
Auckland War Memorial
Museum, is now Deputy
Director of the Museum and
Gallery of the Northern
Territory.

Louise Doyle, formerly Director
of Bathurst Regional Gallery,
and most recently General
Manager of the Wagga Wagga
Regional Art Gallery, is now
Director of Cairns Regional
Gallery.

Leon Paroissien, founding
Director of Sydney's Museum of
Contemporary Art, has been
appointed the first Director of
Taiwan's Museum of
Contemporary Art.



Visit us at

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