

The cover features a landscape photograph of misty mountains and evergreen trees. The title 'museumnational' is at the top, with 'museum' in white on an orange background and 'national' in orange. The subtitle 'Australian museums and galleries — issues, news, views' is in the top right. The date and title 'AUGUST 2002 THE MAGAZINE OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA' are on the left. The main article title 'Natural heritage Volunteers' is in the bottom right.

museumnational

Australian museums
and galleries —
issues, news, views

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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 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 page 17.

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.

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 refereed 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/omj>).

Short bulletins on current issues and events are often publicised through an Internet discussion list, the *Australian Museums Forum* (see <http://amol.org.au>). *Open Museum Journal* and *Australian Museums Forum* are published by Australian Museums On Line (AMOL) and access is free.



Cover:
Mount Tomah Botanic Garden is located within the World
Heritage-listed Blue Mountains in NSW
Photograph: Jaime Plaza
Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney



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NATIVE TITLE BUSINESS ON TOUR



Vincent Serico (*Waka Waka, Kabi Kabi, Kilcoy Massacre 2002*)

Acrylic on canvas

Photograph by Mick Richards courtesy of Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane

Indigenous land rights and art go hand in hand. A touring exhibition, *Native Title Business*, curated by Joan Winter for the Gurang Land Council, Bundaberg, with support from Central Queensland University and Visions of Australia, and managed by the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland, illustrates this fundamental connection in a display of the work of Australian Indigenous artists.

Australia's contemporary Indigenous visual arts movement originated in the Northern Territory's Western Desert three years before the first land rights legislation was enacted in 1975. The art movement has continued to be part of Indigenous communities' calls for acknowledgment, self-determination, social justice and the return of land and sea rights.

The exhibition's organisers see its role as to continue and extend this dynamic:

'Artwork in *Native Title Business* is cultural evidence; community substantiation of the past and the needs of the

present, in the face of massive ignorance and misrepresentation of what Native Title is, where it has come from, and how it affects Indigenous communities. In strategically presenting the work of sixty of Australia's Indigenous artists from all states and the Northern Territory, in the quiet, informative spaces of our galleries and museums, this exhibition will do much to promote understanding, communication and reconciliation throughout regional centres of Australia during its three-year tour.'

Work by artists at all career stages, and from communities ranging from traditional to urban, is represented in the exhibition, with female artists comprising half the show.

The exhibition will tour to twenty-five venues in five states until 2005.

CURTAIN UP FOR NEW BRISBANE GALLERY

In March 2001 the Queensland Performing Arts Museum (QPAM) proudly opened its new exhibition space — the Tony Gould Gallery. Named after the Performing Arts Centre's founding Director, Tony Gould, who retired in January this year, the Gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm and admission is free. Prior to the opening of this new venue, exhibitions were limited to the QPAC foyers.



Queensland Performing Arts Museum exhibition, *Dancing by Design: the Australian Youth Ballet*. Tony Gould Gallery, Performing Arts Centre, South Bank, Brisbane

Photograph by Justin Nicholas courtesy of Queensland Performing Arts Museum

A changing program of theatrically-designed exhibitions is now presented in the 300 square metre 'black box' space which has excellent staging, lighting and audiovisual facilities. QPAM is fortunate to have a curator who is also a theatre designer and, so far, QPAM has presented exhibitions on theatre, dance and opera, with Indigenous brass bands and rock music to come later this year.

With direct access to South Bank Parklands, the Gallery attracts a large number of visitors to Brisbane as well as theatre patrons and locals interested in arts and history. The entry foyer is shared with the Cremorne Theatre. Facilities now exist for themed displays from the QPAM collection so, even when the Gallery is closed, there are still interesting things for theatre patrons to see.

The new Gallery also enables QPAM to host relevant touring exhibitions, and has helped to increase awareness of QPAM's role in preserving Queensland's performing arts history.

KEY NEEDS OF COLLECTING INSTITUTIONS REPORT NOW ON AMOL

The fate of heritage collections in Australia is of vital concern to all who work in the museum sector. For over a decade the Heritage Collections Council, working with the Cultural Ministers Council, has been responsible for creating products and putting initiatives in place to ensure that these collections can be preserved for, and accessed by, current and future generations of Australians.

Deakin University's Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific was contracted in 2001 to evaluate these products and initiatives, and to investigate the current and future needs of heritage collections held by museums, galleries, archives and libraries across Australia.

Their report, 'A Study into the Key Needs of Collecting Institutions in the Heritage Sector', claims that 'the past

decade has seen a transformation' in access and preservation, with 'industry-wide concern to see initiatives sustained and developed', but 'also a desire to see these more effectively coupled with the need for quality visitor experiences'.

Eight key needs were identified by the report, to ensure that existing initiatives in the areas of access and preservation maintain their momentum; and that those working with Australia's heritage collections are equipped to deal with present situations and anticipate those of the future. They are described under the headings of Documentation, Conservation, Interpretation, Professional Development, Wider Understanding of Heritage Collections, Quality and Consistency, Recognising Professional Isolation and

Respecting Diversity, and a Perceived Lack of Nation-wide Coordination. The full report is now available on AMOL at <http://www.amol.org.au/craft/publications/keyneeds>

The report's executive summary concludes, 'Finally, heritage collections need stability in the short term, and sustainability in the long term'. In line with this conclusion, the Cultural Ministers have agreed to establish a National Collections Advisory Forum to provide strategic advice on collections and identify priorities for government in addressing the ongoing needs of the sector. Funding of \$160,000 in 2002-03 has been allocated to enable the Forum to:

- Prioritise the current and future needs of Australia's collections, including benchmarks and standards, and recommend strategies

and programs to address these needs;

- Develop strategies to identify the community value of collections and support their potential as instruments of social, cultural and economic development;
- Advise on means of enhancing the coordination of programs of support offered by the three tiers of government and industry; and
- Provide a report to the Cultural Ministers Council within twelve months, on the feasibility or otherwise of establishing a national industry body to represent the library, archives, museum and gallery sectors.

HOT TOPIC

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

In June a call for Expressions of Interest in a Collection Management Plan for the collection of a regional local authority in New South Wales was posted on the Australian Museums Forum list on AMOL. The project brief included four substantial elements, and a stipulated timeframe for the project that would have barely allowed a successful tenderer to have been appointed, let alone complete the project.

The response to this brief was swift and negative. Most respondents frankly disbelieved that it was possible that the work could be done in the time; one even suggested that the completion date was a typo. Another respondent replied that, although this was a particularly egregious case, 'the nature of this project and the impossible deadline is only a slightly-worse-than-usual example of scenarios that regularly confront the consultant working in the museum sector'.

The incident sparked a call by several respondents that Museums Australia might appropriately take an advocacy role in this area, preparing guidelines for tendering organisations in the museum sector to guide their expectations of the magnitude of the work they could reasonably ask to be done, and the time required to carry out the project to an appropriate standard. They also suggested that the idea of a Consultants' SIG in Museums Australia should be reconsidered, to address issues of this nature. Certainly the responses to this specific project brief indicate that those working as consultants to the museum sector learned that they were not alone in having to deal with the 'great expectations' of contracting institutions.

Museum National welcomes feedback on this and other 'hot topics' that have engaged our readers.

ARTISTS AT ASIA-PACIFIC TRIENNIAL 2002



Yayoi Kusama, Japan b. 1929, *Self-obliteration by dots 1968*
 Photograph Hal Reiff, courtesy of OTA Fine Arts, Tokyo



Song Dong, China b. 1966, *Writing diary with water 1995 — present (detail)*
 Collection of the artist

Works of a core group of senior artists from the Asia-Pacific region will be on display in the Asia-Pacific Triennial 2002 at the Queensland Art Gallery from 12 September 2002 to 27 January 2003.

Queensland Art Gallery Director Doug Hall said that the Triennial exhibition 'creates a context in which we see works by these senior artists, alongside artworks dealing with similar ideas and themes by other regionally significant, but lesser known artists'.

Artists represented are: Montein Boonma (Thailand), Eugene Carchesio (Australia), Heri Dono (Indonesia), Joan Grounds (USA/Australia), Ralph Hotere (Aotearoa New Zealand), Yayoi Kusama (Japan), Lee U-fan (South Korea/Japan), Jose Legaspi (Philippines), Michael Ming Hong Lin (Taiwan), Nalini Malani (India), Nam June Paik (South Korea/USA), 'Pasifika Divas' (Pacific Islands and Aotearoa New Zealand), Leisa Reihana (Aotearoa New Zealand), Michael Riley (Australia), Song Dong (China), Suh Do-Ho (South Korea/USA) and Howard Taylor (Australia).

TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA



Works by some of Australia's most thought-provoking artists are on show at the National Gallery of Australia until 22 September 2002. *Tales of the Unexpected: Aspects of Contemporary Australian Art* contains more than fifty works by artists including Kate Beynon, Robert Boynes, Lyndell Brown, Charles Green, Rosemary Laing, Sally Smart — who has created a large wall installation specially for the Gallery — and Anne Wallace.

Curator Deborah Hart said 'All the works suggest evocative, dream-like worlds and theatrical or filmic possibilities. Through the

surprising juxtapositions of images and locations, each of the artists invites the viewer on journeys of the mind and imagination. Their works do not prescribe straightforward narratives with beginnings and endings. Instead they engage us with images that suggest open-ended tales and states of being, that are part of the endlessly entrancing continuum of imaginative and unexpected possibilities that this world has to offer.'

Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, *Sleep 2 2000-2001*
 digitally printed photograph on Duraclear film
 Courtesy of the artists and Grant Pirrie

MATERIAL WITNESS AT TAMWORTH CITY GALLERY, NSW



Pat HOFFIE, From 'Ideology and artefact ...Rodchenko's legacy' 2002, grass mat woven by artisans of Samar, Philippines
Courtesy of Tamworth City Gallery

Twenty-three Australian and Torres Strait Islands artists will be represented in the fifteenth Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial, *Material Witness*, to be held from 21 September to 10 November 2002. The exhibition then tours to seven other galleries in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia in 2003 and 2004.

Curator Robyn Daw said that 'All the artists in *Material Witness* celebrate the tactile, sensuous and 'making' aspects of materials as uppermost in their practice and use this as a platform to present challenging, provocative and subversive concepts to an unsuspecting audience'.

NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT PRIZE AT ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The Art Gallery of New South Wales has announced the establishment of the Citigroup Private Bank Australian Photographic Portrait Prize, with \$15,000 to be awarded to the winner at the same time as the awarding of the Archibald Prize. Open to photographers resident in Australia to submit works taken in the previous twelve months, the prize will be judged by two Art Gallery of New South Wales trustees, the Director of the Australian Centre for Photography, and a well-known photographer.

For photography lovers, the Art Gallery of New South Wales is displaying both contemporary and historic photographs over the coming months, in two exhibitions: *Others: Contemporary Photography in Sydney*, from 14 September to 10 November 2002; and *Soft Shadows and Sharp Lines: Australian Photography from Cazneau to Dupain*, from 5 October to 1 December 2002. *Others* features the work of Vanilla Netto, Alex Kershaw and Harold David; while *Soft Shadows and Sharp Lines* displays, in addition to Cazneau and Dupain images, works by Henri Mallard, Wolfgang Sievers and Olive Cotton, among others.

CENTENNIAL BAKERY MUSEUM NAME CHANGE

The Centennial Bakery Museum at Hurstville, New South Wales (featured in the May issue of *Museum National*) has changed its name. It is now the St George Regional Museum, with 'Centennial Bakery' as a subtitle. The previous name of the museum, and its location in a former bakery building, gave the impression that it was a museum of bakery. Although there is a permanent exhibition, *Packham's Place*, which deals with the history of the bakery, the museum itself hosts a wide range of exhibitions on diverse themes. Councillor Vince Badalati, Mayor of Hurstville, said that the Council hoped that 'the change of name will



Horse-drawn delivery vehicle, circa 1930s

Courtesy of St George Regional Museum

increase awareness within the southern Sydney area that the museum is more than just a former bakery. It is a regional museum that collects, conserves and displays objects relating to the history, heritage and culture of the St George region, as well as showcasing travelling exhibitions on a range of issues.'

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2001

SUSAN MARSDEN

Susan Marsden takes a look at the findings of the *State of the Environment Report 2001* and their implications for the museum sector.

The *State of the Environment Report* in 1996 (SoE 1996) provided Australia's first comprehensive and independent assessment of the environment, against which this second SoE report can now be compared. The 2001 report, prepared for the federal minister by the Australian State of the Environment Committee, aims to expedite more effective environmental management and to 'help people to be better informed about the state of our environment, the pressures we exert on it and the effectiveness of our responses'. The report also provides a useful historical perspective, while noting wryly that 'Ignoring lessons has become a characteristic of Australian natural resource management'. Along the settled coastal strip rapid population growth and land subdivision, has meant, amongst other consequences, that the remaining Indigenous heritage places are seriously threatened.

The key findings of the *State of the Environment Report 2001* (SoE 2001) are drawn from seven theme reports on atmosphere, coasts and oceans, land, inland waters, biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage, and human settlements (see: www.ea.gov.au/soe/). These findings are set out clearly in summary and then discussed in detail. Overall, it comes as no surprise that 'Australians still have major challenges in the sustainable use of resources and in the maintenance of our

natural and cultural heritage', and that, 'progress towards sustainability requires the integration of environmental with economic and social policies'. All cultural heritage lobbyists and grant applicants please note!

There is good as well as bad news. Under *Biodiversity*, 'favourable news' includes improved protection under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the actions of many community organisations, helped by grants from the federal Natural Heritage Trust. However, most threats identified in SoE 1996 persist, including salinity, changing hydrological conditions, fragmentation of ecosystems and land clearing. There has been a net loss of vegetative cover since 1996 with the rate of clearance actually accelerating. It's a shock to learn that as much has been cleared in the past fifty years as in the previous 150 years. In 1999, only four other countries exceeded the rate of native vegetation clearance in Australia. Clearance depletes plant species and destroys the habitat for thousands of other species. At the same time, knowledge on biodiversity values in Australia remains limited. This is surely a priority for research by natural history museums.

For *Natural and cultural heritage* the news is favourable and unfavourable in equal

measure, but overall, heritage conservation improved between 1995 and 2000. Many new sites were identified through the Regional Forest Assessment process and other large regional studies, but most are yet to be added to heritage registers. Two thousand new places were added to the Register of the National Estate (RNE), but amendments to the EPBC Act will phase out the RNE, except as an information resource. This was confirmed in the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Bill introduced this year, after publication of SoE 2001.

Other good news included the opening of the National Museum, establishment of the Australian Museums Online Database, a first survey of university collections, a survey showing that most museum collections examined were in a fair to good state, and increased Indigenous ownership of heritage places and the return of Indigenous cultural property. Nevertheless, the loss of heritage places (and objects) continues; there are no long-term national funding programs of similar magnitude to the Natural Heritage Trust's assistance to natural heritage places, and only limited resources available for the systematic treatment of museum collections. Despite release of a National Conservation Policy, *Australia's Heritage Collections*, in 1998, there is not even an agreed

national definition of what constitutes cultural heritage collections. Later, the report notes that cultural heritage management is far less coordinated than natural heritage management, and that 'the governmental and administrative fragmentation of elements of Australian heritage remains a significant problem for its effective conservation'.

Apart from the (somewhat limited) discussion of natural and cultural heritage, the report raises many other issues of relevance to Australia's museums, although it fails to make that connection. What are some of these broader implications? Museums operate within and reflect Australia's environmental and cultural context: how do natural history museums, botanic gardens and zoos, in particular, reflect and respond to the reported changes in the environment? Do they use SoE reports as a means of shaping collection development, research, and broader preservation efforts? For example, as Indigenous cultural heritage is under threat of complete obliteration in Australia's settled coastal strip, is this a priority in collecting and interpretation, not only within large museums but also in regional museums, particularly in areas under severest pressure, such as the central and south coasts of NSW?

Finally, as a fundamental role of museums is public

WEBWATCH

education, then the findings of this report should inform many exhibitions and other public programs. The report also identifies an overarching requirement for better environmental management: the Indigenous concept of 'caring for country'. Indigenous rules for the care of country as well as the revised Burra Charter prepared by Australia ICOMOS (www.icomos.org.au/australia) provide a sound basis for conserving cultural heritage. Australians also require a sound understanding of the issues, both to feel and be part of a society that can manage or ameliorate changes to the environment. Above all, Australians must learn to recognise that 'the environment, including our natural and cultural heritage, is everyone's business'.

State of the Environment 2001: Independent Report to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Australian State of the Environment Committee, Canberra 2001
www.erin.gov.au/soe/2001

DR SUSAN MARSDEN IS A PARTNER IN MARSDEN RUSSELL HISTORIANS. IN 1998-2001, AS NATIONAL CONSERVATION MANAGER AT THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF NATIONAL TRUSTS, SHE CONTRIBUTED SUGGESTIONS FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE REPORTING IN SoE 2001

In line with the natural heritage theme of this issue of *Museum National*, and to celebrate the International Year of Ecotourism, we look at some natural environment websites, and natural history features on existing museum websites. The official Australian website for the International Year of Ecotourism is <http://www.ecotourism.org.au/IYE2002>

AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM FAUNA GATEWAY

The Australian Museum's *FaunaNet*, coordinated by the Museum's Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Research, gives access to available resources and expertise in conservation and biodiversity, and is organised in five modules. 'FaunaMap' and 'FaunaImages' will soon be available, providing Australian Museum specimen databases online to allow specimen records to be mapped across New South Wales, and giving access to an online image database. 'Wildlife of Sydney' gives access to the natural history of both vertebrates and invertebrates found in and around the city of Sydney; 'FaunaKeys' allows easy and quick identification of animals in New South Wales and around Australia; while 'Invertebrate Resources' gives a comprehensive index to invertebrate resources on the web.

FaunaNet can be found at <http://www.faunanet.gov.au>

FAUNABASE PROVIDES ACCESS TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S BIODIVERSITY

FaunaBase is a new website, launched on 5 June, Environment Day, by the Western Australian Museum. Over the past 110 years the Museum has collected thousands of mammal, reptile, amphibian and bird records, which are now available free online to the general public. The Western Australian Museum's Director of Science and Culture, Dr Paddy Berry, explained that 'Few people realise that what is on display to the public in the Museum's galleries is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the specimens and information on the State's animal biodiversity accumulated over the last century by our curators'.

There is also FaunaList, which gives up-to-date scientific classifications and the scientific and common names of every mammal, reptile, fish and amphibian recorded in Western Australia, and includes notification of threatened and extinct fauna.

FaunaBase and FaunaList can be accessed via the Western Australian Museum's website, www.museum.wa.gov.au/fauna/base

FOSSILS AT THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

Visit the South Australian Museum website for an online version of the Origin Energy Fossil Gallery at www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/fossils/

The Origin Energy Fossil Gallery features opalised treasures from the age of the dinosaurs. The website provides a handy diagram of geological eras in South Australia with the relevant

fossils indicated for each period, information on the 120-million-year-old Addyman opalised plesiosaur (named for its discoverers John and Molly Addyman, who found the skeleton at Andamooka in 1968) and ichthyosaurs, and an interview with a palaeontologist. There are also interactives for students to explore.

ENVIRONMENTAL EXHIBITION WEBSITES

The Powerhouse Museum's *Ecologic* exhibition explores what we can do in Australia to shape a better future for the planet, and demonstrates how we can make a difference with good ideas and environmentally-friendly design. It includes a sustainable 'house' displaying products, materials and energy efficient appliances available now. The EcoLogic exhibition website, which includes online interactives demonstrating pathways to sustainability, is at <http://www.phm.gov.au/ecologic/>

The Australian Museum's *Biodiversity* website, including a virtual tour of the Museum's *Biodiversity* exhibition, and biodiversity videos, is at <http://www.amonline.net.au/biodiversity/>

NATURAL HERITAGE ADVOCATES

CHONTARLE PITULEJ

INDIGENOUS VIEW OF NATURAL HERITAGE

The Indigenous people of Australia have a rich, complex and dynamic culture that plays an important role in the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

For many thousands of years our connection with the land has been an integral part of our culture. The land was used as a resource for food, shelter, water and clothing. Today objects, such as artefacts, and places hold a special significance that reflects a deep and lasting relationship with the lands and waters.

Our culture is unique. We see ourselves as custodians of the land. Caring for country expressed through our spirituality, customary law, tradition and recent history. Natural heritage cannot be interpreted without the acknowledgment and recognition of the indigenous peoples. This way we are able to share our knowledge and still hold our values and beliefs whilst protecting significant places.

To maintain the culture and protect our people's values, the appropriate protocols must be followed when working with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander communities. It is important to include Indigenous peoples in the first stages of planning and consultation when dealing with land management issues, natural heritage and interpretation.

In Western Australia the Department of Conservation & Land Management is liaising with Aboriginal groups, building positive relationships and hoping to establish joint management in the near future. The Department's mission is to build partnerships with the community so as to conserve Western Australia's biodiversity and manage land and waters entrusted in them. Aboriginal communities then become part of initial planning. It allows the organisation to meet its mission and Aboriginal

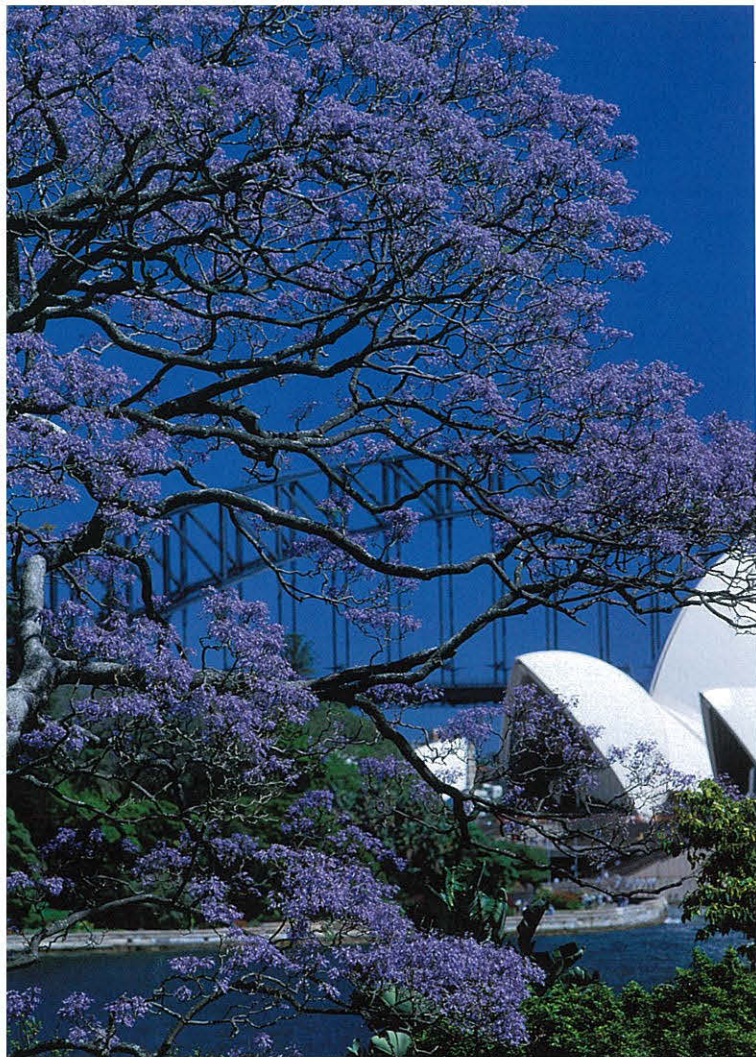


Walich Dreaming at Mandooboornup (Cape Le Grand) by Donna Beach (Ninnon), direct descendant of the Esperance Bullenbuk people
Photograph courtesy of Chontarle Pitulej

communities to have been consulted appropriately and to have been actively involved. It's all about working together. Currently the Department is completing several interpretive sign projects that have come about through collaboration with Aboriginal people in the state's wheatbelt and south coast regions. The signs will appear in National Parks and Nature Reserves managed by the Department. They tell of the creation of significant landscape features, such as wetlands and granite peaks, through Dreaming stories and artwork by local Aboriginal people. These projects provide visitors with an insight into an ancient culture that still maintains strong connections to the land.

Through natural and cultural interpretation we can share our knowledge of the land from an indigenous perspective, creating better awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for this generation and many more to come.

CHONTARLE PITULEJ IS INDIGENOUS HERITAGE OFFICER,
INDIGENOUS HERITAGE UNIT, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
& LAND MANAGEMENT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Jacaranda in bloom in Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney
Photograph courtesy of Jaime Plaza, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney

JANELLE HATHERLY

JOIN THE BOTANIC GARDENS SIG AND THINK OUTSIDE THE SQUARE

Botanic gardens aren't often thought of as museums. However they clearly fit into Museums Australia's new definition of 'museum' in that they help people understand their world — past, present and future. Thematic landscapes interpret natural and cultural heritage and, as public gardens, botanic gardens provide people from all walks of society with wonderful recreational and educational opportunities that inspire an appreciation of plants and the importance of biodiversity.

Botanic gardens are also about collections. Historically botanic gardens grew a great variety of plants, both indigenous and exotic, to test for economic importance and effectiveness as medicines. Now the focus of living collections has shifted to species conservation and education about environmental protection and sustainable horticultural practices. 'Dead plant' collections, or herbaria, preserve and record a country's natural heritage and are the cornerstones of taxonomic research by plant scientists.

In common with museums and other cultural institutions, botanic gardens employ staff such as curators, scientists and educators; have professional associations, Friends organisations and volunteer support groups; have obligations to provide public programs as well as raise revenue and sponsorship. They, too,



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But botanic gardens are also quite different. The immersion experience takes on a whole new meaning in these living botanical museums. Not too many museums have visitors coming primarily for a stroll or to enjoy 'the peace and tranquillity' and not too many museums occupy several hectares and lack a roof over a significant part of them. The outdoor environment presents unique challenges for maintaining, conserving and interpreting collections.

A few years ago Museums Australia set up a Botanic Gardens Special Interest Group (BGSIG) in recognition of botanic gardens as a museum type. BGSIG provides botanic gardens' professionals with a sense of belonging and a forum to network with other museum professionals. Focussing on organisations that are different to our own often helps us think 'outside the square' and create new perspectives for problem solving. This is particularly useful for those of us who have worked in one particular type of cultural institution for most of our professional lives.

While still quite small, membership to BGSIG is growing and now has over fifty-three members from a wide variety of institutions. We share ideas and resources primarily through an electronic network (via Debbie Milsom at ma@museumsaustralia.org.au) but also aim to visit the local botanic garden at the venue of annual Museums Australia

conferences. At the last national conference in March a few of us got together in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens and learnt about the organisation while enjoying the glorious Victorian gardenesque landscape and historic garden buildings such as Museum of Economic Botany, Palm House and Victoria House, and statuary.

By joining BGSIG you can find out about professional publications and conferences that might bring new approaches to old problems. For example, consider attending Botanic Gardens Conservation International Fifth International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens to be hosted by the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney from 29 September to 4 October 2002. The five congress themes are:

- Evaluation and research;
- Multiculturalism and Indigenous issues in interpretation;
- Linking science and sustainability;
- Novel methods in interpretation/communication;
- Forming partnerships.

Information about the diverse program, excursions and pre-congress storytelling workshops can be found on the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney's website at www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/HTML/SCIENCE/BGCIcongress.html

JANELLE HATHERLY IS CHAIR OF BGSIG AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION MANAGER, ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, SYDNEY

PETER GRANT

A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION

While googling the other day, I entered the word 'interpretation' into that splendid Internet search engine. My screen was nearly swamped by the five-and-a-half million entries. The first few alone showed the diversity of meanings the word can have. Language interpretation, dream interpretation, biblical interpretation, map interpretation — the list goes on.

But **heritage interpretation** was what I was looking up. And it's one kind of interpretation whose star is rising. Defined as 'a means of communicating ideas and feelings which help people understand more about themselves and their environment', heritage interpretation is coming to be seen as 'the key to understanding ourselves and who we are' to quote from the Interpretation Australia Association. It's a grand claim, but when you look around you'll find that interpreters

work in many of Australia's most important places — including its museums. They deal in stories, ideas and experiences. They explain, guide, reveal, arrange, question, share and provoke. They are central to the national conversation about meaning and significance.

The Interpretation Australia Association (IAA), was formed in 1992 to encourage interpretation professionals in a diverse range of workplaces. The membership now includes heritage managers, rangers and curators; academics, graphic designers and researchers; educators, bureaucrats and tour guides; cultural and ecotourism operators, writers and artists.

The IAA aims to encourage these interpreters through:

- an annual national conference/workshop;
- an Internet website and listserv;
- local and regional meetings;



Message at roadside stop, Derwent Bridge, Central Highlands, Tasmania. Not all interpretive signage is complex
Photograph by Peter Grant

- a quarterly newsletter;
- facilitation of interpretation training;
- access to interpretation publications;
- advocacy with employers.

In recent years the IAA has wrestled with how to go about interpreting Indigenous issues. We have chosen to move strongly towards greater Aboriginal representation in the profession. One result is that the 2002 IAA National Training Workshop will be at Lga Warta, an Aboriginal community and cultural tourism site in South Australia's Flinders Ranges. To be held from September 22-27, the event will not only provide a chance to workshop

Indigenous interpretation issues, but will offer a unique immersion experience in the Adnyamathanha Aboriginal community. Full details are available on-line at: www.interpretationaustralia.asn.au

The website also contains a wealth of other information on the interpretation profession in Australia.

Membership for individuals is \$55 per annum; corporate membership is \$130. Forms are available at the website, or by emailing the membership secretary, Carolyn Dance at carolyndance@aol.com.

PETER GRANT IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE IAA. HE MANAGES THE INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION SECTION OF THE PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE IN TASMANIA

ARAZPA: THE AUSTRALASIAN ZOO AND AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION

ARAZPA is the peak zoo and aquarium organisation in the Australasian region. Its membership includes the major zoos and aquariums in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific Islands.

ARAZPA's mission is to 'promote and maintain professional standards of operation in the zoological industry and to maximise its collective resources for the conservation of biodiversity'.

ARAZPA member institutions support the principles outlined in the World Zoo Conservation Strategy, and continue to develop zoos and aquariums as centres of excellence in conservation, education and research.

Under ARAZPA's Australasian Species Management Program, member institutions

collaborate to plan and manage their animal collections in ways that improve their sustainability and contribute to species conservation.

ARAZPA's Wildlife Conservation Fund is a major funding initiative aimed at providing crucial funding to projects conserving threatened species in the wild. In its first year, the Fund has provided support to projects aiming to protect wild populations of Black rhinos and Sumatran tigers.

Various specialist advisory groups, regional and national projects and campaigns are established through ARAZPA's professional networks, including Australasia-wide initiatives in zoo and aquarium education, marketing, and conservation fundraising.

ARAZPA is overseen by a Board of Management elected

by the members of ARAZPA, and staffs a Science and Administration Office located in the grounds of Taronga Zoo, Sydney, Australia.

The ARAZPA Network

ARAZPA represents:

- over fifty zoos, aquariums and captive breeding centres throughout Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific;
- approximately 150 zoo and aquarium professionals.

Under ARAZPA:

- more than 100 programs for rare and threatened species are conducted;
- more than twenty regional networks of the various zoo and aquarium specialists are administered;
- the voluntary work of more than 150 zoo and aquarium staff is co-ordinated.



ARAZPA also acts as a key source of information on the Australasian zoo and aquarium community, regularly distributing information and publications to personnel in more than twenty-five government and non-government agencies, and other subscribing organisations.

For more information about ARAZPA or if you wish to learn about the benefits and opportunities offered by ARAZPA membership please visit the ARAZPA web site: www.arazpa.org.au

problematic paintings

Developing an Australian Framework for Investigating Issues in Art Authentication

The University of Melbourne Thursday 26 and Friday 27 September 2002

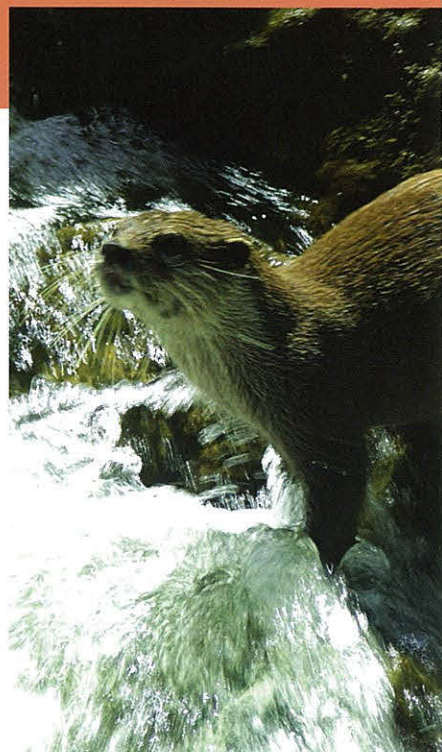
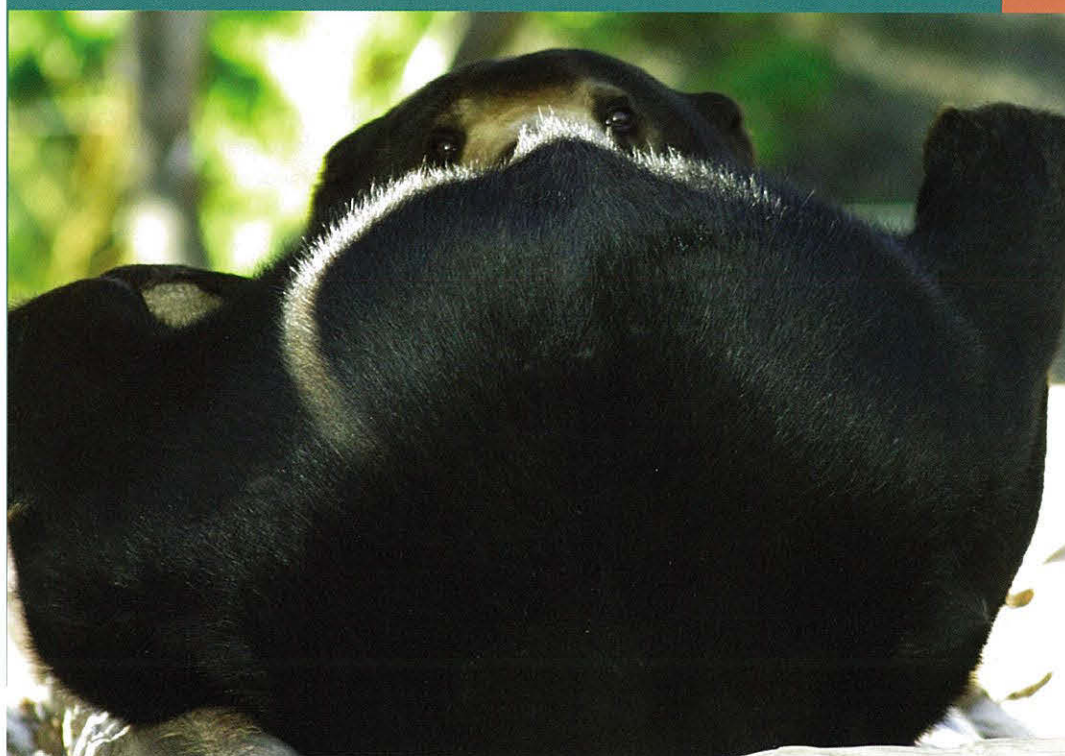
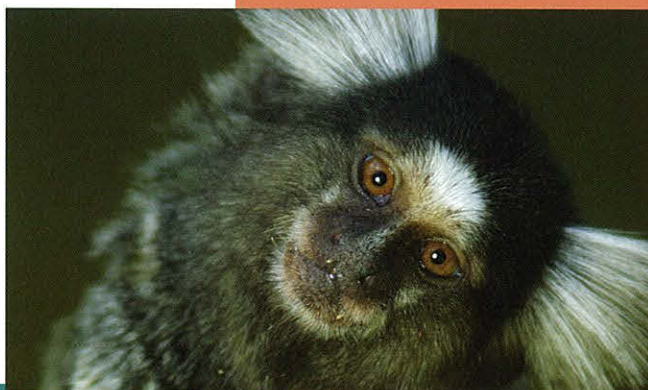
The University of Melbourne's Ian Potter Art Conservation Centre and the Australian Commercial Galleries Association, in conjunction with Melbourne University Private is hosting a forum to examine the major issues currently engaging police, legal professionals, art collectors, dealers and galleries in relation to fraudulent, problematic and poorly provenanced artworks.

The two days will include both a speaker program and small group working sessions. Key recommendations to government and industry will be developed by participants in the working group sessions.

For further information please contact Rachel Perkin
Telephone 03 9362 5819 Facsimile 03 9347 5888 r.perkin@muprivate.edu.au



ZOOS AS MUSEUMS



Zoos and aquaria and botanic gardens are museums with living collections, and form part of Australia's — and the world's — natural heritage. *Museum National* visits a zoo and aquarium, and learns about specific collections management issues that arise in these museums.

While most of Australia was celebrating Christmas last December, the staff of the National Zoo and Aquarium in Canberra and firefighters were battling to save their animals and buildings from a fiery inferno driven by fierce winds. As the staff prepared to evacuate the zoo, a marmoset mother gave birth, highlighting a special characteristic of zoo collections — they continue to expand at an even faster rate

than do other collection types. Happily the zoo escaped the flames and, ironically, is now more visible to potential visitors now that the pine plantations that previously surrounded it were razed after the fire.

Animals in this new zoo, as in other Australian zoos, live in conditions that are a far cry from those many of us will remember from our youth, when morose lumps of fur huddled in corners, and big cats padded back and forth behind sturdy bars fronting small cages. Now the National Zoo's Sumatran tiger rolls onto its back within a spacious enclosure, blissfully unaware that it is one of a vanishing species. A sun bear, another endangered species bred in a captive breeding program at

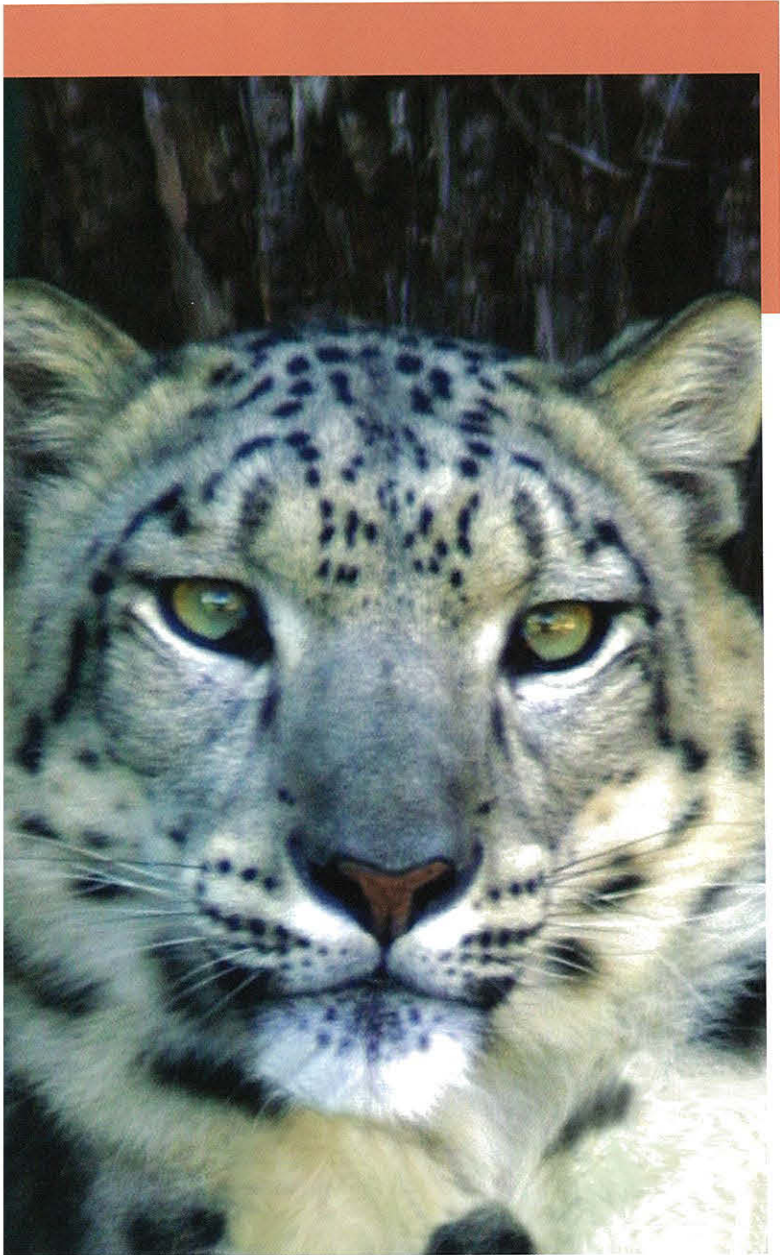
the zoo, climbs a tall timber tower and can be seen by visitors from an elevated walkway. And cougars have an enormous rocky landscape complete with a waterfall in which to roam and play, while small-clawed otters gambol in a fast flowing stream. Conservation of animal species is a key function of zoos worldwide, and represents a major contribution to retaining the natural heritage of the world.

The National Zoo and Aquarium is the only integrated zoo and aquarium in Australia, and is a member of ARAZPA (profiled on page 11). A key part of zoo collections management is collaboration with other zoos, so that the products of breeding programs can find

homes. As with all museums, sufficient space to store collections is a major necessity. Zoos have an even larger problem than other museums with storage needs: their collections quite literally grow, and they have to be fed — plenty and often!

Like other museums, zoos have volunteers and friends groups, and encourage their members to take part in interpreting the collections. There is no shortage of keen volunteers willing to interact with the live specimens in this museum, and share their enthusiasm with visitors. Now there are opportunities for volunteers and visitors to get even closer to these engaging specimens, with special tours organised to bring people into

Clockwise from top left: Marmoset, Snow Leopard, Otter and Sun Bear
 Photographs by Andrew J A Parsons
 Courtesy of National Zoo and Aquarium



proximity with the animals, and even help with feeding tigers and bears.

Andrew Tindale of the National Zoo and Aquarium has some advice for zoo visitors: wear green clothing, carry a bunch of keys and come early — animals come out eagerly in the morning to greet their keepers. They discover new treats each day — a strategy designed to stimulate natural

behaviour while animals are in captivity — finding new scents that have been sprayed around while they slept, and caches of food concealed overnight. How many other curators of collections have to keep their specimens entertained? But the result of this care and attention to detail is engaged — and engaging — displays of some of the world's most vulnerable creatures.

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KAY PARKIN

THIS SECTION OF MUSEUM NATIONAL HAS BEEN GUEST EDITED BY SUE SCHEIFFERS FOR THE FRIENDS AND VOLUNTEERS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA. WE THANK SUE FOR HER CONTRIBUTION.

VOLUNTEERS

AT INVESTIGATOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

How do you implement a new volunteer policy in an already existing program?

The Investigator Science and Technology Centre is a not-for-profit community organisation. It is an interactive science museum that aims to facilitate a spirit of scientific enquiry and strengthen the technological and engineering capability and understanding of the community.

Volunteers at the Investigator are known as 'explainers' because they provide the human interface between the exhibits and the visitors in the exhibition gallery. They allow visitors to get the most out of their visit, as well as ensuring that exhibits are used appropriately and safely. Explainers also assist with holiday programs, after-hour functions, sleepovers, Science On the Go (a mobile education program which visits schools, libraries and community events) and in administration.

The Investigator currently has approximately fifty volunteers, most of whom volunteer once a week for a

four-hour shift. However, this was not always the case. When I became Volunteer Co-ordinator six years ago, there were problems with the program, including inappropriate behaviour, poor attendance and inappropriate dress. New to volunteer management, I was unsure how to deal with these issues. By setting in place policies and procedures specific to volunteering at the Centre, I was able to implement many changes that resulted in a volunteer program that was better for all parties concerned.

A step by step approach

The first thing to do was to identify the problem. Studying the issues presented by both staff and volunteers, it was clear that the problems stemmed from a lack of guidelines, written policies and procedures for volunteers. After identifying the problem the solution was clear. A volunteer policy including structure, expected behaviour and job descriptions had to be designed and implemented.

This created the challenge of implementing the new policy, organisational structure, training and grading criteria, code of behaviour and guidelines into an already existing volunteer program. It also raised the question, 'How do I do this without upsetting everyone?'

As this would require a large amount of my time, it was

important that I receive support from management. I discussed the situation with the General Manager, who provided support and helped set in place a timeline that allowed me to give priority to this project.

To start the ball rolling, I met with volunteer representatives. We discovered that, because no job descriptions were provided, volunteers were unsure of their specific role and what was deemed to be inappropriate behaviour. The volunteers agreed that a volunteer training structure, guidelines for behaviour and volunteer policy should be written and implemented. It was important that this process be conducted in consultation with the volunteers.

When implementing a change to workplace procedure, you can expect to encounter some resistance. It is therefore important to establish an open and effective communication line between all groups affected by the change. Consulting with groups and ensuring they are actively involved in the process will make the transition much easier.

A letter was written by the General Manager, myself and an elected volunteer representative, explaining the need to develop a policy and structure, and inviting all volunteers to provide input to the process and ask questions.

After a series of meetings a

draft was formed. Letters were then sent to all volunteers inviting them to attend the next meeting to comment on the draft. These comments were taken on board and a final draft taken to the General Manager for approval.

A meeting was called to provide all volunteers with the approved policy and volunteer structure and guidelines, and to give them the opportunity to ask further questions, complete updated forms and book into a training session.

Three months later, the evaluation process began. Questionnaires were sent to volunteers and to teachers visiting the Centre with school groups. A comparison was made between volunteer performance and volunteer satisfaction prior to implementing the change and afterwards. Results show that the change has been very successful.

Selection Procedure

Part of the change was to provide a specific selection process as well as a structured volunteer program. To ensure the Centre runs as efficiently as possible, it is necessary to interview every applicant. When an applicant applies to join the volunteer team they are sent a standard letter providing information on the volunteer role, the minimum requirements, the need for a police clearance to be conducted, and for two written

character references that must be provided at the interview. If they agree to these terms and continue with their application they are then booked in for an interview.

At the interview a prospective volunteer is asked a standard list of questions, and is given a thorough description of the role,

A three-month trainee stage follows where they are teamed with an experienced volunteer to assist them to learn the skills in a non-threatening environment. There is a minimum of twenty hours explaining required during this period. They then graduate to be a qualified explainer to assist in the gallery. Extra



Kay Parkin, flanked by volunteers Paul and Werner at Investigator Science and Technology Centre
Courtesy of Kay Parkin

ensuring they understand what is expected. They can also ask questions and see where they would be working, vital to ensuring they will enjoy their time here. A police check form is completed and two references collected to ensure they are suitable candidates. This is a necessary precaution, as they will be working with people under the age of eighteen. All staff (both paid and volunteer) undergo this screening before working at the Centre.

If selected, the volunteer will then go through an induction, covering the volunteer structure, OHSW, exhibition knowledge and how to explain the exhibits.

training is required to assist in other programs.

This structure has solved the initial problems in this program. The volunteers are happy as they are provided with specified guidelines and support. Volunteers are an extremely valuable part of the organisation and I am happy that the program is running very smoothly now.

If you would like to know more about the new policy or how it was implemented at the Investigator please contact me at kparkin@investigator.org.au

KAY PARKIN IS VISITOR SERVICES MANAGER AT THE INVESTIGATOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE, ADELAIDE

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VOLUNTEERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Elizabeth O'Brien, Sam Chalk and Jamie Parsons discuss ways to maximise the skills of people with special needs in volunteer teams in museums.

Here at the Cobb & Co. Museum we take each volunteer application and assess individual needs and the ability of the organisation to provide adequate support, supervision and training.

So far our volunteers have included people with a range of special needs. One person suffers from severe arthritis, so we limit the time he spends standing up, and provide seating. Another volunteer is profoundly deaf but able to read lips and he has no problem dealing with the public. He is rostered on with his wife to provide support.

A schizophrenia volunteer is stable under medication. Staff are aware of her condition and don't get too flustered around her. We have a volunteer with a physical limp and a walking stick, so we have provided seating and limited walking. A young stroke victim with mental and physical limitations is given specific tasks to her level of ability.

A new addition to our volunteer force is a young woman with multiple sclerosis (MS). She is supervised and buddied with another volunteer at all times, and staff are aware of her physical limitations. We have had some comments about her speech slurring, and we deal with that.

I think the most important thing is understanding the level of supervision that will be required of staff. One

suggestion is to buddy up people with special needs with another volunteer to help them.

ELIZABETH O'BRIEN,
COBB & CO MUSEUM

We have had volunteers with multiple sclerosis, vision impairment, hearing impairment, varying physical abilities, seasonally affected disorder, depression, Parkinson's disease, as well as those affected by stroke and encroaching age. Each is responded to according to mutual needs and available resources.

Our MS sufferer, I suppose, was our longest-running 'case'. He had a pretty big impact upon our organisation (he left us late last year) both emotionally and resource-wise. We bought aids to help with guiding: voice amplification and a motorised scooter. We negotiated and scaled down his responsibilities. As his condition progressed, we renegotiated his duties, altered office space, purchased a keyboard with large keys, a particular chair and we had his workstation evaluated by an occupational therapist. We educated staff and volunteers about his condition and made arrangements for access to and within the building. It was a really positive experience for all involved.

A vision-impaired volunteer was given on-floor support, particularly amongst his team

members. He was provided with a lift key, and was given special notice of any changes on tour routes. This year training has been given on vision impairment to all visitor services staff and volunteers.

Deafness awareness workshops for all visitor services staff and volunteers were conducted, helping staff to deal with a hearing-impaired volunteer. A stroke victim volunteer was eased back into his duties. He negotiated an appropriate set of duties and was given support by all his team members. Volunteers with depression and S.A.D. were given support by all team members. There was some negotiation of duties and rostered commitment.

Underpinning all this is just a simple belief in the value of workplace diversity and a sense of community and continuous honest communication. Tempering that is also a belief that we will do our utmost, but the reality is, there is a limit. Our organisation has found that this limit is recognised by the individual earlier than it is by us.

Sam also poses some questions which volunteer managers may wish to ponder.

My question is, do you have a volunteers' committee? If so, do you use it? How? Do you think you'll stay with this arrangement? If your volunteer community does not have a volunteers' committee, why is this so? (Say it in the voice of Professor Julius Sumner

Miller!) In reaching this decision, how did you resolve issues of representation of your volunteer body to management (I am not really happy using those terms, but they'll do for this purpose) and communication with volunteers, sounding out ideas etc.?

SAM CHALK, VOLUNTEERS COORDINATOR, OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE ARTS

At Melbourne Museum we have a number of volunteers with special needs. Initially it does take a bit more time to get these people started but the benefits are fantastic!

We meet with each person and together we determine what they are capable of, and then identify volunteer positions that they may be suitable for. We liaise closely with relevant staff to ensure they are aware of any issues.

Unfortunately we don't have enough volunteer positions available for everyone who volunteers, so there are many people from all backgrounds who miss out on volunteering.

We make it clear to the volunteer and the staff working with the volunteer that the first three months is a trial and that it may not work out.

For example we have the following volunteer jobs filled by people with special needs:

- Mail Room: a volunteer with a severe form of cerebral

UNDERPINNING ALL THIS IS JUST A SIMPLE BELIEF IN THE VALUE OF WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CONTINUOUS HONEST COMMUNICATION.

palsy and in a wheelchair delivers small urgent packages and documents around the building;

- Library: a volunteer who has had a stroke assists with data entry;
- Ornithology (birds): a deaf, young student volunteer assists the curator with research. We pay for interpreters through the orientation period and when training sessions are on;
- Children's Museum: a volunteer who was in a car

accident a number of years ago and who has memory loss volunteers with a support worker once a week.

There are some others, including those that may suffer from disabilities that we are not aware of. Nor do we need to be, since those disabilities do not affect their contributions to our museum.

JAMIE PARSONS,
MELBOURNE MUSEUM

MUSEUM NATIONAL EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

The current committee

Margaret Birtley is the Coordinator of the Museum Studies program at Deakin University.
mbirtley@deakin.edu.au

Anne Kirker is Head of International Art at the Queensland Art Gallery.
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Dr Brian Shepherd is Director of the Edith Cowan University Museum of Childhood.
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Doreen Mellor is an Indigenous Australian and the Project Manager for the Bringing Them Home oral history project at the National Library of Australia.
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Robyn Sloggett is Deputy Director of the Ian Potter Museum of Art and the Chief Conservator at the Ian Potter Conservation Centre, The University of Melbourne.
r.sloggett@art-museum.unimelb.edu.au

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The Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies program director is Professor William Logan, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Heritage. The Museum Studies coordinator is Margaret Birtley.



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YOUTH AT THE ZOO

Right: YATZ volunteers paint a sign
Courtesy of Hayley Smithers, Taronga Zoo

Hayley Smithers and a YATZ volunteer handle a snake
Courtesy of Hayley Smithers, Taronga Zoo



As the sun dips over the horizon, I can hear the pulsing rhythm of a distant drum. The animals are stirring as the darkness engulfs the landscape. Am I around a campfire on the Serengeti Plains in Africa? No. I am walking the winding pathways of Taronga Zoo on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour. I'm participating in a Youth At The Zoo program while corporate Taronga Zoo sponsors are having their own zoo experience.

YATZ (Youth At The Zoo) is a group of teenagers volunteering their time to help the environment, inform the public about wildlife and their environments, and be involved at Taronga Zoo. It began in October 2001, with a trial group of twenty-two thirteen to eighteen-year olds. After an eventful and successful trialling period, seventy more enthusiastic volunteers with similar environmental and animal interests were introduced to the program.

The group participates in a range of activities with

individuals volunteering about twice each month. These activities include: Roar & Snores; behavioural enrichment programs; bush regeneration of the Sydney Harbour foreshores; and frog captive breeding programs, whereby we breed the endangered species, the Green and Golden Bell Frog, in captivity and release them into the wild at a site in Botany. The group is also taught a great deal about animals and their environments, and is trained to handle a wide variety of animals so that they can communicate with the public about animal awareness and conservation.

Two of my favourite activities as a YATZ member are Roar & Snores and behavioural enrichment programs. A Roar & Snore is one of the many chances we get to interact with the public, sharing our knowledge, giving them a small insight into the animals' life at night, and showing them things about the Zoo they wouldn't normally see. A Roar & Snore involves a group of twenty-four

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THE GROUP IS ALSO TAUGHT A GREAT DEAL ABOUT ANIMALS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS, AND IS TRAINED TO HANDLE A WIDE VARIETY OF ANIMALS SO THAT THEY CAN COMMUNICATE WITH THE PUBLIC ABOUT ANIMAL AWARENESS AND CONSERVATION.

people for a 'wild' evening in which we have a two-hour night tour, a large barbecue dinner and a close encounter with some cute, cuddly, slithery and sometimes spiky animals. On the night tour the group experiences a totally different perspective of the Zoo, the animals and the Sydney Harbour views. After the barbecue, the leaders bring out some Education Centre animals such as koalas,

snakes, lizards, and sometimes echidnas for the close encounter where the group can get face to face with, and learn about, these animals. After camping out overnight (in a safe area within the zoo!), the group has breakfast, then heads off for two behind-the-scenes tours. One is of the giraffes' enclosure where they get to feed the giraffes, then there is the Nocturnal House where the daring can even

taste the animals' food themselves.

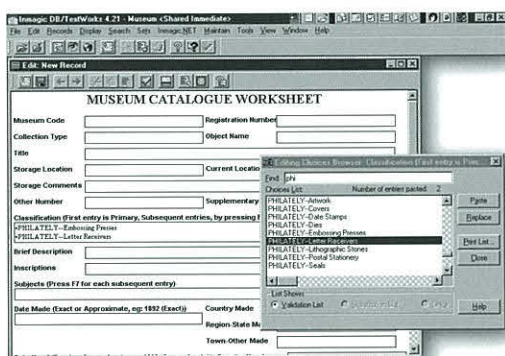
The behavioural enrichment programs are a great idea. About ten YATZ members go and help the Behavioural Enrichment Division for the day, making toys and food puzzles for the animals. This not only keeps us busy, but works to keep the animals' minds active and promote natural behaviours while in their exhibits. We make things such as balls with holes in them, and we fill them with food. Then the animals have the job of getting it out!

Our plans for the next year are to raise money for the two foundations we support: the conservation of flying foxes; and supporting our Behavioural Enrichment Department at Taronga Zoo. We are also planning an Eco Fair in December of this year, where there will be many stalls, activities and workshops.

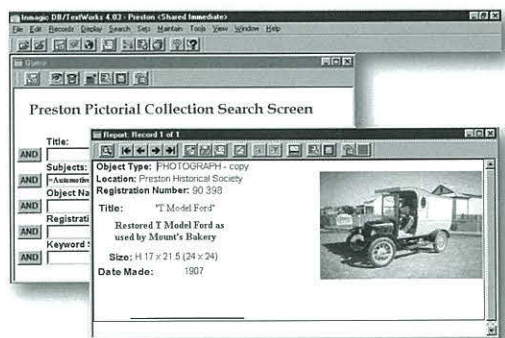
YATZ is a great group, and provides excellent experience for those looking to work with animals when they get older, or for those who are working hard to fulfil the YATZ mission, which states that 'working together, we can help others to take positive actions for the conservation of wildlife and their environments'.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the Youth At The Zoo program phone Hayley Smithers — YATZ Coordinator on 02 9978 4558, or email her at hsmithers@zoo.nsw.gov.au

JULIAN BEAMAN IS A YEAR NINE STUDENT AT NORMANHURST BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, NSW. HE HAS BEEN A YATZ VOLUNTEER AT TARONGA PARK ZOO SINCE THE PROGRAM'S INCEPTION IN OCTOBER 2001



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20 YEARS

OF GUIDING AT THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY

Volunteer Guides at the Queensland Art Gallery have their ups and downs in the twenty-first century. A Guide recently recalled how one underwhelmed viewer claimed that 'works of art are a lot better and brighter on the Internet'. These lows are rare though, as most visitors who take tours at the Gallery are more discerning and appreciative. They delight in getting to know the collection, exploring the relationships among the works and interpreting the individual paintings and sculptures in the company of an informed and enthusiastic Guide.

This year the Queensland Art Gallery is celebrating twenty years at its South Bank venue, which also means twenty years of guided tours. This milestone seems to be a good vantage point from which to reflect on the guiding experience, and also one from which to look forward. The future is actually very exciting, with the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art building scheduled to open in 2005 alongside the existing building, and our Guides are already gearing up to adapt tours to this new concept of 'one gallery — two sites'.

An informal survey of highlights of guiding at the Queensland Art Gallery included some extraordinary exhibitions that were both a challenge and a thrill to guide. Exhibitions such as *Pop Art*, *Turner Abroad*, *Matisse*, and *Modern Masters from the Metropolitan Museum in New*

York are particular favourites. But perhaps guiding itself 'came of age' here with the advent of Expo '88, also located at South Bank, when Brisbane really blossomed from a sleepy town into a culturally vibrant community. Numerous Queensland Art Gallery Guides volunteered at Expo and some Guides inspired by the Expo experience, in turn, joined the Gallery. Queensland Art Gallery Guides have since enhanced visitors' experiences of tall ships and the Brisbane Visitors and Convention Advice Bureau. Nowadays, they can be found in all sorts of places like the Brisbane Botanical Gardens, the Customs House Art Gallery, the Queensland University of Technology Art Museum, the Queensland Museum and St Stephen's Cathedral.

This breadth and diversity of interests is regarded as one of the real strengths of QAG's Guides, in that it broadens the scope of engaging audiences in discussions about artworks. QAG's Guides range from young tertiary students to some of eighty-plus years. Many have had or do have successful careers. There are teachers, nurses, social workers, scientists, artists, lawyers and so on, and most have travelled the world. The tours offered at the Queensland Art Gallery reflect this diversity. No two tours are ever the same. But what the Guides all have in common is the enthusiasm and interest to engage with their audiences, the viewers.

One ongoing highlight of guiding at QAG is the

Asia-Pacific Triennial series of exhibitions. The fourth Triennial will open on 12 September this year and preparations are about to hit full speed. Guides enjoy the APTs because they are incredibly popular shows that attract a diversity of people from a wide range of the population. The spectacle of the APTs is an attraction for regular visitors, tourists, and many who would not otherwise visit the Gallery. This last group offers a particular challenge for Guides to transform this latter group into 'regulars'. QAG's Guides also require expertise in dealing with overseas visitors who visit Brisbane briefly on the way to the Great Barrier Reef and the Gold Coast beaches. This 'quick-hit' style of Gallery visit is sometimes the only opportunity tourists have to experience Australia's artistic spirit, and Guides work hard to make it a memorable and positive experience.

The art is, of course, always at the heart of the guiding experience. It is the artists' inspiration that generates the dynamics for exchange between Guide and viewer and, in this way, art provides people with a sense of connection to each other. The shared passion for art draws this diverse group together and sustains its energy and fun. Guiding is perhaps, above all, about making connections.

JANNE MCGAW AND LYNNE HOUGHTON ARE MEMBERS OF QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY VOLUNTEER GUIDE COMMITTEE

YOUNG BRIGHT SPARKS

Since its inception during last year's International Year of the Volunteer the Queensland Sciencecentre's Volunteer Program has gone from strength to strength, actively engaging young people in all facets of the Sciencecentre's activities and programs and boosting young people's awareness of science and technology.

The Queensland Sciencecentre is an interactive learning environment that promotes the fun and enjoyment of science and technology through a diverse range of hands-on exhibits and a number of special programs. It is a bright and stimulating family discovery centre offering fun, interactive science and technology learning experiences for adults and children, with a dedicated force of skilled and trained volunteer science explainers on hand to help visitors share the excitement and enjoy over 170 permanent science exhibits.

The Sciencecentre encourages an active and involved community through its education programs, membership benefits scheme, outreach programs and regular events. Recognising that early exposure to science is essential to advance science and technology awareness, the Sciencecentre developed the Volunteer Program to encourage science participation amongst young people and create experiences that aid personal self-development.

The Volunteer Program fosters a culture of mentorship between young people and the more experienced volunteer science communicators, who work tirelessly to enrich the

visitor experience by providing personal guidance, explanations and demonstrations. These volunteers play a key role in the day-to-day operations of the centre and provide the essential 'public face' of the Sciencentre that the small permanent staff team cannot hope to do.

Sciencentre Director Dr Graeme Potter explained that members of the Volunteer Program carry out a number of exciting roles at the Sciencentre, including developing their knowledge of the Sciencentre's interactive exhibitions, assisting with the running of holiday workshop programs and performing science demonstrations to the public.

'Queensland's young people have a rare chance to gain valuable volunteer work experience, mix amongst peers with a common interest in science and gain exposure to a range of professionals within the science and museum industry.

'Our youthful volunteers are offered an opportunity to develop their public speaking and presentation skills and assist with education activities such as Do & Discover hands-on workshops incorporating science challenges and games for children of all ages.

'The future of Australia's science and technology depends on today's young people and we are trying to encourage an active interest to make them aware that science isn't terrifying nor is it limited to professors in white laboratory coats.

'We now have approximately forty young people continually involved in science workshops, science shows, school holiday programs, taking part in team activities and group discussions as well as assisting with special events and the science social club.'

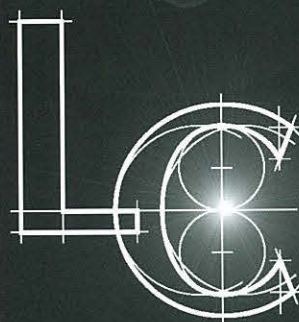
The inaugural Volunteer Program Information Session was held last year. Since this initial meeting the enthusiastic response from Brisbane's bright sparks has seen the centre's young volunteer numbers increase sixfold. You don't have to be Einstein to work out that young people giving continuous enthusiastic and committed service is a real investment in Queensland's future.

The Sciencentre's commitment to young Queenslanders and significance of giving young people a feeling of pride in their museums will extend when the Sciencentre moves from its current location in Brisbane's CBD to a major new gallery to be created in the Queensland Museum South Bank. The new South Bank Sciencentre will be state of the art in interpretation and display techniques. Above all, it will retain the engaging interactivity that has made the Sciencentre so popular and tell stories of greater relevance to the Queensland of today and the future.

Over the next few months visitors will be introduced to the new concepts and plans for the South Bank Sciencentre, which is scheduled to open in July 2003. The Sciencentre will remain open in its current facilities until the end of January 2003. This is an exciting new development for science education and learning in Brisbane, and integrates the strengths and focus of both the Sciencentre and the Queensland Museum South Bank in the one location.

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TEENA CARDILLO

TRUST ME, I'M A VOLUNTEER

How much does the concept of trust play a part in working with volunteers? Perhaps not unusually, the RAAF Museum has volunteers participating in nearly all areas of its operations. But this museum is a little different.

Three days a week at Point Cook, and occasionally off-site, the museum shows off its fleet of airworthy aircraft, a practice which involves many hours of behind-the-scenes technical work. Here in the museum's workshop you will find volunteers helping with restorations and maintaining the airworthy fleet of historic aircraft.

Technical Officer Brett Clowes believes that trust is a most important component in working with volunteers at the RAAF Museum.

'It's an essential factor because safety is such a paramount consideration when working with active aircraft. As a licensed engineer, I need to be able to trust the volunteers to be able to take instructions, because ultimately I am responsible for their actions', he says.

Of course, this responsibility does not take place without the appropriate coordination and supervision.

'In the technical area, I have to develop a sense of trust with each volunteer on an individual basis and ensure that they are tasked appropriately, according to their varied skills and abilities. In this case, it's not

always the volunteer's specific skills that are essential; it's an ability to listen and carry out instructions, attention to detail and a willingness to strive to meet a particular standard.'

Trust is equally important in the more traditional non-operational public display areas, says Curator Brad Owen.

'When volunteers are in the display areas of the museum, they have partial responsibility for the security of the collection during opening hours. We need to be able to trust that they are doing that job effectively, so we use the orientation process and continuation training to reinforce an awareness of our policy.

'Often we are only able to provide on-the-job instruction and minimum supervision, for example on aircraft cleaning days. At those times, it's important that the volunteers are able to work as part of a team, with more skilled people taking the lead roles, and supporting one another.'

Mary Louis says that, as the Volunteer Coordinator, she has a requirement that volunteers can be trusted to be reliable in meeting the museum and public's needs. The museum offers weekday guided tours to visitors, a program that can't be achieved without being effectively resourced with volunteers, ahead of time.

'Because of limited training in the area of guided tours, we entrust more experienced volunteers to take new



Busy in the workshop are volunteers Colin Stacey and Peter Tyers. They are working on the uncovered wing of the museum's airworthy Sopwith Pup replica
Photograph by Teena Cardillo

volunteers under their wing. That's effectively putting more trust in the abilities of the volunteers that have been here for longer and helping them to learn from one another.

'Also, we need to trust the volunteers to promote the RAAF Museum message in a professional and positive manner, and this means that they recognise their own limitations and potential and ask for assistance if required.

'We can't have too restricted a view on what the volunteers can do within our organisation, because this might result in feelings of being undervalued. Once a volunteer has a set task that they know has a value to the museum, this brings about a continued motivation', she says.

To enable the museum to have a trusting relationship with its volunteers on a daily basis, effective communication

is required. Volunteers need to feel comfortable that the lines of communication are open.

'When we put out a newsletter for example, volunteers are able to comment or question what is written. They can approach members of staff with perceived problems or suggested improvements, and they do this regularly, even using informal means.

'In other words, we trust the volunteers to use those lines of communication to express opinions, ask questions and identify their own merits, in order that they continue to meet the museum's needs as well as their own.'

TEENA CARDILLO IS PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER AT THE RAAF MUSEUM, POINT COOK

GOOD NEWS ABOUT CULTURAL PROPERTY

There are positive signs that the goals of stemming the illegal trade in works of art, and the repatriation of cultural property to its relevant owners and countries, may be closer to achievement.

The Art Newspaper's international edition (July–August 2002) reports that **Switzerland**, 'a country which lies at the heart of the global trade in illicitly excavated artefacts and looted art', is heading towards ratifying the 1970 UNESCO convention on illegal trade in archaeological material and works of art. While the move towards ratification is supported by most of the Swiss cantons, cultural and ecclesiastical bodies, the Socialists and the Christian

Democrats, it is opposed by Populists and Radicals, as well as collectors, dealers and museums. *The Art Newspaper* says that, although it will take time before legislation allowing ratification is approved and implemented, 'Once it goes into effect, it will make the transfer of art and artefacts in Switzerland more transparent and it will deal a severe blow to international art smuggling networks'.

The same edition has announced that the Upper House of the Japanese parliament, the Diet, has approved **Japan's** ratification of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, while Belgium and the **United Kingdom** are 'working towards ratification'.

While world leaders threaten **Iraq** with destruction, archaeologists and curators from that country and the **United Kingdom** are collaborating in a project to begin the process of recreating the world's first library, built 2600 years ago at Nineveh for the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal. Clay tablets taken from Nineveh by British archaeologists a century and a half ago, now in the British Museum, are to be cast in plaster and sent to Iraq, which has asked for UNESCO support for the monumental project. This is not the only sign that a love for objects and a respect for law can transcend international tensions: in 2001 a 4000-year-old stone head of

Medusa, which had been smuggled illegally out of Iraq, was identified as for sale in a London antique shop. The *Independent* newspaper reported that 'Scotland Yard's Art and Antique Squad swung into action and, much to the astonishment of the delighted Iraqis, the Medusa was handed over to be sent back'.

Still in the **United Kingdom**, the *Museums Journal* (April 2002) has reported that the Human Remains Working Group has sent out a survey to 200 museums to assess their holdings of human remains. Museums were asked to look at their holdings under two sets of two categories: UK and overseas; and pre- and post-1500.

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THE HADDON COLLECTION AT CAIRNS REGIONAL GALLERY



Madub (rain charm) collected by Alfred Haddon in the Torres Strait Islands in 1898

Courtesy of Cairns Regional Gallery

Sixty objects from Cambridge University's Alfred Haddon Collection of 1898 have returned 'home' in a new exhibition; *Past Time: Torres Strait Islander Material from the Haddon Collection, 1888-1905*, which opened at Cairns Regional Gallery in May this year.

Englishman Alfred Cort Haddon first travelled to the Torres Strait Islands in 1888 to study marine biology. His research depended on the assistance of local residents, and Haddon formed close associations with the people of Mer and Mabuiag Islands. In the evenings the men of Mer and Mabuiag would tell Haddon stories of their past.

Intrigued by the stories and legends they shared with him, Haddon became concerned that the cultural origins of the people of the Torres Strait Islands might be lost through European influence and colonisation.

Recognising the importance and 'richness' of the Torres Strait Islander culture, Haddon began to trade with the local residents for numerous objects, including turtleshell masks, drums and bamboo pipes, in return for cloth and tobacco.

Unlike many other Europeans, Haddon did not consider these objects to be merely curios or trophies. He believed that a systematic collection of ethnological objects and associated information was the key to understanding, and hence preserving, the culture of the Torres Strait Islands.

Returning to his base in Cambridge in 1889, Haddon was determined to revisit the Torres Strait and complete his studies. It took him nearly ten years to rally sufficient support to make the trip back, but in

1898 he left the United Kingdom as leader of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition.

Haddon's was a multidisciplinary expedition. The group included scholars in the fields of ethnology, psychology, physiology, medicine and linguistics. Haddon took his expedition back to the islands of Mer and Mabuiag, where they stayed for seven months recording, collecting and analysing both the people and traditional customs.

Concerned mostly with 'salvage' ethnography, Haddon's studies focused on recording the knowledge and traditions of the past that were in danger of disappearing. A large percentage of the objects collected by Haddon, and represented in the *Past Time* exhibition, concern dance performances.

Haddon was dismayed to find that many of the objects he had collected on his original trip, such as turtleshell masks, were no longer regularly produced by the Islanders. The difference between the objects Haddon collected in 1898 and those he had gathered during his previous trip indicate that significant changes had already begun to take place in the traditional practices of the Torres Strait Islands.

Haddon commissioned individual Islanders to reproduce some of the items he had seen on earlier visits, as well as bartering for 'new' objects, which included dhari (feather headdresses), dance ornaments, musical instruments and personal ornaments.

Haddon relied upon the friendships he had made with Islanders on his previous visit. He would not have been able to amass his detailed notes and

collection of over 1000 objects were it not for the support and friendship of the Torres Strait Islanders themselves.

Back in the United Kingdom, Haddon entered his detailed recordings, journals and collection of objects into the Cambridge University Collection, where they formed the foundation of the development of social anthropology.

The Haddon Collection remained at Cambridge for over a hundred years, until in 2001 sixty of the objects returned to Australia in a new exhibition, *Past Time*, thanks to a collaborative venture between the National Museum of Australia and the University of Cambridge.

Terry Waia, Chairman of the Torres Strait Regional Authority, said that the Haddon Collection gave the people of the Torres Strait an important insight into how their ancestors lived at the turn of the last century.

Mr Waia said 'It is extremely important that the people of the Torres Strait Islands have access to the exhibition, because these artefacts represent our traditional culture and our identity. Collections such as this serve to remind us where we as a people came from and how important it is to maintain what we have left of our culture'.

Past Time: Torres Strait Islander Material from the Haddon Collection, 1888-1905, is only appearing at two venues in Australia, the National Museum of Australia and Cairns Regional Gallery, where it can be seen until 8 September 2002.

This article has been compiled from information supplied by Cairns Regional Gallery

NAMATJIRA WEBSITE AT NGA



Albert Namatjira, *Palm Valley* c. 1945–1949
watercolour over pencil on paper
Private collection, Adelaide
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Australia

The National Gallery of Australia has launched a website celebrating the opening of its latest travelling exhibition, *Seeing the Centre: the art of Albert Namatjira 1902–1959*, which opened at the Araluen Centre for Arts and Entertainment in Alice Springs on 28 July 2002.

The website utilises beautiful images and detailed text to introduce some of the exhibition's themes and is available at nga.gov.au/namatjira

An upgraded version of the website will be available by 5 October 2002, when *Seeing the Centre* opens at the National Gallery of Australia, in celebration of the Gallery's twentieth birthday.

JOSÉ ROBERTSON IS MULTIMEDIA COORDINATOR AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA

PAST AND FUTURE OF THE REMOTE AND REGIONAL MUSEUMS CONFERENCE



The 2001 Remote and Regional Museums Conference in Kalgoorlie from 26–29 October drew together 140 delegates from as far afield as the Christmas and Cocos Islands, New Zealand, northern Queensland, the Northern Territory, Tasmania, the Kimberley, Balgo, Pilbara, Cheeditha and Western Central Desert, Mount Margaret Aboriginal communities and many places in between. From the opening night to the final field trip day there was a friendly and enthusiastic buzz of exchange as people made new connections, hatched new ideas and shared their experiences with other people in sometimes similar, sometimes different situations. Significantly increased attendance at the 2001 conference was in itself an

Above: Sania Kawi (Christmas Island), Jenny Freshwater (Cocos (Keeling) Islands), Lucy Goh (Christmas Island), and Paul Bridges (Western Australian Army Museum, Fremantle), network after a day of papers and workshops
Courtesy of Elizabeth Hof

Below: Douglas Mourimbine of the Cheeditha Aboriginal Community near Roebourne talks about recent cultural heritage developments in this region of the Pilbara
Courtesy of Elizabeth Hof

indication that interest in this type of gathering, and its capacity to deal with issues of particular relevance to the large number of remote and regional museums in Australia, is steadily growing.

Highlights included Jo Foster's presentation about the activities of people in association with the new cultural centre at Balgo (south

east Kimberley region]; Andre Lipscombe and David Carson's 3D digital presentation about a partnership between two Esperance organisations, the Cannery Arts Centre and the Museum, to re-interpret the museum's Skylab Satellite collection; field trips to some of the fascinating heritage sites and collections of the Goldfields region; and the conference dinner in the candlelit shearing shed at Hampton Hill Station.

Support from the National Museum of Australia enabled a videoconference linkup to Canberra, Townsville and Launceston so that people from those locations could tune in to the morning plenary sessions and participate in question time. In addition to this, a very last minute arrangement and sponsor support saw these sessions webcast via the Melbourne Museum to the Australian Museums On Line website, making it accessible not only to people around Australia, but around the planet. This was a vital development in overcoming the tyranny of distance and enabling access to such events.

Despite there being keen potential hosts for a future conference, increasing difficulty in attracting seed funding has prompted discussion about its direction. This culminated in a session at the Community Museums Special Interest Group meeting at the 2002 Museums Australia National Conference in Adelaide.

Some of the views expressed from the floor were that by continuing as a separate gathering to the broader museum world, the remote and regional museum network was increasingly marginalising itself. By not having a significant presence at the Museums Australia National Conference forum, remote and regional museums were potentially widening the

possibility of misrepresentation in the bigger picture. In addition to this, those people wanting to attend both conferences expressed the opinion that going to two separate events was too costly in terms of time and money.

As an attendee of two Remote and Regional Museums Conferences, and a member of the organising team for the 2001 conference, I know that a special aspect of the atmosphere of this event, which is derived from its scale and location, will change if it becomes part of the Museums Australia National Conference. However, in light of the important points outlined above, there are a number of benefits to be gained and opportunities to explore by combining the two conferences.

The 2003 Museums Australia National Conference team in Perth is looking forward to the challenge of ensuring that the program meets the diverse needs of the wider museum world. Don't miss it!

The 2001 National Remote and Regional Conference papers are now online at: www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/downloads.htm

There are a small number of free 2001 National Remote and Regional Museums Conference t-shirts left — phone (08) 9427 2783 if you'd like one!

ROSALIND BROWN IS MUSEUM EXTENSION OFFICER, MUSEUM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM

US POSTCARD LOUISE DOUGLAS

MUSEUM ADVENTURES IN DALLAS

The American Association of Museums (AAM) conference is the major museum conference for museum workers. AAM was founded in 1906, has more than 15,900 members and has a substantial full-time staff which, along with a different conference committee each year, coordinates the annual conference. This year it was held in Dallas, Texas, and focused on the theme 'The Community of Museums: Seeking the Common Good'. I was one of five Australians amongst 4000 primarily US-based museum workers at the conference. Although I've been to a few AAMs, the size and

us and what is unique about each of us. But today's communities expect even more from their institutions. Museums are asked to help define situations and actions; to guide those journeys between and among communities. How can museums acknowledge boundaries and guide the movement between communities? How can museums show us that we are all vital members of the community, however we define it? And how are communities sustaining their museums? [AAM 2002, *Final Program*, p.5]

WHILE THE IDEA OF CONNECTING MORE TO COMMUNITIES IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED AS LAUDABLE, THE PUSH FOR MUSEUMS TO ADD SOCIAL SERVICES TO THEIR ALREADY OVERBURDENED INSTITUTIONAL WORKLOAD HAS NOT BEEN RECEIVED WITH UNANIMOUS ENTHUSIASM.

diversity of the conference never fails to impress.

I was particularly interested in this conference as the National Museum, having survived its first year of operation, looks to the future and considers how it will connect with the Australian community beyond Canberra. The somewhat ambitious aims of the conference were explained as follows:

Through the years, museums have served as chroniclers of history, providing a broader understanding of the diversity of the human experience, of what unites

That this set of questions was the focus for the 2002 conference is in fact not surprising in light of AAM's Museums and Community Initiative, established in 1998 to 'explore the potential for renewed, dynamic engagement between museums and communities'. This Initiative has created considerable debate in the senior ranks of the American museum profession: while the idea of connecting more to communities is generally accepted as laudable, the push for museums to add social services to their already overburdened institutional

THE MORE VARIED AND SUCCESSFUL THE
SOCIAL SPACES IN A MUSEUM, THE MORE
DIVERSE THE AUDIENCE WHO WILL FEEL
COMFORTABLE THERE

workload has not been received with unanimous enthusiasm. Comprehensive information about the Initiative can be found on the AAM website (www.aam-us.org/m&c/index) or in the publication *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* (AAM, Washington, DC, 2002).

Navigating through such a huge conference program is always a risky business and in the end I was pleased with the majority of my choices. As a historian who has had a career in interpretation through exhibitions, publications, multimedia and public programs I was most engrossed by 'Truth or Dare: A Forum on Historical Interpretation and Public Trust' (with such a title it was difficult to resist!). Starting from the recent finding that eighty-seven per cent of Americans think museums are one of the most trustworthy sources of information, five different experiences or perspectives were presented, some of which explored how this extraordinary level of public trust in museums can in fact be jeopardised when museums move into difficult or provocative territory. Jim Gardner gave a substantial account of the reinventing and reconnecting process the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH) has just been through as they analysed 'the most timely and relevant themes and

methods of presentation for the Museum in the twenty-first century'. The kinds of questions they faced in this process included: how do we reconnect with visitors? NMAH gets huge visitor numbers, but what do they get out of the visit? How do we do good history? How do we do contested history in a time of crisis? (note that the Blue Ribbon Commission report on this exercise can be found at www.americanhistory.si.edu/br/c/contents). On a more specific level, Kim Louagie explained how her small Wisconsin historical society successfully worked with its community to develop an exhibition on the anti-Communist Senator Joe McCarthy, a high profile, but problematic, native of their region.

'The Communal Space in Museums: Seeking the Good Commons' proved to be another engaging session. Elaine Heumann Gurian used Jane Jacobs' famous book *The Life and Death of American Cities* as a way of understanding museum spaces as community spaces — the ingredients of successful neighbourhoods (places for loitering and hanging out, places for shopping) which Jane Jacobs identifies can be easily emulated in museums. And why would you do this? Because the more varied and successful the social spaces in a museum, the more diverse the audience who will feel comfortable there. Other

speakers in the session extended this theme and argued that it is not that difficult for museums to become part of the 'mental maps' of communities as places they naturally gravitate to for informal and social experiences. Lawrence Fisher, who previously worked with Walt Disney and is now with the Barnum Museum, was brave enough to postulate that museums are now much more comfortable about borrowing design elements (the importance of transitional, decompression and exit spaces for example) from theme parks. There was a little rumbling from the audience, but a riot did not ensue so Lawrence seems to be right.

As well as an array of other papers, workshops, lunchtime meetings and evening events I should mention that the keynote speakers were sensational, especially Bill T Jones who gave an inspiring lecture/performance about the ways in which he uses dance to confront and promote understanding of important social issues.

It is hard to imagine I would have gone to Dallas unless there was a museum conference taking place — however, I'm glad I went — it is a thoroughly modern (and very wealthy) city, and has some unusual features including the Dealey Plaza Museum in the Texas Schoolbook Repository, which is of course dedicated to

telling the story of the assassination of John F Kennedy. An unusual feature of this museum is the mini-'freelance interpretation' industry (not associated with the Museum) which has grown up around the Repository and the roadway where the assassination took place. These somewhat scruffy interpreters (for a small fee) provide an intricate account of the assassination and tour of the famous 'grassy knoll', along with a heavy dose of conspiracy theory.

All in all a thoroughly satisfactory intellectual and social — and at times intriguing — experience at AAM 2002 in Dallas.

LOUISE DOUGLAS IS
MANAGER, PUBLIC
PROGRAMS IN THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

CAROL SCOTT

PRESIDENT'S REPORT — AUGUST 2002

New Executive Officer

It gives me great pleasure to welcome our new Executive Officer, Meredith Hinchliffe.

The position of Executive Officer is a new one for Museums Australia. It has been created around a suite of duties to further the work of the Association including:

- Supervising the National Office;
- Financial planning;
- Furthering the work of the Standing Committees and the National Council;
- Project management; and
- Communication and liaison on behalf of the Association.

Meredith has had a long and distinguished career. She has worked as the Project Co-ordinator for the Australian Science Teacher's Association, as the Co-ordinator for the National Women's Justice Coalition and as the Executive Director for the National Campaign for the Arts. In addition, she worked for both the ACT Arts Bureau and the ACT Department of Business, the Arts, Sport and Tourism.

As a private consultant, she has worked on a variety of assignments involving project management, lobbying and promotion for clients including the Australia Council, Ausglass, the Canberra Sculpture Forum, Art and Recreation Training (ACT), Gorman House Arts Centre and the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Meredith's immediate duties over the next few months will involve work on policy, including the revision of *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* and the co-

ordination of industry responses to the new *Sustainability for Museums* policy. She will be managing the transfer and upgrade of the Museums Australia website to Melbourne Museum in association with the National Office and Tim Hart, Director OTIS at Museum Victoria and Chair of the IT Special Interest Group. We welcome Meredith to Museums Australia.

National Collections Advisory Forum

At its meeting on 1 May 2002 in Melbourne, the Cultural Minister's Council established the terms of reference for a **National Collections Advisory Forum** (NCAF). The National Collections Advisory Forum will be a group of six to eight people with a brief to consult with the museums, galleries, libraries and archives sector. The NCAF will:

- Explore the feasibility of establishing a cross-sectoral group that would include museums, libraries, archives and galleries to advocate on behalf of the sector;
- Advise on enhancing the co-ordination of current programs of support;
- Prioritise the current and future needs of the collections sector; and
- Explore the community value of collections.

Museums Australia National Conference 2003

Plans are already underway for the Museums Australia National Conference 2003 to be held in Perth from 25–31 May. Titled *The Other Side*, the conference will explore themes of marginalisation in terms of distance, collections and

audiences. For the first time, the Regional and Remote Museums Conference will run concurrently with the Museums Australia Conference, providing an opportunity for the mutual sharing of ideas and resources.

Sustainability for Museums Policy

Following a resolution at the Museums Australia 2001 Conference AGM, the Policy Standing Committee recommended that the Council contract Dr Sue Graham-Taylor from the Western Australian Museum to draft a policy on sustainable practice for museums. Dr Graham-Taylor provided the Council with a comprehensive draft policy in time for the 2002 Conference in Adelaide. The draft policy has been distributed for comment to the Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD), the Council for Australian Art Museum Directors (CAAMD), the Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) and the Museums and Galleries Association of New South Wales (MGFNSW). The draft policy will also be posted on the Museums Australia listserve for comment by members before its final revisions and publication in September.

Museums Leadership Program

The Melbourne Business School in association with Museums Australia will shortly be sending out notices for the next Museums Leadership Program in August 2003. This prestigious program is developing our leadership for the future and is a must for

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those assuming key management roles in our museums and galleries. For further information call Carol Scott (02) 9217 0448 or Richard Speed (03) 9349 8199.

MOVING ON

Francesca Cubillo has come to the National Museum of Australia from the South Australian Museum to work on the repatriation of Aboriginal remains, including some returned from overseas, to their communities.

Robert Heather is the new Director of Artspace Mackay. He left his position as Executive Director of the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland in July.

Kate Jordan-Moore has left the Art Gallery of South Australia and has taken up a position at the South Australian Tourism Commission.

Professor Colin Pearson has retired from his position as head of the Conservation of Cultural Materials course at the University of Canberra.

Pat Sabine has left her position as Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and is now Director of the Wilderness Gallery, Cradle Mountain.



The Museums Australia National Office team pictured outside Mining Industry House, Canberra
Standing, left to right: Debbie Milsom, Membership and Office Manager, Meredith Hinchliffe, Executive Officer, Peta Siebert, Finance Officer; seated (behind), Catherine Gardner, Advertising Manager, (front) Roslyn Russell, Editor, *Museum National*.

ARRIVAL

In June the National Office welcomed Riley, a new baby son for Finance Officer Peta Siebert and her partner Wayne, and a brother for Thomas.

COMING IN MUSEUM NATIONAL

NOVEMBER 2002:
Children and museums

FEBRUARY 2002:
Repatriation of cultural property



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JENNY DICKENS

Conservation Skills: Judgement, Method, and Decision Making. By Chris Caple. Routledge, London, 2000. ISBN: 0 415 188814

The fundamentals of materials conservation, and the reasoning and decision-making processes of conservators, are not always transparent to other museum and heritage workers. All too often conservation is seen simply as a series of recipes to 'fix' artefacts. In a world which looks for quick fix, simple solutions to complex problems, conservation can be seen as a hindrance instead of the enabling activity it really is. This excellent book demonstrates the complexity and depth of many aspects of the practice of materials conservation, and will also serve as an important textbook for conservators at the start of their professional lives.

Caple suggests that historical research, displays and images of artefacts (digital and traditional) are inevitably interpreted and therefore biased; only the artefact itself can be 'truthful'. Conservation has a fundamental role to play in revealing this truth, and Caple demonstrates the importance of returning to the artefact itself as the prime historic document. He uses the example of the De Walden collection of classical helmets where conservators not only discovered which helmets were genuine, fake and pastiches, but also revealed useful information about the practices of nineteenth-century forgers and their influence on the market for antiquities.

Experience is essential for the optimum practice of conservation. Caple writes that

the successful implementation of conservation 'depends on the conservator knowing: what the object is, where it comes from and what it relates to (context), the materials of which the object is composed, the decay mechanisms of those materials and a variety of measures which could be implemented to clean, stabilise and preserve the object'. Training provides the theoretical background, codes of ethics and practice provide the framework, and experience provides the judgement to know what to do in a given situation. This sequence of knowledge explains why concepts that seem simple to an experienced conservator can be difficult to communicate to untrained people, and therefore why conservators can be reluctant to provide this training.

Collections are among the fundamental reasons for the existence of museum and heritage institutions. They belong to the public, who assume that the custodians of these collections are caring for them in the best possible way. Caple amply demonstrates the importance of experienced conservation staff to ensure the continued survival of these collections. Seen in this context, recent conservation staff cuts and the loss or downgrading of senior conservation positions in some institutions are inexplicable.

A short review such as this cannot begin to do justice to all the concepts explored in *Conservation Skills*. They include discussions on the reasons for conserving the past; dating and authenticating via technical advances; consideration of context and what we would call significance in conservation decisions; the nature of truth, and past

mistakes and conflicts. There is less attention paid to the conservation issues faced by conservators of private collections, those who work for dealers and those who work with indigenous and contemporary art objects. However in general all aspects of conservation professional practice are covered, with many difficult concepts rendered palatable by fascinating real-life examples. Examples include the Portland vase, the Forth Bridge, the Laetoli footprints and the Sistine Chapel.

This thought-provoking book is important in demonstrating the place of conservation within the museum and heritage worlds, and is highly recommended for conservators and other heritage and museum professionals at all stages of their careers.

JENNY DICKENS IS SENIOR CONSERVATOR WITH HERITAGE VICTORIA

VICKI NORTHEY

The Manual of Museum Exhibitions. Edited by Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA. 2002. ISBN: 0-7591-0233-3

An alternative title to this substantial volume could be *Everything you ever wanted to know about exhibition development but were too frightened to ask*.

Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord run an extremely successful, international cultural resources planning company, active for many years. They work across the world on major museum

development and exhibition projects. Many of the contributions to this manual come from their group of sub-consultants. The Lords and their people have also edited manuals on museum planning (1983, 1991 and 1999) and museum management (1997).

The almost 550 pages of the *Manual of Museum Exhibitions* bulge with knowledge and case studies from forty-five very experienced museum professionals from the USA, Canada and Britain. They include curators, museum managers, designers, conservators, planners, public program developers, marketing professionals and even showcase designers and manufacturers.

The *Manual* is aimed at a broad range of museum and non-museum workers. It takes you step by step through all areas of exhibition development, from the germ of an idea to what you could sell in the shop. Each chapter elaborates on a step in the process.

The chapters provide practical advice on planning and building all sorts of exhibitions for all sorts of exhibition spaces and museums. They cover most of the professionals and services that are needed to develop exhibitions, including the dreaded project managers. This coverage would be extremely useful to those embarking on exhibition work for the first time, or museums who are looking at setting up exhibition development systems and planning procedures.

The case studies are the strength of the *Manual*. They provide 'real life' applications of the themes explored in the chapters. These studies boast some well-known names and

institutions, such as Ralph Applebaum, the New York consultant well known in Australia; Robert Bloomfield, of the Natural History Museum, London; and Elizabeth Broun, of the Smithsonian's American Art Museum. There are also case studies from smaller, less well-known cultural organisations like Ename Provincial Museum in Belgium; Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam; Roald Dahl Children's Gallery in Aylesbury, and Conner Prairie Living History Museum, Indiana.

The majority of the case studies give an overall impression of exhibition management as a positive experience. There seems to be little reference to dealing with thorny issues and people management, which can be very tricky parts of any project. However, there are glimpses of more in-depth analysis in the studies and evidence that these authors, too, had learned valuable lessons during the process.

I myself have dipped into the volume to copy some of its very useful charts, diagrams and check lists. I particularly like Figure 7.8: the Exhibition Process flowchart on page 401.

The last section, 'What Now?', provides case studies of innovative approaches to exhibition development. How innovative they are is a matter of opinion, but it is clear that the museum exhibition is definitely here to stay.

The Manual of Museum Exhibitions is based on the considerable experience of museum professionals who work in the northern hemisphere. I don't say that with a southern hemisphere bias, but it does emphasise certain issues which are less important here, for example, that exhibitions are either research-based or market-driven, and that a successful exhibitions program should be both. I always thought that there is a range of motivations

and ideas behind exhibition development.

But I digress. This door stopper is a volume for museum people who work on exhibitions or wish to work on exhibitions. I certainly have removed it from the door on enough occasions to make the investment very worthwhile.

VICKI NORTHEY IS GALLERY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL, CANBERRA

LINDA YOUNG

Remarkable Occurrences: The National Library of Australia's First 100 Years, 1901–2001.
Edited by Peter Cochrane.
Canberra, NLA, 2001; ISBN: 0 642 10730 0

The National Library traces its origin to the first federal parliamentary library, and thus claimed a spot in the jollifications of the Centenary of Federation celebrated in 2001. Its festivities began with the exhibition, *Treasures of the World's Great Libraries*, drawing so many visitors that it was eventually open twenty-two hours a day — a populist triumph. But the Library also celebrated with *Remarkable Occurrences*, a centennial volume about its collections by a clutch of well-known librarians and scholars.

Evidently searching for a new take on celebratory self-publications, editor Peter Cochrane shaped the book from the Library's acquisition files; he describes it as an anthology of 'acquisition narratives'. It is an enchanting idea, and the product is fascinating.

The opportunities and choices that framed many of these acquisitions are shown to have been chancy, idiosyncratic, championed,

contested and resisted — stories which will not surprise museum workers.

A classic example: Cook's *Endeavour* Journal came up for sale in 1923 in a collector's auction, estimated to be worth up to £50,000. The Mitchell Library despatched its man with just over £5,000, but when he arrived in London he found his mission hijacked, with telegraphic instructions to bid, anonymously, on behalf of the National Parliamentary Library, up to £15,000. New Prime Minister Stanley Bruce had been persuaded to inaugurate his government with a grand gesture.

Amazingly, it was acquired for £5,100 (and the Mitchell Library feelings on the matter are not explored). Back in Australia the Journal went on display, inciting a flood of offers of further Cookiana: oak from the keel of the *Endeavour*, Cook's walking stick, Cook's fork, etc.

The genius of Cochrane's editorial vision is that the tale of the *Endeavour* Journal is told by Greg Dening, who turns it into a characteristic meditation on the construction, survival and maintenance of knowledge. Contributions by Tim Bonyhady, Joan Kerr, John Thompson, Stuart Macintyre, Nicholas Thomas and others add more such gloriously personal, yet impeccable, chapters.

Forming the Library's stock as a national cultural resource was the vision of a pair of heroic Commonwealth Librarians: Kenneth Binns (1927–47) and Harold White (1947–70). They nurtured the enthusiasms and tolerated the eccentricities of three great collectors of Australiana.

E.A. Petherick was a book dealer in London from 1879–1894, where he collected on the side; J.A. Ferguson was a lawyer in Sydney, collecting through dealers and most

WELCOME SPRING AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SYDNEY

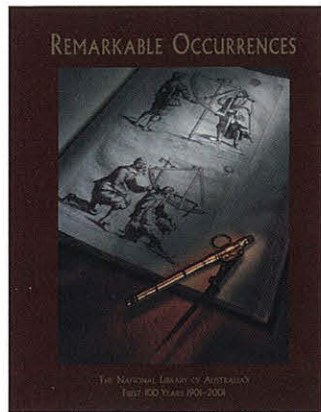
There will be flowers everywhere at Government House in Sydney on the weekend of 12 and 13 October when the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales will host a festival, 'The Art of Flowers'.

As well as those blooming in the grounds of Government House, there will be flower arrangements by Australia's and the world's top floral designers. Britain's Ken Turner, who has created floral extravaganzas for the world's elite — including Jackie Onassis, Margaret Thatcher and the Prince of Wales — and for prestigious events such as the opening of the Sackler Gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, will be creating an exhibition in the Government House ballroom. Those familiar with Turner's work through his book *Flower Style* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989) will know that they can expect a magnificent display.

Other floral designers exhibiting at the festival include Saskia Havekes, Will Atkinson and Andrew Birley, while Andrea Leonard of 'Sweet Art' will use spun sugar to create floral cakes.

For those who want to learn more about plants, cottage gardens and the history of flower arranging, there will be talks by Peter Valder from *Burke's Backyard*, Shirley Stackhouse and Government House curator Ann Toy.

active in the 1920s; Rex Nan Kivell was an art dealer in London before and after World War Two. None was wealthy, but thanks to driven collector-psychology and the relative absence of competition, they established remarkably comprehensive collections.



Other acquisitions were the products of the careful, proactive kind of collecting we all aspire to. The best instance is certainly the Asian collections, cultivated since World War Two with standing orders in Asian bookshops, local acquisitions officers, government publication exchanges, and exchange appointments. After thirty-five years of development, such arrangements were drastically curtailed by the 1983 Razor Gang and the subsequent regular decline in government funding to the Library.

The NLA shifted direction in 1993, aiming strategically to manage thin budgetary resources and continuing priority of Asian materials. Hoping to rely on new technology solutions for access to European and American publications, it focused hard copy collecting on the Asia-Pacific region. In a reflection of that decade's soul-searching about Australia's identity as a European nation located in Asia, many public voices criticised the Library's direction.

The story of the Asian collections points to the effect

of the socio-politico-economic environment, and the impact of technology, on collecting institutions. It is a theme taken up in a specially interesting chapter by Paul Turnbull, on the modern history of the Library's information management systems.

The logic of being the national deposit library led in the 1930s to annual catalogues of Australian publications. In 1956 the NLA established the National Bibliographic Centre to facilitate work on a national union catalogue, but the gigantic task of reproducing traditional catalogues was already acknowledged as nearly impossible.

New technologies entered the scene: microfilm in the 1940s, computers in the 1960s and the Internet in the 1990s. None was ever funded beyond the bare minimum, though the Australian Bibliographic Network, opened for business in 1981, was making a surplus by 1990.

The next step was to be 'World 1', an Internet-based system, shared with New

Zealand. Alas, its stormy history before termination is not here explored; the strategic turn away from western hard copy and towards Asian priority was, at least, an element of the tale.

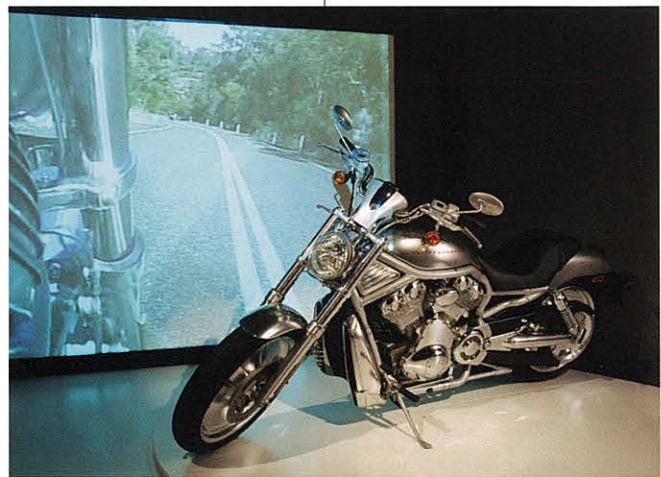
practice, and vice versa. From libraries, we lifted the concept of the distributed national collection; from us, libraries lifted the exhibition medium. It's time we saw more historical analysis along the model of Cochrane's exemplary volume, on museum collecting, its systems and its construction of Australian knowledge.

Let me add that the book itself is a beautiful product.

LINDA YOUNG TEACHES CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

VERENA MAULDON

Two Wheeled Warriors: A History of Harley-Davidson in Australia. A joint exhibition by the National Motor Museum, Birdwood, South Australia, and the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. On show at the Powerhouse until 22 September. The core then tours to Newcastle Regional Museum and the Queensland Museum.



Museums keep an eye on library management theory and

Historic Harleys on show
Photo: Jean-Francois Lanzarone, Powerhouse Museum, 2002

The latest Harley-Davidson, the V-Rod
Photo: Jean-Francois Lanzarone, Powerhouse Museum, 2002

Two Wheeled Warriors is approached along a darkened corridor and a soundscape of burbling engines sets the scene for a stunning display of motorcycles. But this exhibition is about much more than machinery. It explores the place of the Harley-Davidson

motorcycle in Australian popular culture, from its introduction here c1913 — when it was valued as a sturdy workhorse particularly well suited to appalling Australian roads — to the present, where the brand name has instant recognition and a plethora of complex cultural associations.

The exhibition builds on one developed by the National Motor Museum in Birdwood, South Australia. Inspired by the donation of some unique Harley memorabilia, the team at Birdwood Mill developed the concept because, as curator Julie Baird explains, 'Everyone knows Harley'. It is now touring nationally, with local content added at each venue.

At the Powerhouse Museum, the show has been extensively reworked and expanded. Skilful design and detailed labels showcase the bikes both as art objects and as exemplars of the engineering

and design for which Harley-Davidson is renowned. Over twenty motorcycles are displayed, from a 1914 'Model J', with sidecar — a favourite means of family transport in an era when cars were beyond the reach of the working class — to the 2002 model 'V Rod' (retail \$32,000!) — a sleek chromed machine promoted under the slogan 'born on the track, raised on the road'.

The exhibition draws on a wide range of themes, objects and interpretive techniques as it explores the Harley in Australian popular culture. Buying a bike is only the beginning of the Harley-Davidson experience, and the vast selection of parts which can be bolted on comes alive through a computer interactive enabling visitors to customise their own motorcycle. The passion for personalisation is further explored through the skill of the artists who illustrate

helmets and petrol tanks, turning a production Harley into a work of art.

The meaning of the Harley mystique in the lives of contemporary enthusiasts is thoughtfully explored with the use of oral history, a detailed context which gives depth to the exhibition. Photos and personal belongings illustrate stories such as that of Jack Bowers and Frank Smith, who in 1929 took seven weeks to complete the fastest circumnavigation of Australia to date.

In choosing to explore Harley-Davidson as 'an icon of design and a symbol of freedom and adventure', the message of the exhibition is essentially celebratory. A narrative of a success, progress, innovation and prosperity is established, and in part the exhibition could be read as a trade show.

Despite this ambience it is

clear that Powerhouse curators Ian Debenham and Anni Turnbull engage critically with key issues. They explore the way Harley-Davidson as a brand achieves iconic status through clever marketing of its product as a way of life. Objects illustrate just how the legend is perpetuated, from branded clothing to customised bikes and accessories, which are said to express individuality, rebellion and freedom.

Objects also raise questions about aspects of Harley-Davidson's appeal. The tension between traditional, mainly working-class Harley enthusiasts and the increasing number of affluent 'middle-agers' is graphically illustrated by a 1960-style chopper named 'Die Yuppie Scum', lent by a former bikie gang member. The undertone of violence associated with Harley-Davidson is further explored through movies such as *The*

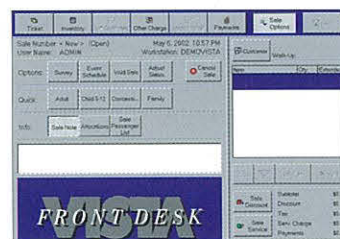
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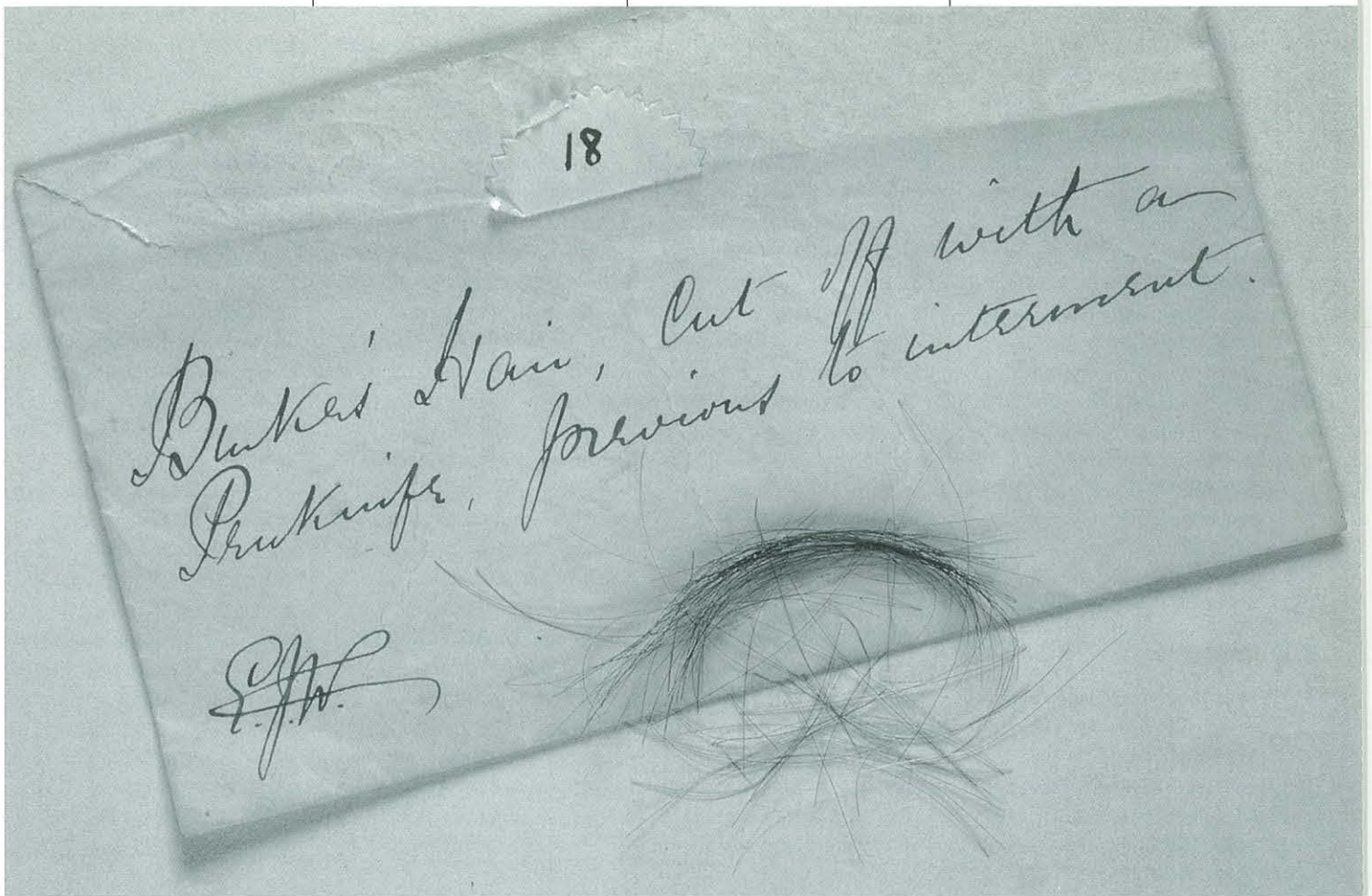
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Wild One of 1954, and *Stone*, a 1972 Australian picture in which a motorcycle gang seeks retribution.

Discussion of the 'one percenters' — the minority of 'outlaws' whose way of life is denounced by mainstream motorcycle groups — by reference to real-life conflict is limited with reference only to a confrontation between police and bikers in California in 1947. It is disappointing that the exhibition allows this aspect of motorcycle culture to remain at a safe distance in time and geography, and misses the opportunity to engage with what is clearly an issue in contemporary Australia. Sensitive exploration of local incidents could have added depth to this discussion.

While initially sceptical, I have to confess to a conversion experience. Far from an 'infomercial', *Two Wheeled Warriors* clearly meets the Powerhouse's mandate to

interpret social history, technology and the decorative arts. As a celebration of the Harley-Davidson and its place in the popular imagination, the exhibition works well. There is plenty of technical detail for blokes and freaks, and a solid history underpins the claim that Harley-Davidson has a real place in the Australian story.

VERENA MAULDON IS CURATOR OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR THE PARRAMATTA PARK TRUST

KARIN VESK

Burke and Wills: from Melbourne to Myth. A National Library of Australia exhibition, touring to the Art Gallery of South Australia 22 June–18 August, and the State Library of Victoria 13 September–24 November.

According to curator Tim Bonyhady, 'Burke and Wills: from Melbourne to Myth' is 'an exhibition which stretches across the culture and across time to reveal how one of Australia's remarkable stories has grown and changed'. (Catalogue, p.5) For me, the exhibition, while interesting, didn't live up to this claim. Expecting to learn more about the expedition and how and why its story has shifted into the realms of Australian mythology, I'd like to have seen an interpretive connection between the material on display and the exhibition title. Although the labels accompanying individual objects are of a high standard, and revealed some fascinating information, the lack of an overarching narrative was a disappointment.

Along with relics — locks of the explorers' hair, bones, Wills' revolver, tools, eating utensils — the exhibition

Relic: The explorer's hair, cut from his body at Cooper's Creek, 1861.
Photo courtesy of the State Library of NSW

includes botanical and zoological specimens, manuscripts, moving last letters written by the dying explorers, watercolours, drawings and paintings by artists including Ludwig Becker, Nicholas Chevalier, William Strutt and Sidney Nolan.

But sometimes it's the stories about what didn't survive or what wasn't deemed worthy of attention at the time that are most interesting and revealing. For instance, Ludwig Becker applied to join the expedition not just as its artist, zoologist and geologist but also, radically, as an ethnographer. Although the Exploration Committee ignored this request, the prescient Becker collected Aboriginal material regardless.

Unfortunately much of the material resulting from the expedition was dispersed. Almost half the recorded colonial history paintings of Burke and Wills are unlocated; products named after the explorers have all disappeared; and the reasons for the lack of a substantial photographic record of the expedition tell an alternately compelling and depressing tale. However, some items have been rediscovered thanks to Bonyhady's research and others may re-emerge as exhibitions such as this create publicity.

While the relics that do survive may reveal much about how Australians have celebrated — and fetishised — explorers' (p.19), when a display is so disparate, and many objects are either missing or chiefly of documentary value, then it falls to text to provide a rationale for their exhibition. But to learn more about the expedition, its aims and achievements and why it was regarded as a failure (even though the wealth of surviving material contradicts this view) one needs to read the catalogue essay.

This led me to wonder whether the exhibition was an afterthought to the book and whether academics approach exhibitions quite differently from museum professionals? [Cheeky!!!] Of course, others may not share my perception of imbalance. After all, the gallery was full of seemingly very satisfied visitors on the warm, sunny afternoon I was there. It was great to see parents reading the labels to attentive young children (proving kids don't need sound, movement and endless button-pressing to enjoy a museum visit), and if this public is also encouraged to read further on a topic then that is no bad thing either.

I guess it's really a matter of whether there is a problem, from the audience's point of

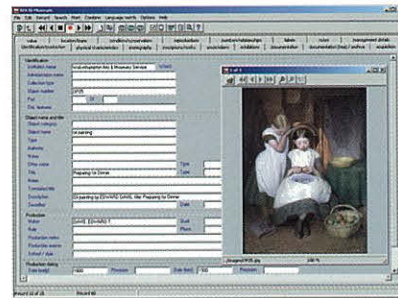
view, with titles that may promise more than an exhibition offers, and with the latter depending on the catalogue to tell most of the story. When *Burke and Wills* was on in Canberra, the National Archives was showing *A Vision Splendid: How the Griffins Imagined Australia's National Capital* (coincidentally about another famous Australian 'failure'), and this is exactly what the objects illustrated: the Griffins' vision for the city. I've been involved in many discussions on exhibition titles in my career and I must say, as both an editor and a visitor, I'm always in favour of the most straightforward explication — while allowing space to manoeuvre, it nevertheless leaves no room for disappointment! In terms of this exhibition I think a couple of theme panels would have fleshed out the story and thus provided a richer and deeper context for the objects.

As it stands I suspect that the exhibition offers most to those visitors familiar with the Burke and Wills expedition and conversant with Australian colonial art and history painting. But for the rest of us it's still a good introduction to a many-layered, and ongoing, tale. 'To begin with, the expedition was simply the stuff of words.' (p.5) Nearly 150 years later, the history of the expedition and its search parties raises issues about collecting, collecting for the future and relevance that are still topical today.

KARIN VESK IS AN EDITOR AT THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM IN SYDNEY

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Edward Davis, Preparing for Dinner, image courtesy of Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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POSSUM SKIN CLOAKS AT MELBOURNE MUSEUM



Two nineteenth-century possum skin cloaks created by Victorian Aboriginal people, in the collections of Museum Victoria, have inspired contemporary Indigenous artists to create the works in *Tooloyn Koortakay, Squaring Skins for Rugs*, a new exhibition opened in NAIDOC Week at the Melbourne Museum.

New possum skin cloaks, each measuring three by two metres, were made using traditional techniques by Victorian Indigenous artists Vicki Cousens and Debra Couzens (Kirrae Wurrung people, Western Districts), and Lee Darroch and Treaahna Hamm (Yorta Yorta people, Echuca area). The cloaks took several months to complete, and feature designs representing elements of

Participating artists (left to right) Debra Couzens, Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch and Treaahna Hamm
 Courtesy of Museum Victoria
 Possum skin cloak created for Tooloyn Koortakay
 Courtesy of Museum Victoria

Victoria's landscape, which have been burnt onto the skins. Examples of traditional tools used to make the cloaks — a mussel shell scraper, stone scraper, ochre and a bone awl for sewing and cutting — are also on display. The exhibition is the first part of Melbourne Museum's strategy of profiling and encouraging emerging Koori artists, and promoting use of traditional techniques and imagery, and is supported by the City of Melbourne Indigenous Arts Grants Program.

OPEN MUSEUM JOURNAL

Volume 5 of the *Open Museum Journal*, 'Interpreting Historic House Museums' has been published. This volume contains a selection of articles examining topics such as the absence of women's history themes in historic houses, a case study of the tensions between an object-based approach to interpretation and one based on ideas, a Collector's House Museum, short articles on museum practice including a methodological study of house museum classification, a volunteer-managed historic house and a prime minister's house museum. Volume 5 has been edited by Charlotte Smith and Andrea Witcomb. Browse omj at: <http://amol.org.au/omj>

COLOSSEATUM AT BRISBANE CITY GALLERY

The Roman Colosseum, one of the most recognisable of all the architectural works of the ancient Roman Empire, comes to Brisbane in the shape of a chair by furniture maker William McMahon. The chair, called the 'Colosseatum', was created by McMahon using the latest in digital imaging technology combined with new materials and techniques in furniture making. It was inspired by a brief to artists that asked them to create chairs that would explore new developments in technology.

To make the Colosseatum McMahon scanned sixteen holiday pictures of the Colosseum, and created a single digital image, which was then printed onto polycotton fabric. This was mounted on a moulded framework of timber and foam, and the printed sections sewn together with shot velvet, which forms the 'seat' of the Colosseatum.



The Colosseatum by William McMahon, uses the latest technology to recreate an ancient structure
 Photograph courtesy of Flash Photobition

McMahon, who has had a twenty-year career in furniture making and has been responsible for designing seating for hotels, airports, corporate offices and luxury trains, said of the design and fabrication of the Colosseatum, 'It's extremely satisfying to be able to complete such a whimsical project to such a high standard of finish. With a number of similar projects in mind I think for me at least, the future of furniture is in ruins.'

The Colosseatum will be on display from 16 August to 13 October 2002 at Brisbane City Gallery, located in Brisbane City Hall in Queen Street, Brisbane, in its *21st Century Chair* exhibition.

NOTICEBOARD

Traditions in the Midst of Change, Strehlow Conference, 18–20 September 2002, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs, NT. A Strehlow Conference Program and a list of speakers and abstracts are now available at www.strehlow.com.au

Yarns Across Cultures, Interpretation Australia's National Training Workshop, Iga Warta, 22–29 September. Details available at www.interpretationaustralia.asn.au

University Museums and Collections (UMAC) Conference, 29 September–4 October 2002, Sydney and Canberra. Full details and registration forms at www.icom.org/umac

Connecting with Plants — Lessons for Life, BGCI Fifth International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, 29 September–4 October 2002. For information contact Janelle Hatherly, Tel: 02 9231 8111, Fax: 02 9251 4403, or email Janelle.Hatherly@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

Groundswell: Regional Arts Surging Forward, Regional Arts Australia National Conference, Albury-Wodonga, 10–13 October 2002. Registrations close 20 September 2002. For information contact Groundswell Conference Managers, Regional Arts NSW, Pier 5, Hickson Road, Millers Point, NSW 2000, Tel: 02 9247 8577, Fax: 02 9247 7829, or email groundswell@regionalartsnsw.com.au

The Arts — Serious Business, Australian Institute of Arts Management Biennial Conference 2002, Canberra Museum and Gallery/Playhouse Theatre, Canberra,

27–30 October 2002. Professional Development Program, 26–27 October. Over three days we will stimulate lively debate on the ways that arts business is currently conducted globally and in Australia. The keynote speaker for the conference will be Dr Richard Steckel, a world expert on enterprise development in the arts and the not-for-profit sector. For more information visit the conference websites at www.aiam.com.au and www.dramaticonline.com, or contact the AIAM Conference 2002 Secretariat, Conference Logistics, PO Box 201, Deakin West ACT 2600, Tel: 02 6281 6624, Fax: 6285 1336, email conference@conlog.com.au

Heritage and the Outback, National Trust of South Australia Conference, Burra, SA, 8–10 November 2002. The conference is being held in conjunction with a meeting of the Australian Council of National Trusts, and will bring together the Trust's leadership nationally with conference participants. The conference will range across the human and environmental history of the Outback, but will also look at contemporary life and issues. For information contact Kaylene Quist, National Trust of SA, 27 Leigh Street, Adelaide 2000, Tel: 08 8212 1133, Fax: 08 8212 1141, or email admin@nationaltrustsa.org.au

International Committee for Exhibition Exchange (ICEE), Annual Meeting 2002, London, UK, November 17–19 2002. ICEE is a forum for the dissemination of knowledge and experience about exhibitions. The committee deals with many different aspects of exhibition

development, circulation and exchange. Visit the ICEE web link at www.cee.ca

From All Quarters, Oral History Association of Australia National Conference, Guildford (near Perth), Western Australia, 4–7 September 2003. For details on the Call for Papers and Expressions of Interest contact Margaret Hamilton, guy12mar@ellenbrook.net, or Jan McCahon, jan@iprimus.com.au

THE OTHER SIDE — MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2003 PERTH, WA, 25–31 MAY 2003

For more information see www.museumsaustralia.org.au

FEEDBACK

With reference to the new Museums Australia definition of 'museum', quoted on p.3 of the May 2002 issue of *Museum National*, I would like to point out that the 'Museum Birthdays' piece in the same issue was somewhat inaccurate.

The oldest major museum, and in fact the oldest scientific institution of any kind in Australia is the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney. The foundation date of the Royal Botanic Gardens is 13 June 1816, which makes this august organisation the senior museum by more than ten years! (See Lionel Gilbert *The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney — A History 1816–1985*, Oxford University Press, 1986, and the engraved foundation rock at Mrs Macquarie's Point in the Sydney Domain.)

Allan Cunningham was the first King's Botanist appointed to the colony of NSW, at a salary of 180 pounds per annum. He arrived in Sydney to

take up his duties in December 1816. Charles Fraser, the first superintendent of the Botanic Garden (as it was then known), compiled the first catalogue of plants in cultivation about 1820.

I have spent many years reminding the museums community in many fora that botanic gardens (and zoos) are included in the ICOM definition of museums. I also attended the MA AGM in Adelaide and participated in the debate about revising the definition of 'museum' to specifically include botanic gardens and zoos. I think it is a great pity that botanic gardens have again been overlooked in documenting our cultural and scientific heritage.

Despite this minor failure of scholarship, I think *Museum National* is a wonderful source of news and information about our profession and the new design makes it even more attractive and readable.

Yours in scholarship,
Pam Diver
Interpretation Officer
Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra.

CORRECTION

An article which appeared in the May issue of *Museum National*, 'Parental Recollections of Childhood Museum Visits' should have listed Barbara Piscitelli as a co-author. The photograph accompanying the article should also have carried an extended credit, as follows:

Image sourced from: *A Time for a Museum: The History of the Queensland Museum 1862–1986*. Patricia Mather (ed.), Brisbane, Queensland Museum. Reproduced with the permission of the Queensland Museum.



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