The Wired Museum

NEW TECHNOLOGIES
IN THE ELECTRONIC
ENVIRONMENT

COVER IMAGE:

Designed around the museum and gallery visitor not the technology, handheld interactive MP3 audio tours boast intuitive one button 'Point-and-click' operation that is simple to pick up. High quality MP3 digital sound, with no moving parts eliminates traditional linear recording overheads and provides an enhanced audio experience.

Photograph courtesy of Dataton AB and Interactive Controls Pty Ltd.

CONTENTS

A CRISIS OF SUPPORT FOR UNIVERSITY GEOLOGY COLLECTIONS

ANDREW SIMPSON

The Pigott report in 1975 identified the areas of geology and anthropology as being the two most likely to develop collections in Australian universities. Since then Australia has seen a relative decline in the traditional resource-based economy and a lessening demand for geology graduates. Over the last decade, but particularly since 1996, tertiary education sector restructuring has meant that university-based collections in areas that do not attract a significant student load, such as geology, are in danger because of inadequate resources for their effective management.

Staff levels are an indicator of resources available for managing collections. The 1998 Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee *Transforming Cinderella Collections* report showed some eight staff, Australia-wide, responsible for just over one million specimens. A paper presented at the 2003 Museums Australia conference in Perth shows that a mere four years from the 1998 survey these staff numbers are now down to around two and a half. Many large collections have no staff and are essentially shut away. Whilst the large number of specimens needed for undergraduate teaching do not require advanced

information management systems, those that result from basic research do. Without adequate management systems and strategies, the knowledge base of the earth sciences in Australia is at risk.

In the 1970s Australia had a strong economic reliance on the minerals and energy sector and there was a consistent demand for earth science graduates. Earth science departments in Australian universities had a high level of graduate throughput. Many departments developed their own geological collections to enhance teaching programs and develop research programs. Collections form the empirical basis of research findings and they provide a comparative framework for research investigations. Many of the geological collections that developed reflect the research priorities, strengths and history of their host universities.

Not all research projects in the earth sciences generate sets of research specimens and not all that do necessarily end up housed in the institution that fostered the original research. Practices have been variable. Some earth science departments insist material from original student research be housed in a departmental collection and the student's

Crocoite (lead chromate) specimens from Dundas, Tasmania in the Earth Science collection at Macquarie University. High quality specimens of this mineral are only known from this one Australian mineral field
Earth Science collection, Macquarie University

results not be released until information and specimens are lodged in an acceptable and useable form. Other departments will hold specimens in the first instance, but then lodge them with other collecting agencies when research results are published. In others, no requirements are sought from students or their supervisors. Even those that have established procedures in place don't always follow them.

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence that geological collections have not fared well from recent fiscal pressure on tertiary education. The changes, particularly rapid in the late 1990s, have entailed considerable organisational restructuring. In the sciences,

this has often involved clustering various related academic disciplines into broader administrative units. Many geology departments have had declining staff numbers subsumed into the programs of environmental science 'divisions' or engineering 'faculties'. This has induced what is termed as 'disciplinary flux'. General or support staff, traditionally responsible for collection management, have been hardest hit by these changes.

Since 1998, five positions associated with university earth science collections have been 'destaffed' (to use the human resources vernacular), none of these have been replaced. One collection of 250,000 specimens

has been transferred to a state museum. None of these collections have been recognised by their host institutions, leaving their fate to be decided by smaller administrative units such as faculties or departments, or alternatively, undecided.

The obvious decline in resources available for earth science collection management in our universities is reflected by the lack of filled staff positions. The burden of maintenance of the collections falls on academic or other staff members or volunteers who may not have the knowledge, expertise or interest in effective collection management. Decreased specimen requirements for teaching programs and research will lead to an increase in the number of orphaned collections, and the number of institutions seeking to dispose of collections. In the absence of any strategic planning by host institutions these collections will inevitably suffer from information loss thus reducing their utility in any future research efforts.

Whilst the size of many of these collections reflects active teaching programs in the past, of critical importance are those parts of the collections that form the empirical basis of research results. Institutions need to make significance assessments of their research collections and seek alternative futures for them if they are not deemed to be within their future strategic needs. There are plenty of examples where research specimens within universities for projects undertaken during the 1970s and 1980s now can't be found. This is because many of the collections have been without staff and proper procedures for many years. Without assessment of significance, we run the risk of disposing of the raw data of much scientific endeavour. It is known that some research material has already simply been thrown out.

With declining demand universities downsize or close departments. Yet there has not been any obvious articulation about how they deal with the material evidence left behind after the deed. Responsibility is shifted down the line, and the institutional level stewardship that should be provided to their portion of the Distributed National Collection is ignored. When universities did maintain staff positions to manage scientific collections, this represented an investment in the intellectual integrity of work carried out in the institution's name. This is no longer possible, particularly in areas of low undergraduate demand

WITH DECLINING DEMAND UNIVERSITIES DOWNSIZE OR CLOSE DEPARTMENTS. RESPONSIBILITY IS SHIFTED DOWN THE LINE, AND THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL STEWARDSHIP THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO THEIR PORTION OF THE DISTRIBUTED NATIONAL COLLECTION IS IGNORED.

such as geology. Responsibility for managing primary research data has been sheeted back quietly to the individual researcher.

So if universities can no longer look after these collections, who can? As noted above, one university has transferred its collection to a state museum. Unfortunately, the transfer process did not follow the university's own policy guidelines, so despite good intentions the potential for information loss has not necessarily been averted.

Does it really matter if no one can look after them? In the grand scheme of things, possibly not. Everyone recognises that research priorities change over time. But it will mean difficulties in the future when attempting to validate earlier research results

(as noted above, this is already the case) and it will make some forms of earth science investigation less likely. A draft of a current national inquiry into the future of earth science research gives a list of all the resources required for a vital Australian earth science research community in the future. They are all digital resources. The fact that digital information needs to be based on a lithological reality has largely been overlooked, and a significant part of the earth science research community has already turned its back on the problem.

The full report presented in Perth will soon be available on the Museums Australia website. But it's not all hand wringing and bemoaning the impending tragedy — information loss on a massive scale across large parts of a whole scientific discipline. Remedies are suggested. It's a problem that is not restricted to Australia, and some countries have developed some creative solutions. Here, however, we are yet even to recognise there is a problem. To quote Joni Mitchell's lyrics in 'Big Yellow Taxi':
'You don't know what you've got till its gone!'

ANDREW SIMPSON
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REGIONAL ROUNDUP

ARONE MEEKS: A SOLO SHOW

The Cairns Regional Gallery is hosting a show of paintings, print-making and sculpture by well known artist and illustrator Arone Meeks, exploring the themes of identity, creativity and survival. Meeks has been instrumental in redefining contemporary Aboriginal art and was a founding member of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artist Co-operative in Sydney. Works in this exhibition explore cultural diversity within the local community and combine traditional and contemporary imagery. On show from 6 December–8 February 2004 as part of the Cairns Regional Gallery Community Exhibitions Program.

JOSKELEIGH & KEPPEL SANDS *FLASHBACKS*

Joskeleigh, on the Central Queensland coast south of Yeppoon, has been a South Sea Islander community for almost a century. Their museum tells the stories of the Islander community in Queensland and their island heritage. On 30 August a new photographic exhibition — *Flashbacks* — was launched by the Livingstone Shire Mayor, Bill Ludwig, as part of the Shire Centenary celebrations. As the region's Museum Development Officer I got involved in this project, so I now had a legitimate excuse to go out and chat to the museum's curator, Doris Leo, and enjoy the relaxed and laid back (even more so than usual for Queensland!) atmosphere. My role was meeting with the group to discuss themes, choose (and suggest sources for) photos and objects, and map out a progress plan. Oh yes, and talking and lots of laughs and cups of tea!

The Shire's Community Liaison Officer, Peter Scott, worked successfully to get the museum funding through Arts Queensland's Multicultural Communities Arts Program. Peter also selected photographs and coordinated the production of framed prints for display plus the production of theme and text panels. He also had the job of editing my purple prose for the text panels. Writing for these was lots of fun! Once we picked out the main themes, then the Islander

Zoë Scott and curator Doris Leo in the exhibition
Courtesy of Zoë Scott

group and I had an oral history/remember when session with some really funny stories being told, such as when the car with the groceries would get bogged on the salt pan and everyone helped push it out.

Putting the exhibition together ended up being quite a creative job, with some surreptitious use of Blu-Tac to hold frames straight, the use of patchwork fabric (and tools, proving that being a patchworker is essential for museum outreach) for background to display objects, and trying not to cover the entire office with spray glue. All accompanied by frenzied cleaning, mowing, hammering and other activities associated with a big opening.

At the last minute we decided that it would be a great idea to dress up the section on schoolday memories with the Australian flag and a portrait of the Queen. Not as easy as you might think! When I asked a local historical society — who you would think would be a bastion of conservatism and thus have the Queen somewhere — the response was, 'Oh we threw that out years ago'! Fortunately a

neighbouring museum was able to help out so up went the Queen on the wall with the flag. Then we decided we needed to put 'the oath' on the accompanying label. But how did it go? Did saluting the flag come first or last? So another phone call to the local historical society, where two retired teachers were consulted, and up went the label.

On the day the exhibition looked fantastic, with lots of people, guest visitors from Vanuatu giving a singing performance, and a cake stall whose goodies disappeared incredibly rapidly! The photos had lots of people gathered round, commenting and identifying people and places. Joskeleigh museum is very new, having been opened in 2001, but their community is enthusiastic and committed to presenting and interpreting their heritage.

ZOË SCOTT IS MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER IN ROCKHAMPTON

Harold Cazneaux (1878–1953)
Come in, Old Sydney 1906
chloro-bromide print
National Library of Australia, Pictures
Collection

PHOTOGRAPHIC TREASURES SEEN IN A NEW LIGHT

Curator Helen Ennis researched over 600,000 images in the National Library's pictorial collection to create *In a New Light*, a view of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia through the medium of photography, the first instalment of a two-part exhibition.

In a New Light: Australian Photography 1850s–1930s is on display at the National Library until Australia Day 2004.

A FEARFUL HEART — THE CANE FIRE

The Australian Sugar Industry Museum is opening *A Fearful Heart*, an exhibition exploring the iconic image of the Queensland cane fire. The show, of photographs by Brian Rogers and a soundscape by Michael Whiticker, aims to trigger awareness of the social, economic and cultural issues faced by regional Queenslanders after changes to the sugar industry. Museum and exhibition curator John Waldron considers the fire to be 'A metaphor for the turmoil, hidden or otherwise, experienced by people affected by changes to the sugar industry'.

A Fearful Heart is on display at the *Sugarama Gallery*, Australian Sugar Industry Museum until 7 December. The exhibition then tours to regional Queensland and northern NSW venues along the Sugar Trail.

For more information see www.sugarmuseum.org.au.

MADELEINE MCCLELLAND
ARTS CONSULTANT, TOWNSVILLE

AUSTRALIAN ICON: THE HEYSEN HOUSE AT HAHNDORF, SA

There is great pleasure and interest to be had from visiting artists' studios. At 'The Cedars', at Hahndorf, there are two, those of Sir Hans Heysen and Nora Heysen. The location is idyllic, in keeping with Heysen's most famous landscapes of majestic gums bathed in light. He was skilled in a range of media, including watercolour, charcoal and etching. His subjects also include the magnificent still lives and family portraits that hang in the house, and images of the transplanted German rural life of Hahndorf and the Hills, many of them on display in his studio. His daughter Nora was the first woman to win the Archibald portrait prize in 1938 and the first appointed woman war artist during the second world war. An extensive collection of both artists' work is on view in the family home and in their studios. A walk on the property locates and illustrates eleven of Heysen's favoured painting localities.

The Heysens bought the beautiful property in 1912 and added to it (to save Heysen's beloved gumtrees) so that it is now sixty hectares of rolling green, gum-studded country. The homestead (built in 1878) was also extended and remodelled, every space reflecting the family's artistic sensibilities and love of books, views, comfort, and fine furniture. It is surrounded by a picturesque European-Australian garden. Heysen's separate large stone and timber studio set amidst giant pines was completed in 1913.

The property is still owned by the Heysen family but is now open to public visits every day.
Tel: 08 8388 7277
Fax: 08 8388 1845.

SUSAN MARSDEN
IS A PARTNER IN MARSDEN
RUSSELL HISTORIANS

Meeting of the regional outreach operators (ROOs) held at the Western Australian Museum on 29 May 2003 during the MA Conference. Around the table from the left: Elizabeth Hof, Museums Australia, WA; Rebecca Pinchin, Powerhouse Museum, NSW; Peter Scrivener, Museums and Galleries Foundation of NSW; Zoë Scott, Museums Development Officer, Queensland; Helen Rayment and Maggi Solly, Museums Australia, Victoria; Kerryn Simmons and Leanne Burrows, DCITA; Barbara Poliness, Visions of Australia; Judy Kean, Museums Australia, Queensland; Greg Wallace and Clare-Frances Craig, Museum Assistance Program, WA Museum; Sue Harlow, Museum and Gallery of the Northern Territory.
Photograph by Jason George

INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE AND CHRIS BATTISSON

This article provides a brief overview of action undertaken by governments and various organisations on public liability insurance.

An underlying principle that has been identified by the Review of the Law of Negligence (known as the Ipp Review) commissioned by the Commonwealth government is that individuals should take more responsibility for their own risks, and that some dangers are obvious and should be accepted as such. A copy of the final report of the Review is available at http://revofneg.treasury.gov.au/content/review2.asp.

The Commonwealth believes that implementation of many of the Review's recommendations has the potential to restore a commonsense approach to the law of negligence with positive flow-on effects to many organisations, including not-for-profit organisations (NFPOs).

In November 2002 Commonwealth and state/territory ministers agreed to nationally consistent implementation for the Ipp recommendations that go to establishing liability.

Ministers endorsed a national model for proportional liability in August 2003. This will mean that a defendant will only be liable to the extent that they contributed to a plaintiff's economic loss. All jurisdictions also confirmed their commitment to implementing professional standards legislation on a nationally consistent basis.

At that meeting ministers were assured by representatives of the insurance industry that some capacity and price stability is returning in the areas of public liability and professional indemnity insurance.

Rod Kemp, Minister for Arts and Sport, has asked the Australia Council to work with the cultural sector to develop robust and appropriate risk management strategies.

Research by the Australia Council shows that the focus for action should be on gearing up the sectors' risk management capacity. The Council has produced an information sheet detailing a number of new insurance and risk management resources available, particularly online. See the website www.ozco.gov.au.

The Australia Council is drafting a prototype risk management resource for the cultural sector. We understand Museums Australia will be asked to tailor the package for our sector and make it widely and freely available, towards the end of this year.

Members in NSW, the ACT, WA and SA may benefit from a scheme run by Community Care Underwriting Agency (CCUA). The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has granted interim authorisation for a public liability scheme for NFPOs provided by Allianz Australia, NRMA Insurance and QBE. Cover is expected to extend to all jurisdictions in due course. Further information on the scheme including application details is available at: www.community-care.com.au. This facility is designed for smaller NFPOs, particularly those staffed by a large number of volunteers.

> MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA WILL BE ASKED TO TAILOR THE PACKAGE FOR OUR SECTOR AND MAKE IT WIDELY AND FREELY AVAILABLE

However, if your organisation relies on volunteers, you need to be aware of sub-clause 3.30 of the standard CUAA policy. This sub-clause excludes 'personal injury to any volunteer undertaking work for you or on your behalf'. The effect of this would be to deny a volunteer, even a volunteer who is also a member of the organisation, who is injured as a result of negligence in the course of their activities for an organisation, access to monetary compensation from the organisation's insurer (ie CCUA).

Museums Australia (NSW) has taken out public liability insurance to cover MA(NSW) Chapter Meetings. All meetings must be carried out as a Chapter of MA(NSW) and all members of the executive must be members of Museums Australia.

You will find the following websites useful too.
http://cpns.bus.qut.edu.au
The Centre for Philanthropy and Non-Profit studies at the Queensland University of Technology has several good fact sheets and resources on public liability and other insurance specific to non-profits.
http://cpns.bus.qut.edu.au/research/public_liability.jsp
This link provides information on publications that are available, work that has been done by other organisations and links to websites.

www.ozco.gov.au/issues/publicliability/infosheet.htm
Hot issues from the Australia Council which include tips on reducing insurance premium costs as well as understanding the public liability insurance situation as it applies to the cultural sector. The page also includes numerous links to related sites dealing with this topic.

www.riskmanagement.qld.gov.au
A practical guide to understanding and analysing risk to help not-for-profit organisations manage, reduce or control risks in their activities.

www.maq.org.au/news
A short information piece from the Queensland Branch of Museums Australia on the set-up of a co-insurance pool by the Queensland Government being underwritten by AON Insurance. The site includes links to and contacts at AON.

www.public-liability.nt.gov.au
This page includes information on the insurance position in the Northern Territory (including links to apply for cover under the QLD government co-insurance pool). Also included are some tips on how organisations can manage the associated risk.

www.artslaw.com.au/reference.publicliability02
From the Arts Law Centre of Australia comes a site with information including step-by-step details on why insurance is necessary and what it covers.

www.volunteeringaustralia.org/publications/risk_man.html
This site provides a simple to follow four-step guide to identifying and mitigating risk through implementation of effective strategies. It is specifically tailored to volunteer organisations.

www.artslaw.com.au/reference/cavvolun993
A short information sheet noting the position of public liability insurance as it applies to volunteers.

www.simpsons.com.au/library/documents/museums/museumlaw/INSURANC.pdf
A paper from Simpsons Solicitors, a firm specialising in the arts and museum sector, regarding types of insurance, including public liability, relevant to museums.

www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/economics-ctte/publib_insur/submissions/sub041.doc
A Report by the Federation of Australian Historical Societies Inc on the matter of public liability insurance cost increases.

www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/econ/publicliability.htm
This site simply contains a listing of ministerial documents that can be accessed on-line. From the top of the list select 'Minister Welcomes Approval for Not-for Profit Insurance Pool' for details of the announcement by Senator Helen Coonan on the launch of a co-insurance pool in NSW.

www.alga.asn.au/submissions/publicLiabilitySub.php
A report by the Australian Local Government Association detailing the need for Public Liability insurance and the reasons behind and impacts of cost increases. Although the report itself is dated 3/01 the page is regularly updated by ALGA.

In the ACT, the contact is in ACT Treasury. Other states/territories have taken action and we highly recommend that you contact the relevant area in your state/territory government.

MEREDITH HINCHLIFFE, EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CHRIS BATTISSON, FINANCE OFFICER, MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL OFFICE

OPEN MUSEUM JOURNAL VOLUME 6 'NEW MUSEUM DEVELOPMENTS AND THE CULTURE WARS'

The Open Museum Journal is Australia's only peer-reviewed online journal for the museum sector. Volume 6, entitled 'New Museum Developments and the Culture Wars' is now available on the AMOL website.

Editor Andrea Witcomb writes:

This issue on the 'Culture Wars' in museums is intended to take the recent intense debate and criticism of what we might call the 'new museology' as an opportunity to revisit what the contemporary role of museums and galleries might be. Papers by Anita Angel, Fiona Cameron, Dawn Casey and Jennifer Ellison offer a record of some of the current debates across the museum sector in Australia, engage with specific curatorial practices and exhibitions, provide some insight into the reasons for the existence of the 'Culture Wars' and some suggestions as to ways to respond to the situation which has arisen. Find out more in Volume 6 of the Open Museum Journal, at: http://amol.org.au/omj/volume6/volume6_index.asp

AT HOME WITH ENGLISH AUTHORS

ROSLYN RUSSELL

In August–September this year I participated in a three-week tour, 'Exploring the Literary Landscapes of England'. The broader cultural landscape provided the backdrop, while the foreground was packed with visits to the domestic environments associated with English authors and their characters.

Our tour group visited many literary house museums, and other sites associated with the theme — Stonehenge, Lyme Regis, Bath, Salisbury, Winchester, the Lake District, and Stratford on Avon. Time passed in a whirl. After spending some time reflecting on the experience, I have attempted to categorise the literary house museums; and to assess how effectively they convey the stories that validate their existence.

The first category includes the former homes and workplaces of particular authors. These houses (even if they suffer from some museological shortcomings) are so imbued with an author's character that devotees of their work can experience an almost spiritual connection as they briefly inhabit these spaces. Jane Austen's small writing table in a sitting room at Chawton, Hampshire, for example, and another table in the dining room of the Parsonage at Haworth, Yorkshire, around which the Brontë sisters would walk in single file each night discussing the day's work, are evocative objects for those who love the novels and know the tragedies

and triumphs of these authors' lives. A portrait of Wordsworth's dog Pepper at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, and the memorial to Byron's beloved dog Boatswain at Newstead Abbey add new layers to our perception of these poets.

A subset of this category is a house museum associated with part of an author's life, and in some cases, with an author's close relations. This includes birthplaces (Shakespeare's in Stratford on Avon, D. H. Lawrence's in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire); and houses such as New Place, Hall's Croft, and Ann Hathaway's cottage at Shottery, all associated with William Shakespeare's family. Although D. H. Lawrence left his native Nottinghamshire and became a wandering exile, the 'country of my heart' provided the context for some of his most celebrated work.

The second category comprises museums in houses that have provided inspiration for works of fiction. Knole, near Sevenoaks in Kent, was the ancestral home of the Sackville family. Virginia Woolf, inspired by her visits to Knole with her lover Vita Sackville-West, who had longed to inherit it, used the great house as the setting for her novel *Orlando*. The Red House at Gomersal, furnished to reflect the period when Charlotte Brontë was visiting her friend Mary Taylor there, is significant as the model for 'Briarmains' in Charlotte's novel *Shirley*. The former surgery and residence of Yorkshire vet Alf Wight is now

1 The drawing room at the Red House, Gomersal, recreated to reflect the period when Charlotte Brontë stayed there on visits to her friend Mary Taylor
Photograph by Roslyn Russell, reproduced by permission of Kirklees Community History Service

2 Miniature books on display at the Brontë Parsonage museum contain stories penned by the Brontë sisters
© The Brontë Society

3 Anne Brontë's dog Flossy, painted by her sister Emily
© The Brontë Society

4 This 'board game' in 'The Secret's Out' exhibition at the Red House, Gomersal, invites visitors to choose alternative futures for nineteenth-century women. The exhibition shows how Charlotte Brontë used local characters and places in her novel Shirley. It also explores the life of Mary Taylor, and the narrow range of options that faced women in the nineteenth century
Photograph by Roslyn Russell, reproduced by permission of Kirklees Community History Service

displayed as the setting for 'James Herriot's' *All Creatures Great and Small*.

Which house museums best convey the sense of an author's life and provide a context for their work?
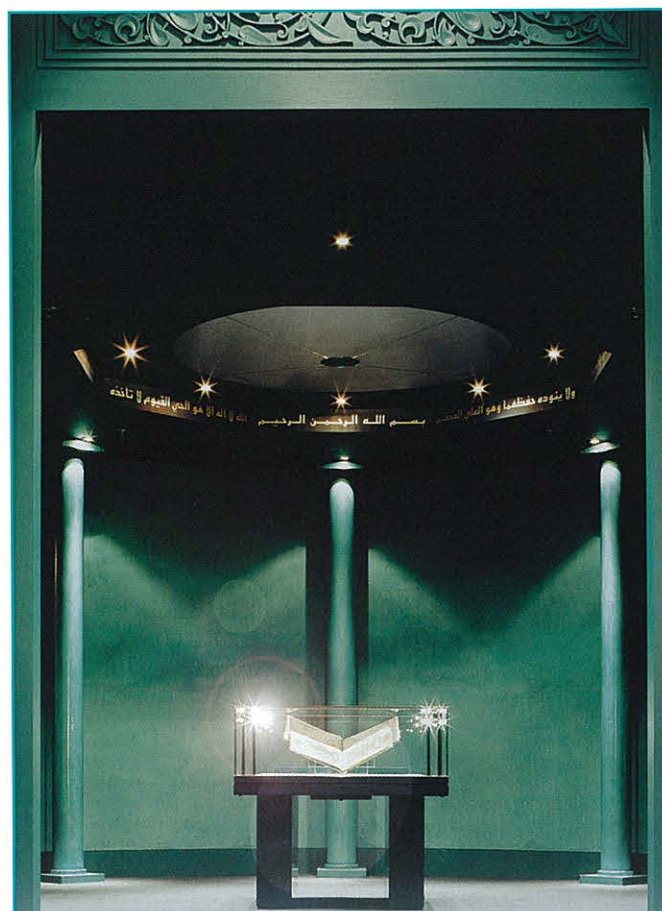
National Trust properties — Sissinghurst and Knole (both associated with Vita Sackville-West), Batemans (Rudyard Kipling) and Hill Top at Near Sawrey in the Lake District (Beatrix Potter) — present furnished interiors, and sometimes a display of documents, with minimal interpretation beyond a few panel displays. Elegant and gracious, but essentially sanitised, every author's desk is tastefully arranged with personal ornaments and one or two pages of manuscript, a far cry from the usual working writer's environment. The displays evoke a middle-to upper-class milieu for most of the authors, and would not be out of place in an interior design magazine. One National Trust site, though, does deliver a more complex, layered interpretation. This is Lacock Abbey where, in addition to the Abbey's domestic interior and cloisters (setting for part of the Harry Potter movies), a gallery presents the life and work of pioneer photographer William Fox Talbot, a former resident. One of the Abbey's oriel windows was the subject of the world's first photographic negative, taken by him in 1835.

The D. H. Lawrence Birthplace and an interpretive display in nearby Durban

House Heritage Centre convey a gritty view of life in a mining district, including a model of the cramped conditions in which miners toiled all day 'down t'pit'. Similarly, the Red House at Gomersal also examines, in a separate panel-and-audiovisual display, the social context of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*. It explores the ramifications of nineteenth-century women's life choices; and the life of Mary Taylor, Charlotte's friend. Mary, herself an early feminist author, emigrated to New Zealand. *The World of James Herriot* also provides a display on British veterinary practice over the centuries. An engaging interactive challenges visitors to 'deliver' a calf by pulling on a 'hoof'. The strength of the pull registers on a gauge — either we Australians have powerful arms, or it was made to look much harder on television! The vet's residence is also presented as a working practice and household, its dispensary full of jars and bottles, and the kitchen cosy and cluttered.

The best of English house museums can provide models for interpreting Australia's more modest stock of this museum type. But I would like to see a literary house museum interpret an author's working space as it often is, with papers and books strewn over a desk — even if only by using a photograph!

ROSLYN RUSSELL IS EDITOR OF *MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE*

PUBLIC PROGRAMS IN LONDON'S MUSEUMS

LOUISE DOUGLAS

I recently spent a couple of days in London taking stock of adult public programming at two of London's senior museums. These museums — the Victoria and Albert (V&A) and the Science Museum (part of the National Museum of Science and Industry) are both revered and long established museums with large numbers of staff, huge and significant collections and worldwide reputations. Millions of people go through their doors every year, and in fact the crowds were so dense the days I visited it felt like there were millions of people there at the very same time.

I visited these museums about ten years ago and was not overly impressed with their public programs. In 2003 they have innovative and lively programming in place, which leads me to think not only about the way these museums have changed, but the way public programs are now pivotal in ensuring museums connect with their communities.

The V&A has set up a dedicated Contemporary Team to manage the creation of exhibitions and programs which reflect recent developments in applied art and design. As an example, the Guy Bourdin exhibition (17 April–17 August 2003) focused on his highly original fashion photographs and explored image making as a commercial activity. Programs associated with exhibition included: a student night (the curator discussing the exhibition in a bar); a lecture and critical debate (featuring leading academics); a Friday

night fashion parade featuring a retrospective of the work of French designer Jean Paul Gaultier.

I was lucky enough to be there for the Gaultier parade but as (of course) seats had sold out weeks ago, I watched it with a couple of hundred wine-quaffing young people in the museum's foyer on a large screen which broadcast the parade as it happened in one of the galleries. The irresistible V&A shop is located right next to the foyer and was doing a roaring trade. I suspect the alcohol was not only loosening inhibitions but purse strings as well! Young Londoners have clearly decided that the V&A is a great place to be on a hot Friday night.

The Science Museum, now run by Lindsay Sharp (former director of our own Powerhouse Museum) is a grand old lady of United Kingdom museums and has absolutely no problem attracting family audiences. As part of its audience development strategy, adult public programming has been

given a high priority, for example, the 'Naked Science' series of adult programs and events which bring experts, the public and the media together to debate and discuss scientific and technological issues variously online, at the museum or venues around London (including bars). Topics over the last year have included sustainable development, cheap airfares and ownership of the cure for cancer. Indicative of the museum's commitment to adult public programming is the opening (November 2003) of the Dana Centre designed to be 'a major meeting ground for scientists, the public, and the media ... to discuss controversial issues raised by accelerating progress in such fields as neuroscience, molecular biology, and genetics. Global teleconferencing facilities, utilizing the latest digital media technology, will extend the reach of the discussions around the world' (see www.dana.org).

You can't help but be impressed by the energy and momentum at work in both

V&A and Science Museum adult public programming — to the outside observer, both institutions are using programs and events to connect with their audiences in the most engaging ways possible. Among other strategies that have contributed to their programming success two stand out: the creation of teams dedicated to contemporary programming and the use of imaginative partnerships.

In July 2002 the National Museum of Science and Industry published *In the 21st Century: What Role Should a Museum Play?* (online as a PDF file at www.nmsi.uk.ac) which is worth reading as it signposts how this world famous organisation and its constituent museums intend to take even greater leaps in becoming relevant to their communities.

LOUISE DOUGLAS
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER,
CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS AND
CONTENT SERVICES (INCLUDES
RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADULT
PUBLIC PROGRAMS), NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

> YOU CAN'T HELP BUT BE IMPRESSED BY THE ENERGY AND MOMENTUM AT WORK IN BOTH V&A AND SCIENCE MUSEUM ADULT PUBLIC PROGRAMMING — TO THE OUTSIDE OBSERVER, BOTH INSTITUTIONS ARE USING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS TO CONNECT WITH THEIR AUDIENCES IN THE MOST ENGAGING WAYS POSSIBLE.

THE WIRED MUSEUM

NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN THE ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT

THE THEME FOR THIS ISSUE, 'THE WIRED MUSEUM', EXAMINES A NUMBER OF ASPECTS OF THE MUSEUM SECTOR'S USE OF NEW ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGIES.

In this issue, planning for effective information delivery online by museums is the subject of an article on 'Information Design, Museums and the Web'. The Commonwealth government's online Le@rning Federation project is examined as an example of how this can be achieved in the educational environment.

Making museum and library collections accessible online is the subject of several articles, on PictureAustralia, the *Australia's Fauna* website, and the Powerhouse Museum's online music collection, soundbyte.org. Digital preservation and access to documentary collections is the function of PADI, a National Library of Australia initiative.

This issue also takes you through the process of buying a digital camera for use in a museum; and introduces you to the newest MP3 technology for audio tours. For this diverse selection of material on the 'wired museum' I must thank Kevin Sumption, Associate Director, Knowledge and Information, at the Powerhouse Museum, and a member of the *Museums Australia Magazine* Editorial Committee, who has acted as guest editor for this theme. Kevin commissioned many of these articles and managed the editorial process for the themed section, making it possible for me to spend a month in the United Kingdom looking at other issues in museums.

ROSLYN RUSSELL
MANAGING EDITOR
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE
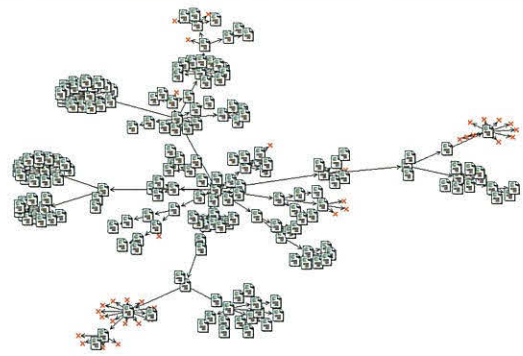
INFORMATION DESIGN, MUSEUMS AND THE WEB

PHILLIP DERMODY

Museums have always been important information spaces and most specialists involved in core museum activities have a developed sense of what constitutes good information design in physical places. But is this experience useful or even appropriate when designing for our newest information domain, websites? The evidence is mixed but there are sufficient examples of mediocre museum web presence, even from major museums, to raise the issue about what should be the standards for information design specialists in museum websites.

However, finding a clear source for the required specialised knowledge is complicated. For historical reasons the two essential strands that make up Information Design have become divided. We have information architects who have claimed the place of content — its generation and labeling, its organisation and its navigation. And we have the usability specialists, advocates for the user's interaction with and experience of the website. But these viewpoints are inextricably synergistic. Without both, the information design of museum websites cannot achieve full potential.

The makeup of information design:
information architecture and usability

Skills for information architecture, or the physics of information presentation, include an understanding of the ontology of information (for category development within specific domains, to labeling and metadata), and methods for establishing underlying connections to provide navigation between these categories. Design, if it is exemplary, can be seen in the particular selection, arrangement, and relationships of the presented information. Criteria for deciding on exemplary information design might be that users no longer need sitemaps, help or even search on the well designed website. They can satisfy their requirements from the information architecture itself.

1 **A representation of information architecture of a museum website.** (Supplied by author)
This is one way of representing the information architecture of a website. It shows the page interrelationships (positions reflecting the distance in connectivity between pages) for a major Australian museum website). This representation provides an impressionistic interpretation of both the potential structure of the original intentions for major information nodes as well as the unsystematic growth of more recent additions. It suggests the value of reconsidering the application of information design principles to the website. Also obvious (as red crosses) are the web page orphans that generate from the failure of matching original information design with an appropriate content management technology.

2 **The Getty museum website homepage.**
It is always reasonably easy to find fault with average websites. In this case www.getty.edu is an exemplary website in most respects. It provides a clear separation of visitor motivations into those that want to enjoy the virtual museum experience, those that have pragmatic information requirements about visits, and those that want to understand the museum's role and operations. These provide the important information categories for museum websites and the major directions in which website users want to go. There is even the traditional role of the spruiker on the homepage as excerpts advertising options for the visitor. Users can also go on to get information about exhibitions in the Visitor section. But it is here, in the Visitors section (www.getty.edu/visit), that the website loses its information direction. The 'list' nature of the information does not really provide a special museum place for potential visitors. It works, but it is not exemplary information design because it does not immerse potential visitors in the experience of being a visitor to the museum. It is clear that they are just at an informative web page. The user must explore the listed options to find out their value. The web page supports the needs of potential visitors, but it does not motivate them in the same way that a real spruiker earns their money by creating desire from the presentation of information in a personal way to a particular audience.

Skills for usability design, the psychology of information, include, at least, detailed understanding of the fundamental principles of cognitive and social psychology, but also the equally complex principles of human communication. Evidence for exemplary design can be seen in users showing focus of attention, memory of the paths taken to satisfy their information desires and knowledge acquired from the information presented. It is also demonstrated by the user's satisfaction with the experience.

The background and principles on which the physics and psychology of information for website construction are based are complex and acquired with difficulty. They both must work in harmony for websites to achieve design that is demonstrably beyond our everyday expectations.

Why do some successful museums have websites that do not reflect exemplary information presentation?
Successful physical museums typically offer three essential components of museum information ecology: liminality, sociality and engagement. These are supported by good information design within the physical space. But what of their websites? The newest medium is certainly a place that offers experiences away from the rest of our life but few would see their web experience as transformative or moving.

Sociality on information websites is problematic — except as a post-visit follow-up to send a bookmark to a friend or try to describe, over morning coffee, the rapidly decaying memory experience of all the museums you visited last night. Engagement, in the sense of its physical museum role, is not going to be possible without considerable expenditure to provide 3-D experiences with surround sound for audio tours. It is not a surprise the docent/audio tours are so popular in the physical museum — they relieve fear of not knowing, add to the social experience (people can talk about the common elements of what they learned/ experienced afterward) and they make it easy to dis-engage from the necessity of any time-consuming engagement. Build that into the virtual experience and they will come, but realistically this is some time away.

In the short term we may need to concentrate our efforts in information design on the utility of information content areas for museum websites and their associated information ecology. The topic of information utility for museum websites can be discussed in relation to a recent report about evaluating features of museum websites — the Bologna Report.*

The Bologna Report highlights the critical importance of differentiating the issues of the real museum and the virtual museum. The real museum representation on the website concerns information design requirements that are both simple (opening hours, costs) and complex (planning a visit, getting background knowledge). Alternatively the virtual museum usually attempts to recreate as much of the physical museum information ecology as it can.

Many museum websites have learned the benefits of providing website places for specific web audiences similar to those analysed in the Bologna Report. These websites often do present the simple representations of opening times and related information in a prominent sub-place on their homepages. They may advertise their major physical exhibitions there. They place their virtual exhibitions in close proximity hoping this will support the interested visitor. But this is not the same as realising the more complex information design requirement of positioning information to satisfy the particular needs of that website visitor.

Information design for real utility on museum websites comes from providing clear paths to the information spaces required by specific users, and doing that in a way that layers the information to provide both feedback that the user is heading in the right direction as well as constructing information to satisfy them in their travels.

For the website visitor wanting to become a physical visitor they do want pragmatic advice but closely associated with it they are also seeking the intellectual and social support to complete this as an experience. Exemplary information design has to do more than just situating the 'visiting' information on the website. It has to create the desire to visit in ways that might also lead to following up the physical visit with return visits to the website. Who knows it might even create a growing community of museum visitors.

*Di Blas, N., Guermand, M., Romagna, E., Orsini, C., Paolini, P. 2002. Evaluating the features of museum websites: The Bologna Report. Paper presented at Museums and the Web. URL: www.archimuse.com/mw2002/papers/diblas/diblas.html

PHILLIP DERMODY, PhD
DISTANT COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM
soundbyte.org
WINS NATIONAL SCIENCE AWARD
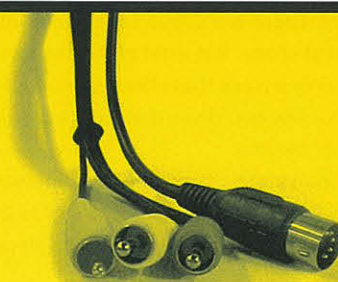
IRMA HAVLICEK

The Powerhouse Museum's online music service, soundbyte.org, was awarded the Australian Computer Society Eureka Prize for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Innovation at a gala dinner at Fox Studios on 12 August 2003.

One of twenty-one categories of science awards in the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes, this award was for outstanding innovation in the research, design, development or implementation of projects related to the Information and Communications Technology Industry.

Soundbyte.org enables a computer with Internet access to become hundreds of musical instruments and a recording studio. Users online anywhere in the world can produce high quality music of any style, including dance music, hiphop, classical, techno, jazz, pop, and jam with each other *in real time*.

Soundbyte requires no theoretical knowledge or instrument skills — just Internet access, imagination and time. Although primarily developed for teachers, students, young people and community groups, it can be used by anyone, from primary school kids to professional musicians.

Soundbyte resources include music tutorials, free software including some 500 loops, multi-track audio, sequencing and editing software, and the opportunity for schools or community organisations to upload their music.

Soundbyte.org has reached some 60,000 people since its launch in October 2001, including Indigenous young people and others in regional and remote areas of NSW, homeless and at-risk young people in Sydney, as well as music students and other community groups around NSW.

As John Welch, Coordinator of the Regional Outreach Music Project (ROMP) said, 'The strongest impact has been in communities where arts intervention programs are being used to re-engage marginalized young people back into the community, on projects with Indigenous communities and in small schools.

'The value of the music programs Soundbyte promotes is that it can be accessed without any theoretical knowledge or instrumental performance skills. The self-esteem the music making generates and the positive changes in behaviour and attitude among the young people is remarkable.'

The Powerhouse soundbyte team (headed by Peter Mahony, Seb Chan and Mike Jones) is currently redeveloping soundbyte to even further improve functionality. Check it out: www.soundbyte.org.

IRMA HAVLICEK
ONLINE CONTENT COORDINATOR,
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

LEARNING OBJECTS,
REUSE FOR DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

STUART TAIT

It all started for me in the early 1990s when I worked in education at Zoos Victoria. We proudly developed and published a range of resources and student trails to support the breadth of Victoria's curriculum. Our purpose was to support the teacher in providing a rich educational experience at the zoo. Often though, I noticed that students were walking around the zoo with trails that had been extracted from our published resources and rearranged to fit onto a two-sided A4 sheet. I must admit I was a bit aghast at how such carefully produced resources could end up as a seemingly haphazard attempt at desktop publishing.

What was illustrated, though, is what teachers do continually: they gather the most appropriate resources, and organise and then utilise these resources within a context of a curriculum, classroom and diverse group of learners. The teachers of these students had reviewed the Zoo Education resources, identified those components that were relevant, and reorganised the resources to meet their teaching program. It was the beginning of my journey into the principles of reuse, re-contextualising resources and the role of online learning objects in education, a priority of the Australian and New Zealand collaborative initiative, The Le@rning Federation.

The Le@rning Federation, an initiative of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Australia and the New Zealand government, is developing online learning objects, supportive infrastructure and a framework for the ongoing development of learning objects for the Australian and New Zealand school education sector. Further information on this initiative can be obtained at www.thelearningfederation.edu.au.

Definitions of learning objects vary. A Google search on 'learning objects' will return a wealth of papers on the issue. In summary, learning objects:
→ are small units of learning, say two to twenty minutes of interaction.
→ are self contained and can be utilised independently
→ are reusable and can be used in multiple contexts
→ can be aggregated to larger collections of content, including websites and courseware
→ are tagged with metadata that enables discovery and management of the object
→ are usually displayed within a browser

THE LE@RNING FEDERATION, AN INITIATIVE OF THE COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA AND THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT, IS DEVELOPING ONLINE LEARNING OBJECTS, SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL EDUCATION SECTOR

Museums and cultural institutions are vital sources of rich online resources for schools, teachers and students. Across Australia teachers are working within the framework of different state and territory curricula, diverse cultural and demographic expectations, and varying capacity to equip students with resources to offer rich educational experiences. The challenge is to present these resources in a form that is of most use to teachers and students.

Museums and cultural institutions have undertaken to digitise collections for archival, display and educative purposes. By considering a learning object model, greater use of the assets will be achieved through enabling the institution to reuse the learning object in a range of contexts, and allowing teachers to contextualise the content for their purposes.

For example, the principles of recording artefacts in an archaeological excavation can be transferred from one example to another. A learning object based on users creating a grid to record the location of artefacts within a fossil excavation could also be used in an urban excavation such as the recent Lonsdale Street excavation in Melbourne. The tool is the same but the context changes. The technology enabling the capacity to create a grid and record artefacts is reused and the data is replaced. Technologies, such as Macromedia Flash MX, enable the data to be separated in a file structure from the application and presentation layer and allow efficient replacement of data. Each version of the learning object could be contextualised in a digital presentation that meets the curatorial and educative requirements of the Institution, but also
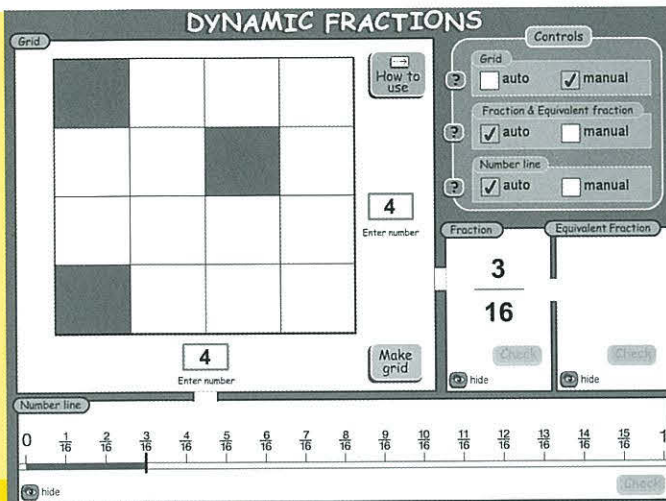
Figure 1: "Dynamic fractions" learning object. This generic tool allows students to investigate representations of fractions.
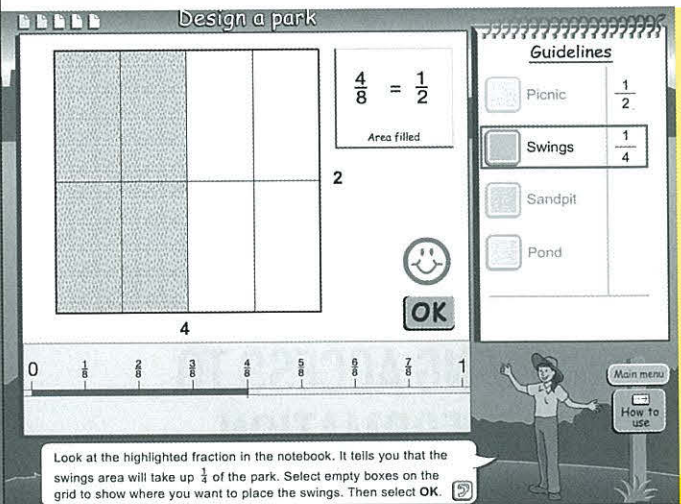
Figure 2: "Design a park" learning object. This illustrates how a generic tool such as Dynamic Fractions can be presented within different contexts.

offered as a learning object that could be downloaded and utilised by a teacher in the context of a class lesson.

The Le@rning Federation has developed a series of learning objects on fractions for primary school students. The Le@rning Federation focused on developing a generic tool that allowed students to engage with different representations of fractions, that is, a number line, grid and numeric expressions of fractions. This same tool was then placed within a number of contexts such as designing parks, schools and a neighbourhood. Figure 1 represents the generic tool as published in the learning object called 'Dynamic fractions'. This open ended learning object allows students to explore different ways of representing fractions. Figure 2 illustrates the same tool within the learning object 'Design a park'. Students apply their knowledge of fractions to design a park consisting of picnic areas, sandpits, swings and a pond. The one tool can be reused in a number of contexts.

A second example would be to take an artefact such as the first Victa mower and digitise the artefact as a three dimensional view. From this digitised image, a learning object could be developed within the context of innovation and enterprise. The same image could be utilised within an interpretive website as an icon of Australia. Further treatment of the image could allow students to deconstruct the mower within a lesson on industrial design. The one asset has been developed for multipurpose use.

Metadata is critical for the discovery and management of learning objects and associated assets. Many institutions are currently undertaking extensive digitisation projects. Consideration should be given to the ultimate use of these assets and, as digital assets expand within repositories, then the capacity to display relevant content within an educational framework will be limited by the metadata applied to each asset. The Le@rning Federation has a number of pilots with cultural institutions identifying and repurposing selected assets that have value within a curriculum framework. Many of the assets will be incorporated into learning objects, whilst others, such as the Victa lawnmower, will be digitised in a form that will have intrinsic value to teachers and packaged in a way that supports reuse and recontextualisation. The pilots will assist museums and cultural institutions in understanding the requirements of the education sector and will enable them to consider appropriate metadata to support the requirements of the schools sector.

The concept of learning objects is not new. Producers of educational resources have been developing kits, charts and other resources enabling teachers to utilise the resources in different contexts. Technically, learning objects consist of one or more files that can be packaged as a zip file and downloaded to a desktop or uploaded into a learning/content management environment. Included in the package is an xml manifest that documents the metadata for discovery, management and digital rights purposes. The manifest is constructed within the framework of standards and specifications; hence it can be interpreted by other technologies to ensure that the learning object is displayed as it was designed.

While much of the literature assumes that learning objects will be managed and presented to students within applications such as learning management systems, The Le@rning Federation is developing learning objects that are interoperable with a range of solutions. Teachers may prefer to download learning objects and store them within a file system on a school network. They may prefer to utilise the powerful authoring and communication tools offered by learning management systems to aggregate a series of learning objects and to provide instructions and assessment activities. Alternatively they may choose to link to learning objects that are contextualised with a museum website using a Word document they have uploaded onto the school intranet.

Flexibility and ease of use are keys to the uptake and utilisation of digital resources within education, particularly in schools. Learning objects are designed to meet these requirements. Museums and cultural institutions are well placed to enrich the education of our students. Through careful planning and a focus on reuse and enabling users to recontextualise digital content, institutions will reach into the classroom and support the work of teachers, and guarantee a broader audience.

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DIGITAL DILEMMAS

PRESERVING ACCESS TO DIGITAL INFORMATION

MADELEINE McCLELLAND

National Library of Australia

Two decades after we first entered cyberspace, museums, galleries and libraries are faced with the increasing importance of preserving access to digital records in all their forms for future generations. The processes involved in maintaining, and if necessary, recovering accessibility to electronic information resources are now a major concern for collections around the world.

Two of the key challenges in safeguarding accessibility to these resources are the huge growth of material to be maintained, and rapid changes in the technology required to access various media. For example, the fight to keep up with frequently changing file formats of digital documents, or the difficulty in archiving a website that includes links to other sites that may also become obsolete over time. Staff responsible for digital information are becoming increasingly uncertain about the significant properties that are to be maintained for different digital resources, and how to establish cost- and labour-efficient strategies to ensure the long-term safekeeping of them. In addition there is the problem of intellectual property rights. The question of authenticity needs careful consideration for digital information, as it is so easily copied, altered and transmitted. These issues are only the tip of the digital preservation iceberg.

The National Library of Australia (NLA) is one organisation that has taken steps to lead Australia through this quagmire of question marks towards better digital archiving and preservation practices. In 1993, the Australian library community made recommendations at the Towards Federation 2001 meeting that a group be established to develop guidelines for the preservation of information in electronic form. The resulting Preserving Access to Digital Information (PADI) working party then launched an initiative in conjunction with NLA that aims to facilitate the development of strategies and guidelines for museum and gallery collections, to actively identify and promote relevant activities and to provide a forum for cross-sectoral cooperation on digital preservation. The PADI initiative is guided by the International Advisory Group, whose members represent countries around the world. This is vitally important for ensuring the standards upheld in the strategies and guidelines promoted by PADI account for global trends and current advances in the field.

The Library has set up the PADI website to provide a forum for discussion, promote sound strategies and provide access to the latest and greatest resources on digital preservation. The website is subject based and provides access to everything from information on upcoming events to policies, procedures and guidelines on keeping digital records, including key directives such as the UNESCO Draft Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage (April 2003) and more specific guidelines such as DREAMS: Digital Resource Electronic Access & Management Strategy (28 Sept 1998), designed to describe key elements of an electronic management infrastructure capable of supporting long-term access to digital resources. The practical application of preservation strategies is included in reports on various digital preservation projects. In support of cross-sectoral interaction on various issues the site lists relevant organisations, journals and newsletters and provides a moderated discussion list, 'padiforum–l'. The site also addresses some of the more difficult questions such as who should take responsibility and pay the costs of digital preservation and how to identify exactly what should be preserved.

A great advantage of the website is that it is regularly updated by registered providers through 'PadiUpdate', making it a valuable international resource. Contributors are encouraged to use the PADI Selection Criteria in order to select the most appropriate and useful sources for indexing on the site. One way to glean the most significant information on the site is to view documents labelled 'Safekept', which have been added to the PADI Safekeeping Project. The Safekeeping project is 'aimed to build a distributed and permanent collection of digital resources from the field of digital preservation'. It records our evolving understanding of preservation of digital information. The project is founded on agreements between PADI and a range of providers with the latter indicating their intention to preserve access to their own networked resources. Records are selected for this collection on the basis that they mark a change in direction for our understanding of digital record preservation.

The site is run with the support of the Council on Library and Information Resources, the Digital Preservation Coalition based in the UK and the Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network. PADI provides an essential tool for any museum seeking digital longevity for its collection. Search it for yourself at: www.nla.gov.au/padi/index.html.

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http://amol.org.au

Working with collections

You'll find professional networks, conservation and collection management tools and research resources. **Access** support organisations, an events calendar and lots more.

omj — open museum journal

Open Museum Journal Volume 6: *New Museum Developments and the Culture Wars* explores the politics of representation in cultural institutions.

TOUR

touring exhibitions database

Find travelling exhibitions for your venue, or **promote** your exhibition for hire. **Link** to funding bodies and other resources.

training

for the collections sector

Utilise online training courses and course materials for collection digitisation and venue management. **Access** information and links to other professional development resources.

National guide

to collecting institutions

Promote your collections, exhibitions and events to tourists, schools, researchers and the general public with a free Guide listing.

National Exhibition Venues DATABASE
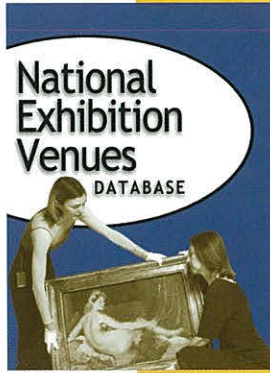
Promote your exhibition venue to tour managers, or **plan** an itinerary for your travelling exhibition.

The NEVD is sponsored by **Visions** of Australia

AMOL

Australian Government

Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts

BUYING A DIGITAL CAMERA

SCOTT DONKIN

Nearly everyone is running around with a digital camera these days and most cameras priced between $1000 and $2000 will do everything the average person could want. However, the *average person* doesn't work for a museum or gallery.

This article will look at some of the considerations necessary when buying digital still cameras (DSCs) for under $2000 for shooting objects and exhibitions. For this money, you'll get a point-and-shoot camera with a fixed (non-removable) zoom lens, and a built-in flash. But there are other considerations in choosing the right model.

Right off the cuff: buy a brand-name camera that has (warranty) support within your reach. Test the camera before you buy: take along some coins to try the macro feature. Buy a camera that shoots in the superior TIFF format (not just JPEG). Make sure your camera has an LCD screen. Test and buy the camera that works well in average room light, because the built-in flash won't work in a huge room or for extreme close-ups.

Most DSCs feature zoom lenses and built-in flash, perfect for functions and exhibition openings. However when it comes to shooting objects and entire rooms, there are some features that are really important for gallery or museum photography.

Batteries in some cameras last for twenty shots, others for 200 shots. Don't listen to what the manufacturer tells you. Go to an independent website and see what they have to say about battery life in average conditions (see *links* at bottom).

The Macro or close-up ability of DCSs varies greatly from model to model. If a lot of your work will be coins, medals, jewellery and the like, then you'll want to find a camera that can fill much of the frame when focusing on, say, three fifty cent pieces, spaced side-by-side.

If rooms and exhibition spaces are your thing then you'll need a zoom lens to encompass it all. And this is where a lot of DCSs are limited. Try to look for a camera with a stated '35mm camera equivalent' of 28mm or lower (like 24mm). That is, the wide angle setting that gives a similar view as that of a 28mm lens on a regular SLR camera. The so-called wide angle supplementary lenses that attach to your lens work well but good ones cost $200+.

Make sure the camera you buy has an LCD Screen. Most LCDs contribute to poor battery life, so make sure you get a camera that has a regular eyepiece as well — some don't. LCDs are at their best when used for composing macro photos because the view from the eyepiece is not in line with that of the lens. Turning on the LCD allows you to view exactly what you are shooting.

USE THE MEGAPIXEL RATING OF A CAMERA AS A GUIDE ONLY — MANUFACTURERS FUDGE THESE NUMBERS.

Megapixels. Camera manufacturers love this term. This refers to the area of the CCD or CMOS image sensor (a digital camera's *film*). All DSC image sensors are measured in pixels and each pixel is the finest point of detail in an image; the more pixels, the more detail. Use the *megapixel* rating of a camera as a guide only — manufacturers fudge these numbers. Instead, look at the camera specifications for the *actual* sensor area. The five megapixel *Canon G5*, for example, has an actual image sensor of 2592 x 1944 pixels. Multiplying these together gets five megapixels.

Quite simply, the total number of pixels in an image directly influences the size of the image you can print or display on a page or screen. Most inkjet or laser printers will give good image quality when outputting an image at 200 PPI — or pixels per inch (often referred to as DPI or dots per inch).

The Canon G5's 2592 x 1944 images printed at 200 PPI gives a 13 x 9.7" picture (by dividing pixels by output resolution of 200 PPI). That's bigger than A4.

All $500+ digital cameras these days will give great results for screen (web, presentation) viewing. So the printed image is all you need be concerned about.

Finally, the histogram. This is by far the most useful feature of a DSC — and at the same time warrants a separate article all on its own. Some cameras offer the ability to view a graph of your exposed image, showing the distribution of pixels. This means that you can immediately determine if you have recorded all of the tones in a subject or if the dark tones of a mahogany bookcase are featureless black. This is important because a little LCD on the back of your camera cannot possibly show all the detail in an image and replicate what you will get on a printed page.

There are lots of other things we could talk about here but it really comes down to the individual needs of the user. At the end of the day whichever model you buy, be mindful that good technique is nine-tenths of a good shot. Don't let ease-of-use spoil a good picture.

Links

Try these links to independent reviews of digital cameras:
Steve's Digicams:
www.steves-digicams.com
DPreview: www.dpreview.com

SCOTT DONKIN
POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

AUSTRALIA'S FAUNA:

TOWARDS A DISTRIBUTED NATIONAL ONLINE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

BASIL DEWHURST

Australian natural history collections are significant repositories of data about the biodiversity of the fauna of Australia. While each collection is in itself inherently valuable, in order to achieve an overall picture of the fauna for the whole of Australia the data from all faunal collections must be linked through a single access point.

This single access point is *Australia's Fauna* (www.ozcam.gov.au), an Online Zoological Collections of Australian Museums (OZCAM) project, which has a major but realisable goal: to provide access to specimen records and associated spatial data for the estimated thirty million faunal specimens held in Australian natural history collections.

An initiative of the Council of Heads of Australian Faunal Collections (CHAFC), OZCAM is comprised of representatives of every Australian institution that hold significant faunal collections. The development of *Australia's Fauna* has been funded through contributions by participating institutions and the Australian government. The participating institutions are:

→ Australian Biological Resources Study, a program of the Department of Environment and Heritage
→ Australian Museum
→ Australian National Insect Collection, Australian National Fish Collection and Australian National Wildlife Collection, all managed by CSIRO
→ Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
→ Museum Victoria
→ Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston
→ Queensland Museum
→ South Australian Museum
→ Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
→ Western Australian Museum

The visible result of the OZCAM project is the *Australia's Fauna* website at www.ozcam.gov.au. This website is hosted by Australian Museums and Galleries OnLine (AMOL) and was developed by a project team consisting of Patrick Filmer-Sankey, Chair of CHAFC; Ken Walker, Chair of OZCAM Technical Advisory Group; Ely Wallis, Project Manager; Basil Dewhurst, Technical Developer; Michael Tierney, Administrative Support; and Alan Brooks and Jon Kelly, KE Software. The aim of the first stage of the project, which commenced in April 2003, was to make available mammal records from only three institutions available through the website. This would demonstrate that specimen records and their associated point data could be returned from faunal databases and show that a distributed model was viable for the OZCAM project. By the end of the first phase of the project the team had not only made mammal records available, but also specimen records from other groups from the collections of

Australian Museums and Galleries OnLine

OZCAM data providers. These groups were: fishes, amphibia, insects, snakes and reptiles.

The search on the *Australia's Fauna* website allows queries based on taxon name, locality, latitude and longitude, type status and record identifier to be made. Embedded in the website is portal and mapping software developed by KE software which aggregates search results and presents maps of specimen records to the user.

In order to provide results as datasets and maps the portal accepts a user's search criteria and queries a distributed network of collections around Australia. OZCAM has not imposed a standard database on institutions but has simply requested data in a specific number of fields. Communication between the distributed datasets and the *Australia's Fauna* portal is achieved by using wrapper software developed by AMOL. This software accepts queries from the portal and returns a set of specimen records matching the user's query in XML format. The KE portal and mapping software then aggregate the results provided in XML and generate a map of specimen records. Users are able to zoom in and out of the map, pan across it and query individual specimens at various points on the map. Importantly the search functionality allows researchers to query multiple species held in collections around Australia and compare their spatial distributions.

Australia's Fauna demonstrates that access to Australia's vast zoological collections through a single point is possible and, while *Australia's Fauna* is currently a valuable tool for researchers in the OZCAM institutions, public access is planned for the future. In addition *Australia's Fauna* will be part of the solution that allows Australia natural history collections to provide their data to the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) whose purpose is to make the world's biodiversity data available via the Internet.

BASIL DEWHURST, TECHNICAL DEVELOPER,
AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ONLINE (AMOL)

PICTUREAUSTRALIA

JENNIFER ANDERSON

You've all heard the term 'wired for sound' but did you know that you can also be wired for pictures? The Internet has revolutionised the delivery of images to people in their homes, schools and workplaces, enabling all of us to view images almost anywhere.

The Internet allows users to browse through enormous amounts of information. Unfortunately users sometimes find it hard to locate the information that they want, becoming frustrated and disgruntled in the process. Increasingly cultural agencies are looking for new or improved ways of delivering information to their users in a way that reduces the amount of searching and filtering needed and thereby the frustration. PictureAustralia is one example of how this delivery can be achieved.

About PictureAustralia

Hosted by the National Library of Australia, PictureAustralia is a free, collaborative Internet-based service that allows users to search the online pictorial collections of multiple cultural agencies from the one website. Users, wherever they are located, can find digital versions of the images though the website.

There are currently 750,000 images available from twenty-nine participating and partnering organisations available on PictureAustralia. The agencies contributing images to the service include libraries, galleries, historical societies, archives, universities, museums and other institutions holding pictorial collections. Usage of the service grew by thirty-two per cent in the past twelve months. User sessions average 46,000 per month.

PictureAustralia has been successful because it addresses the fact that in a web environment users don't make distinctions between which agency may hold the image they require. Many pictorial collections have traditionally been the province of serious researchers and more casual browsers may not know if the image they require exists, let alone where it might be found. By collaborating to provide a way to search without having to address these issues, PictureAustralia helps put users in touch with our national pictorial collection.

What type of images?

The image collections that can be viewed through PictureAustralia provide a valuable resource for individuals or groups with interests in just about anything. The collections include paintings, drawings, sketches and photographs from the eighteenth century through to the present day. You can find pictures of your home town, major events in Australia's history, artists and other famous Australians, not to mention countless ordinary men and women quietly forging

Above: Binngih Sandblow, Fraser Island.
Photograph by P Candlin
Image no. RT66672
Australian Heritage Commission Collection
From PictureAustralia

history, and many other topics. For example, try a search on gold mining, Gallipoli, Coleraine, Tom Roberts or your own family — the service is a useful way to identify people and places with familial connections.

Other features

You can get started in PictureAustralia by trying out the picture trails, which bring together highlight images from the collections on particular topics, for example the Maroochy Sugar Industry, Women and Dance or the Freshwater trail. You don't need to use any search terms here — just click on a trail to see a selection of representative images. The Freshwater trail in particular provides an overview of how water is used in Australia, and what happens when we don't have enough. Check out these and other trails at www.pictureaustralia.org/trails.html. Suggestions for new trails are always welcome — put your expertise to good use by suggesting not only a new trail but the images to match as well.

The 'favourites' feature allows you to select images during your search which are then stored in your 'favourites'. You can view thumbnails of these images and send the list of images to an email address.

PictureAustralia as a means of providing access to your pictorial collections

Agencies involved in the process of scanning their images and putting them online find that PictureAustralia greatly increases the audience for those images. PictureAustralia promotes all the agencies that contribute to the service in a number of ways, including articles, presentations and the national and international distribution of generic and individually targeted promotional materials. The free PictureAustralia postcards, which use images from the contributing agencies to promote the service and the agencies' collections, have been hugely successful and have even become collectors' items.

If you would like more information about PictureAustralia, please contact the Manager at pictaust@nla.gov.au or ring (02) 6262 1641.

JENNIFER ANDERSON
MANAGER PICTUREAUSTRALIA
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Number 37 locomotive at Toronto, NSW, in September 1901
Lake Macquarie City Library
From PictureAustralia

MP3 audio tour players provide high quality random access digital audio, fit snugly into visitors' hands and, like a garage door opener, use infrared to actuate a tour

Photograph courtesy of Dataton AB and Interactive Controls Pty Ltd

PICKING UP ON THE LATEST
MP3 AUDIO STANDARD

JOHN EUSTACE

The latest generation audio tour systems take full advantage of the MP3 encoding practice, an ISO standard compression technology and format enabling audio files to be reduced to about one-twelfth of their size while preserving the original's sound quality and stored on smart media.

Smart media, smaller than a credit card, negates the need for moving parts. This in turn affords increased power efficiency, reliability and makes the human interface smaller, lighter, and easier to manage. Slim line handheld units weighs as little as sixty-five grams and at 12x47x94mm they make a practical and popular hand-held remote.

Units operate using wireless infrared, just like your garage door opener and TV remote. Intuitive user interfaces rely on a single interactive control switch with a built in status display. No numeric selection or keypads, simply select an item of interest point and click to immediately listen to the related stereo sound through your headset. Many units have two stereo outputs, so you can even share the experience with your companion.

With smart media individuals can even access various levels or 'chapters' of information about an individual exhibit. Curators can combine an overview narration in the first chapter, and arrange additional information in subsequent chapter files for academics, children or special interest groups to retrieve.

The digital MP3 random access memory (RAM) format frees the visitor from the necessity of viewing exhibits sequentially. On

MP3 TECHNOLOGY HAS REVOLUTIONISED THE AUDIO INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE, GIVING GREATER ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY DIGITAL AUDIO VIA THE NET AND SPAWNING HIGH QUALITY, INEXPENSIVE DISTRIBUTION AND PLAYBACK DEVICES TOO.

actuation a welcome introduction is automatically replayed to set the scene for a totally new audio tour experience. A 128MB smart media card delivers over two hours of non-linear CD quality stereo commentary, sound effects and music to direct and accompany your visitors — even longer if lower data rates are preferred.

MP3 encoding has become a standard on PC audio editing applications. Simple and inexpensive USB Smart media card reader/writers provide the ability to originate and easily update individual audio chapter files, and even include multilingual chapters, without re-recording the entire exhibition's narration.

Most significantly, in addition to superior sound, smart media cards register and store important visitor data to take full advantage of their PC interface capabilities to incorporate management feedback and reporting capabilities. The audio unit's

smart media card is simply interrogated on its return to pick up where, when and how the audio tour unit was used. This information is invaluable in analysing visitor flow and to monitor varying levels of interest in each transponder equipped exhibit.

Lithium Polymer batteries in hand held units operate for more than ten hours under normal user conditions and can be fully charged within two hours. Unobtrusive exhibit transponders have effective response arc of 45° and distances of up to nine metres and can last at least two years with an inbuilt Lithium power cell.

MP3 technology has revolutionised the audio industry worldwide, giving greater access to high quality digital audio via the Net and spawning high quality, inexpensive distribution and playback devices too.

MP3 is currently the most powerful algorithm in a series of audio encoding standards developed under the sponsorship of the Motion Picture Experts Group (MPEG) and formalized by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Information on interactive MP3 audio tour technology, its application and intrinsic advantages can be obtained from: Dean Stevenson at Interactive Controls Pty Ltd in Sydney Phone (02) 9489 9044, by email; dean@interactivecontrols.com.au and from their Internet site at www.interactivecontrols.com.au.

JOHN EUSTACE
BELLS AND WHISTLES MARKETING INC

Smaller than a PC mouse and weighing as little as 65g, each MP3 unit operates via the intuitive user interface's single interactive control switch with integrated status display for more than 10 hours
Image courtesy of Dataton AB and Interactive Controls Pty Ltd

PRESIDENT'S REPORT NOVEMBER 2003

CAROL SCOTT

Since the Museums Australia conference last May, the Council and Executive have been addressing the many resolutions that were passed at the Annual General Meeting.

Insurance: One of these resolutions focused on the growing concern with the issue of insurance for small museums and galleries. Museums Australia has recently received information about Commonwealth government initiatives in and I would advise members to access the following websites as a first step in becoming familiar with developments in this area.

There is a report on the Assistant Treasurer's website outlining the outcomes of a meeting held in Adelaide on 6 August 2003 regarding 'the affordability of liability insurance'; it is extremely useful for the scoping summary of existing legislation across the Commonwealth, states and territories.
http://assistant.treasurer.gov.au/atr/content/publications/2003/insurance

It is also important to access the website which outlines the Review of the Law of Negligence (Ipp review). The review found that Not-For-Profit Organisations (such as volunteer-run museums, galleries and heritage centres) should not be exempt from or have their liability limited for negligently causing personal injury or death.
http://revofneg.treasury.gov.au/content/review2.asp

The current focus is on 'risk management' and two useful websites have been identified by Judy Kean, the Executive Officer at our Queensland Branch office. They are:
www.riskmanagement.qld.gov.au/ and
www.volunteeringaustralia.org/publications/risk_man.html

Judy Kean has also advised us that the Centre for Philanthropy and Non-Profit studies at the Queensland University of Technology also has some good fact sheets and resources on public liability and other insurance specific to non-profits
http://cpns.bus.qut.edu.au/research/public_liability.jsp

A further development in this area has been undertaken by the Research Standing Committee (RSC) of the Museums Australia Council which is chaired by Andrew Kenyon. The RSC has developed a research brief to explore this subject with the aim of receiving a report by the end of 2004.

Policy: The Policy Standing Committee (PSC) has been very active over the last two years with the result that the *Sustainability* policy was formally launched at the Museums Australia conference last May. Also launched by Peter Yu was the draft of *Continuing Cultures, On-going Responsibilities* (CCOR) a major updating and re-drafting of *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*. The draft of CCOR is on the MA website and we are inviting responses and comments from Museums Australia members, indigenous communities and other stakeholders. Comments can be sent electronically to our consultant, Janey Dolan dolan@swan.wa.gov.au or janey_dolan@hotmail.com or mailed to her at Museums Australia Western Australian Branch PO Box 224 Northbridge WA 6865.

Conference 2004: Plans are already well advanced for the 2004 Conference to be held in Melbourne and hosted by the Victorian Branch of Museums Australia from 16–21 May 2004. The conference is titled, *Food for Thought: feast and famine* and it will explore the theme of sustainability through the three lenses of (**a**) maintaining **audiences**; (**b**) managing the **business** of running a museum or gallery; and (**c**) sustaining **collections**.

The popular Remote and Regional Museums stream will be a highlight once again and people working in regional museums and galleries should be planning to book early.

CAROL SCOTT
PRESIDENT, MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA

EDITORIAL NOTE

ROSLYN RUSSELL

This issue introduces *Museums Australia Magazine*, formerly *Museum National*. Although the name is new, the magazine will continue to feature news and views on issues affecting the museum community, in Australia and internationally.

Two important issues that are not addressed elsewhere in this issue are the outcome of the National Museum of Australia review (www.nma.gov.au/aboutus/council_and_committees/review/report) and the report of the UK Working Group on the repatriation of human remains.

The situation at the National Museum ought to concern the whole museum community. Despite her magnificent effort in getting the place up and running, its Director's contract has not been renewed, and its interpretation is to be adjusted. As Linda Young wrote, the review's outcome 'opens up the way to insert the old figures of Australian history and diminish the modern taste for diversity' (*Canberra Times*, 20 October 2003).

The UK Human Remains Working Party's recommendations, by contrast, are a positive step towards full acknowledgment of the cultural rights of Indigenous people. It is heartening that the Australian government is anxious to assist in facilitating the return to Indigenous communities of the estimated 15,000 individuals whose remains have been held in British museum collections.

ROSLYN RUSSELL
MANAGING EDITOR
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE

NOTICEBOARD

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:
MUSEUMS & GALLERIES
FEAST AND FAMINE**
MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
16-21 MAY 2004
HOTEL SOFITEL, MELBOURNE

For more details see
www.museumsaustralia.org.au/
conference

**THE MANAGEMENT OF
MUSEUM DEVELOPMENTS
CONFERENCE**
18-20 NOVEMBER 2003
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL,
CANBERRA

An ICOM/INTERCOM conference
hosted by the Australian War
Memorial andsupported by the
Commonwealth Department of
Communication,
InformationTechnology and the
Arts and the Australian National
University.

In recent years there have
been unprecedented building
and redevelopment programs in
the museum and gallery sector.
Some have been major
'greenfields' developments:
others have been programs of
renewal while the institution
continued to operate.

At some time in their
careers, all museum and gallery
professionals will be involved in
such a project. They are
challenging and demanding.
A failure to achieve, and a
disappointment by the public
with the outcome, can materially
affect the standing of the
institution for many years
afterwards

This conference seeks to
examine how such projects
can be managed effectively,
while delivering quality
outcomes within the restraints
of budget and time and will
draw on recent practical
experiences in both small and
major institutions from
Australasia, North America,
Asia and the UK.

An updated program will be
available on www.awm.gov.au/
INTERCOM
Registration fees:
ICOM Member $200
Non ICOM Member $250
For further information and to
register please contact
Conference Logistics —
conference@conlog.com.au

MUSEUM METHODS

In this issue of *Museums
Australia Magazine* you will find
an order form for *Museum
Methods*. No museum or gallery
can afford to be without this
publication. It is written by
Australian museum
professionals for Australians
and is a Museums Australia
publication. It provides practical
information, particularly for
small museums. A special price
of $65.00 (including postage)
applies to institutional member
organisations that are entirely
run by volunteers.

MOVING ON

Leslie Alway has been
appointed Director of Heide
Museum of Modern Art,
Victoria.

Francesca Cubillo has been
appointed Artistic and Cultural
Manager of Tandanya National
Aboriginal Cultural Institute,
SA.

Diana de Bussy has been
appointed Director of Bunbury
Regional Art Galleries, WA.

Daryl McIntyre has left the
National Museum of Australia
to take up the position of Group
Director, Public Programs,
at the Museum of London.

Jennifer Storer has left ACT
Historic Places and is now at
the Tasmanian Museum and
Art Gallery.

Josh Tarrant has joined the
collections management
team at the Workshops Rail
Museum, Ipswich.

visit us at
www.museumsaustralia.org.au

PAUL BRUNTON

Lure of the Southern Seas: The Voyages of Dumont D'Urville 1826–40. By Susan Hunt, Martin Hunt and Nicholas Thomas. Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2003. ISBN: 1876991003

When the Museum of Sydney was established in 1995, some of us wondered how an exhibiting institution would fare without owning a substantial collection of its own. Clearly, it would have to borrow; not some items, but whole exhibitions. Was this a good thing?

The exhibition *Lure of the Southern Seas*, held at the Museum from December 2002 to April 2003, exhibited artwork and artefacts held by a number of French institutions. These works emanated from the three expeditions with which Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville was associated; the first, 1822–1825, as second-in-command, the second, 1826–1829, and third, 1837–1840, as commander.

These voyages to Oceania and Antarctica would galvanise France's interest in these regions, an interest which persists to the present day. It was Dumont d'Urville who claimed the Antarctic Adélie Land (named after his wife) for France and secured his country a foothold on the last frontier. Dumont d'Urville visited Australia, both the mainland and Van Diemen's Land, New Zealand, Tahiti, the Marquesas, Tonga, Fiji, Rotuma, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Guam, New Britain, New Ireland, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, many places in the

Atlantic, South America and Indonesia and, of course, Antarctica. He travelled more widely than Cook. He encountered many cultures.

Lavishly illustrated publications were always produced by the French Government to record their voyages of exploration. But Dumont d'Urville exceeded them all. The official record of his last voyage ran to thirty volumes, 'a museum in a book, and the zenith of French voyage publishing', as Martin Terry writes in his scholarly and elegantly written text for this catalogue.

Dumont d'Urville is hardly a household name in Australia. Our interest in French explorers stopped at Lapérouse. But the French contribution to the exploration and scientific examination of Australia and the Pacific, and particularly to the visual documentation of these lands, was immense and it is high time that this was brought to the attention of the Australian people.

This catalogue provides both a scholarly and easily digestible introduction to the story of Dumont d'Urville and to the extensive scientific collections which were amassed on his voyages. It gives us a permanent record of the exhibition in a series of beautifully reproduced illustrations and a number of clear but concise essays on aspects of the voyages. The design of the catalogue aids understanding of the contents rather than impedes it. You cannot say this about all exhibition catalogues.

In bringing some of the original Dumont d'Urville collections to Australia, the

Museum of Sydney demonstrated a truly creative direction in overcoming its lack of a collection of its own. The Museum killed two birds with one stone — a particularly apt analogy, I think, in view of the subject matter of the exhibition. First, it brought to our attention a very significant series of voyages which had been neglected but are an important part of Australia's history and the history of our region. Secondly, it exhibited a collection of items which, if not actually hidden, are housed out of the country and would be very difficult for most Australians to access. In addition, it published a catalogue which stands as a permanent reference work and aid to future scholarship in this area.

We should not be surprised by this. The Museum of Sydney has form, as it were. In 1995, its first exhibition, *Fleeting encounters: pictures & chronicles of the First Fleet* did a similar thing. Instead of forming an exhibition based on the very many First Fleet items held in Australia, it showcased items from the Natural History Museum in London and the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. These items, particularly the artworks by the Port Jackson Painter, are essential for any study of the events of 1788 yet they are not well known to the public and difficult to view even for those in London.

In between the First Fleet and Dumont d'Urville, the Museum has given us the opportunity to see, in 1998, again from the Natural History Museum, the original drawings of Ferdinand Bauer, the great

botanical artist who accompanied Matthew Flinders; and, in 1999, some of the original collections formed by the Nicolas Baudin expedition and housed at Le Havre, France.

Although all these exhibitions have closed, their catalogues remain as significant publications, scholarly reference works as well as informative guides to significant collections of national interest held outside Australia.

In taking this direction, the Museum of Sydney has filled a real need. Not having a collection of its own may have been a blessing in disguise.

PAUL BRUNTON IS SENIOR CURATOR, MITCHELL LIBRARY AND CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION *MATTHEW FLINDERS: THE ULTIMATE VOYAGE*.

KARIN VESK

Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self: the Reinvention of Museums? By Paul Martin. Leicester Museum Studies. London, Leicester University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0718501705

Paul Martin questions the phenomenon of contemporary popular collecting in an increasingly individualistic society. He employs Guy Debord's social theory (*Society of the Spectacle*, 1967/1983) as an explanatory tool, proposing that popular collecting is undertaken by people who considered themselves integral in society but now feel increasingly marginalised and

alienated from it, eg, through redundancy. In this context, he explores collectors' clubs for the social sphere and values of people searching for a 'point of re-entry' into society.

In a shift away from the tradition of specialist collecting, Martin interprets contemporary popular collecting 'as a societal coping mechanism for dealing with fundamental social change, as employment practices and technological advances change the way we think, work, act and plan ahead.' He finds a new therapeutic rationale for the practice: 'It is proposed that socio-economic uncertainty undermines the confidence of the individual, which collecting seemingly helps to re-establish.' (p.xi).

Lest this all sound too theoretical, what we are looking at here is objects, how people value them, and what this says about us as a society. The author's (very well-referenced) exploration and interpretation of classic and contemporary collecting is most interesting. Perhaps more pertinent to many readers is how popular collecting might be viewed by museums as an opportunity to redefine themselves.

Martin undertakes a thorough investigation of contemporary collecting through popular literature, visiting car-boot sales and collectors' fairs, writing to clubs and talking to collectors. Comparing his findings with museum attitudes and practice he reaches the conclusion that the worlds of museums and popular collecting are mutually exclusive: the one professionalised and socially sanctioned; the other apparently without boundaries. He also notes that the museum 'establishment' regards popular collectors with caution, or even suspicion.

Because there is significant overlap between private popular collecting and that of museums, a closer relationship between the two could prove beneficial; by sharing their knowledge, museums and collectors could strengthen and deepen communal bonds. While I agree with the principle, it is in this crucial part of his thesis that Martin resorts to some surprisingly gross generalisations. Except in the vaguest terms, he doesn't explain *how* the expertise of 'non-professional' collectors could be practically incorporated into museums. This lapse in rigour is all the more obvious because most of the book is so thoroughly detailed.

Martin argues for 'greater

parity between collectors and museums' (p.99); that 'there seems to be no good reason why [private] collections [eg, of bus tickets] should not be lottery assisted in order to make them publicly accessible' (p.113); that 'the real acid test of museum democracy ... would be the incorporation of the wider community into the museum profession' (p.122). He suggests that we are 'rapidly reaching the stage where terms such as "professional" and "amateur" will become redundant, and some other term, such as "facilitator" will have to be employed to describe those who use objects to educate and entertain'. (p 127) He asserts 'There seems no good reason, save cost (which could be negotiated), why museum practice should remain contained within an ivory tower.' (p129)

That Martin himself may inhabit such a tower is highlighted by his glib approach to the pivotal area of funding. Other central issues — training, provenance, conservation, collecting policy, interpretation communication — are barely touched on, but they are relevant if the author wants to convince us of his arguments. I find it ironic that someone who makes his living by lecturing in history and museum studies should so strongly question the role of the expert. To operate with any degree of success, museums require a broad and very particular skills base; so why is it so fashionable in some quarters to dismiss the notion of professionalism?

It should be noted too, that many museums already have strong relationships with non-museum specialists, expert volunteers and collectors and that many also host exhibitions in conjunction with professional associations, educational institutions, cultural and community groups. Such relationships, based on partnerships where expertise is enhanced, rather than discarded as elitist, are what we should aim for and are certainly far more practicable than for example, simply redirecting government funds to 'non-traditional' organisations.

In an odd reversal of intent, Martin's thesis for 'democratising' museums is not ridiculously far from advocating a return to private museums run by connoisseurs. He raises some valid issues about how museums and collectors might work together, but with only one chapter out of nine devoted to museums, the book may be more relevant to social and cultural historians than to museum practitioners. Nevertheless, *Popular Collecting* is an interesting and worthwhile read and provides plenty to ponder.

KARIN VESK IS AN EDITOR AT THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM, SYDNEY.

SUSAN MARSDEN

A Past Displayed: Public History, Public Memory and Cultural Resource Management in Australia's Northern Territory.
By David Carment. Darwin, NTU Press, 2001. ISBN: 187624867X

This modest-looking paperback with its obligatory cover image of an iron-roofed country store explains its purpose clearly in the subtitle. David Carment considers how Northern Territorians 'have thought about their histories and how these histories have been interpreted as part of wider strategies concerned with education, museums, national parks and tourism'. His expertise in both academic and public history also gives this book wider significance. Carment places the Northern Territory experience in context by discussing public history and heritage generally in Australia and draws on the substantial body of work produced by historians outside as well as within academia. He also covers the often-separate areas of museums, heritage places and cultural tourism, and European and Aboriginal heritage. For all of these reasons, this book should be required reading for Australian historians and others engaged in cultural resource management.

The book opens with a chapter on 'Public history, cultural resources and the study of memory' that is a model of its kind and deserves reprinting and a wide readership. It is followed by a chapter on history and cultural resource management in the NT and then by chapters on the Territory's national parks, government and non-government museums, the Heritage Highway, and urban heritage in the Top End and Central Australia. The book is 133 pages and includes an index and extensive endnote references, including to internet sources.

Carment uses many of his own photos that complement the text by showing not only heritage places but also words and images used in signage and pamphlets.

Carment writes clearly and without jargon, moving easily from the general to the particular and discusses the work of individuals as well as that of agencies and organisations. His assessments are both frank and fair. For example, in the chapter on the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, he discusses its 'highly politicised' and sometimes contentious history, records its popularity, and concludes that its representations of NT history were of mixed quality and impact. The best were done by Mickey Dewar, he says, but her 'area of work was clearly under resourced ... A visitor to all the MAGNT's history displays only encountered an incomplete coverage of the Territory's past'. As Carment explains in the following chapter, the Territory's non-government museums 'adopted similar approaches'. (p 67) In my view, the same criticism can be levelled at all of Australia's major public museums, and (despite the good work of the History Trust museums and the SA Museum) SA does not even have a South Australian history museum.

A surprising omission in this otherwise comprehensive account is any reference to the deliberate government action to promote awareness of Territory history by funding the annual NT History Awards. They were established in 1979 and may be the earliest of their kind in the country. The first award was to Peter Donovan for his book, *At the other end of Australia*. Nor are Donovan's several NT histories and heritage studies mentioned by Carment. This may reflect his focus on the 1990s, but it should be acknowledged that some significant historical and heritage work was done in the 1970s and early 1980s, for example at Pine Creek, much of it carried out for the Conservation Commission of the NT. *A Past Displayed* would have also benefited from a general concluding chapter, drawing together some of Carment's general comments in the introduction and the thoughtful conclusions he provides to each individual chapter.

A more important omission, and my only real regret about this invaluable book, is that it excludes the recent past by ending in 1998, but that regret

is shared with (and explained by) Carment himself. My own experience with the National Trusts (including in the NT) and with history and heritage at national, territory and state level since 1998 suggests that history, heritage and the National Trusts are all under siege and that the gains Carment documents — particularly in relation to government support — are already slipping away. On the other hand, there is now a Professional Historians Association (NT).

SUSAN MARSDEN IS PRESIDENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS ASSOCIATION (SA), PARTNER WITH ROSLYN RUSSELL IN MARSDEN RUSSELL HISTORIANS, AND A MEMBER OF THE ACT HISTORIC PROPERTIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

RACHEL FAGGETTER

Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West.
By Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier.
Reaktion Books, UK, 2002.
ISBN: 1861891113

Of all cultural institutions the zoo provokes our dual quest for fantasy and reality. In zoos we encounter the living Other, the creatures with whom we share evolution and for whose extinction we may yet be responsible.

This book is an impressive perspective of the history of zoos in the last four hundred years. It begins with an overview of the passion for collecting (1500s to 1700s) when kings and aristocrats created menageries for prestige, power and entertainment, often blood sports. The lure of the rare and extraordinary from the newly discovered riches of

Africa and Asia led to appalling plunder and cruelty. The authors argue that the keeping of animals in close captivity provoked no condemnation because it seemed natural in a society based on inequality and servitude.

The intellectual energy and curiosity of the Enlightenment led to the first systematic zoological studies. The new democratic agenda prompted the conversion of the aristocratic Jardin du Roi in Paris to the revolutionary Jardin des Plantes, for scholarly observation, open to the whole nation. (Its wonderful Gallery of Evolution is, of course, on the itinerary of any modern museum professional interested in brilliant exhibition design.)

The second section of the book, 'The Need for Control', documents the rapid spread of the zoo as public zoological garden, in the competition between cities to provide entertainment for their newly emancipated citizens. While attention centred on the animals, this was also the era of fairgrounds, eateries and elephant rides designed to earn income for institutions with inadequate public funding. Tamed and trained animals performed for visitors, but endured fearful conditions, bad diets, depression and high mortality.

The pleasure gardens and flowerbeds were designed for people, but a few visionaries began to create more natural habitats for the animals. Circus owner Carl Hagenbeck developed the rockery and lake version of the 'cage without barriers' in Stellingen. Circuses and zoos often collaborated, exchanging animals and ideas.

The third section traces the yearning for nature which is such a feature of the modern, intensely urban world. Darwin's thesis demonstrating the relationship between

humans and animals must have influenced our attitudes. The growth of cities, reduced contact with nature and animals, excellent nature films and the increasing role of children as consumers have contributed to the popularity of zoos. Perhaps the anthropomorphism of animals in classics such as *Peter Rabbit*, *Wind in the Willows*, and the Disney circus, is more an English phenomenon than French?

Nowadays the best zoos use specialised designers to create naturalistic environments for displaying their animals, as we see in such famed US zoos as the Bronx, Woodlands in Seattle, and the Sonora Desert Museum. This may encourage the biggest fantasy of all, 'the humans are caged while the animals are free', but the chances of good experiences

for both animals and people are much better.

Zoos increasingly justify themselves through programs of genetic analysis, behavioural research, species recovery and public education. A promising new trend is to support large areas of habitat outside their boundaries. Chicago's Brookfield Zoo partners the Bookmark Biosphere Reserve system of public and private lands which conserve the threatened mallee ecosystem along the Murray in South Australia.

One of the great strengths of this book is its extraordinary and large collection of artwork, photographs and illustrations. Some are unbearable. They reveal the truth zoos seek to hide: the conditions of high mortality, genetic decline, disturbed and unnatural behaviour, humiliation,

boredom and depression. Our animal friends are still a saleable commodity, their lives controlled by food and shelter.

This scholarly book is arrestingly French-centred, and provides interesting perspectives of cultural difference. As soon as public zoos were established in England, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals were formed to influence legislation. In France the process was slower and the emphasis was on protection, especially in the acclimatisation processes.

Although this book is about zoos in 'the West', it doesn't go beyond Europe, England and the States. Perhaps the authors wanted to avoid dealing with zoos in South America and Asia because they are so terrible. It is a pity, because Australian zoos work hard, conscientiously and with imagination to be among the best in the world. Our climate helps. We don't need to keep animals indoors during the winter, and there are usually good growing conditions. Melbourne Zoo, founded in 1857, is among the world's oldest and best, and has one of the largest botanical gardens in the country.

Marred only by a perfunctory index, this is a fascinating, well-researched and thoughtful book which deserves to be read and looked at by anyone interested in ambiguity, paradox and discomfort in our cultural institutions.

RACHEL FAGGETTER IS LECTURER IN HERITAGE AT DEAKIN UNIVERSITY AND FORMER MEMBER OF THE ZOOLOGICAL BOARD OF VICTORIA.

JOY BARDOE

Museum Methods: A Practical Manual for Managing Small Museums and Galleries. **2nd edition. Edited by Peta Landman. Canberra, Museums Australia Inc, 2002. ISBN: 0958029008**

This comprehensive manual is a much needed Bible for organisations that are not fortunate enough to have professional staff and a wonderful support for regional museums and galleries that have limited access to 'the experts'.

Smaller communities often want to 'save their local heritage' but have no idea where to start. *Museum Methods* acts as a step-by-step guide to any group of enthusiasts considering starting a collection, finding a home for what has already been gathered together, or protecting a building or place from developers or the ravages of time.

The manual is divided into eleven major subject sections, each of which presents numerous papers (originally information sheets) offering concise and practical advice and listing where the reader can find more information, further reading or where to locate possible suppliers. The arrangement of these sections is appropriate to the development of a new or existing museum and offers easy-to-find information for all types of cultural heritage, from the production of local history books to establishing a heritage trail. Some chapters are more comprehensive than others but all are clearly set out and make understanding for the lay person reasonable.

The first section of the manual discusses the establishment and best practice management of a small museum. Issues that

may not have been considered are brought to the fore and suggestions for dealing with potential problems are offered. This is essential reading for those contemplating such an venture and I am sure that if it had been available when the Boyup Brook Museum was first conceived we would be better placed than we are now!

Marketing and public relations is often overlooked until a problem arises. *Museum Methods* outlines some simple procedures that can be put in place to prevent the majority of problems before they arise. Advice on increasing visitor numbers and improving the visitor experience is plentiful and includes concepts such as audience sharing and understanding language style that volunteer staff may not have been previously thought about.

The sections relating to collection management and preventative conservation are not only full of essential information, including charts, photographs and very helpful diagrams, but are a darn good read! The style of these two sections encourages the reader to 'do it better and enjoy doing it', whether that be checking procedures or making a storage box. I must say I'd be glad to have the information on pest management expanded to include some everyday housekeeping techniques for eliminating the most common pests in a certified museum-friendly manner.

I was particularly impressed by the section relating to interpretation and research, and especially the paper on domestic technology. I am sure this will be well thumbed over time, and will prove invaluable. I would have liked to have seen more papers in this section dealing with the recurring questions about interpreting the objects commonly found most rural museums, eg,

working tools and agricultural implements. A little inspiration (as with Kimberley Webber's reference to interpreting irons) can go a very long way.

This manual really is a management tool. If the reader is looking for much in the way of assistance for how to deal with a particular object then this is not the place to look. Here it would have been helpful to have some references to the multi-volume *Re-Collections* guides for finding information on professional and non-professional conservation treatments — information that many volunteer organisations are continually seeking.

The overall design of *Museum Methods* is very practical and the loose leaf arrangement allows for additional material to be included or information to be updated at any time.

This is recommended reference material for all small museums but particularly those just starting out, or voluntary organisations toiling with management problems.

JOY BARDOE IS CURATOR OF BOYUP BROOK DISTRICT PIONEERS' MUSEUM, WA.

ROBYN SLOGGETT

Managing Conservation in Museums, **2nd ed. By Suzanne Keene. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002. ISBN: 0750656034**

When tertiary training for conservators commenced in Australia in 1978 at the (then) Canberra College of Advanced Education, there was very a limited range of books written specifically for conservators. Helmut Ruhemann's *The Cleaning of Pictures: Problems and Potentialities* (1968), Gettens and Stout's *Painting*

Robyn Sloggett, Director of the newly established Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation questions: 'Is it wise to have a manager loose in the laboratory for anything other than publicity shots?'.

Materials: A Short Encyclopedia (1965), and Caroline Keck's *Handbook on the Care of Paintings* (1967) were representative of the three main approaches: the documentation and passing on of personal experience, compilations of related technical information and the professional handbook predominantly for studio practice.

At this time many conservation courses were comparatively recent (eg, the first American graduate training program commenced at the New York Institute of Fine Arts in 1961, and in the UK, the Hamilton Kerr Institute was established as recently as 1976). They were intent on producing professionals to fill a very specific skills gap. In Australia, conservators were needed to treat 'the silent, scarcely visible damage to items in Australian museums' identified in the Pigott Report of 1975. As the profession matured there were increased opportunities for conservators to develop particular interests in areas such as conservation management, preventive conservation, and conservation science. However many of the early graduates found they were quickly 'promoted' from the bench to the desk, trading their scalpels for the PC and their condition reports for the PD or, for the more fortunate, the PA.

Fortunately, in the last decade there has been an increase in the range of literature targeting the broader interests and needs of the conservation profession. The Getty Conservation Institute edited volume *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage* (1996) is an example of the breadth of issues with which the profession now regularly engages. The second edition of Suzanne Keene's *Managing Conservation in Museums* is an important contribution to conservation management, and an extremely useful guide to the paradigms and decision making processes which the conservation manager needs to understand and negotiate.

Although Keene's focus is museums, she takes as her point of departure management paradigms developed in much broader contexts, and focuses on practical outcomes. This makes the book useful both as an academic text as well as a practical manual. Her historical summaries also provide an excellent context and background for each topic she covers.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters ranging from an overview of general management principles, with some timely, serious analysis and critique of past and current obsessions in this area, to very specific discussions such as management of the collections survey process. Keene's writing is always strongly informed by her interest in outcomes and the way in which the actions of management can determine the effective preservation of cultural material. In her Acknowledgements, Keene notes: '...the part that the collections and objects have played in these museums, in that they so vividly illustrate success or failure in managing preservation.' This overarching interest in the preservation of the object underpins the book.

Managing Conservation in Museums successfully moves through discussions of dilemmas that have engaged the conservation profession since the nineteenth century — such as display versus preservation, and travelling versus static displays — to broader management issues such as the role of institutional hierarchy in conservation decision-making and negotiating with staff and management. The format of the book is clear, well set out with an efficient index, and the layout enables the reader to dip in and out of various topics, making it a highly readable reference source.

Yet it is interesting to note the ambiguous conclusion to Chapter 9 dealing with Collections Condition: 'a lot of time and effort have been put into surveys...and too little use has been made of them.' (p. 159) In Australia, the Significance Assessment methodology is proving an invaluable tool in negotiating treatment priorities and determining conservation programs. This method makes an important contribution to more strategic and effective management of museum collections in areas of communication, planning, and resource allocation. It is to be hoped that Keene will incorporate discussion of this tool in a third edition.

In the meantime I can strongly recommend *Managing Conservation in Museums* as a valuable resource, not only for conservation managers but also for museum managers more generally. It is also a good introduction to conservation management for conservation and curatorial studies students. The website associated with the book: www.suzannekeene.info/ conserve is well worth visiting.

ROBYN SLOGGETT IS DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND GRIMWADE CHIEF CONSERVATOR AT THE IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA PUBLICATION DESIGN AWARDS 2003

Museums Australia congratulates all winners in the 2003 MAPDA, as announced and presented in May at the National Conference in Perth. See also the August issue of *Museum National*.

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Portrait **6**
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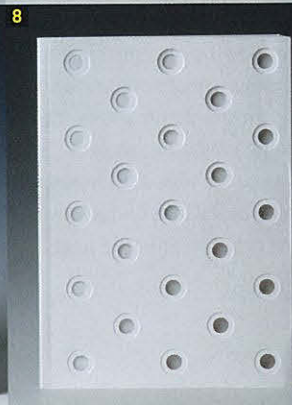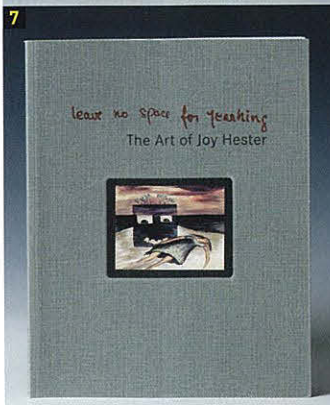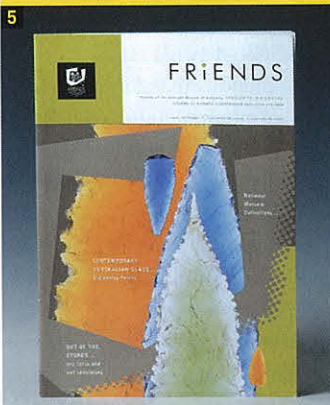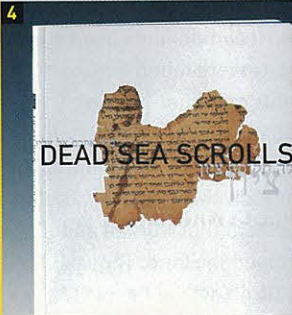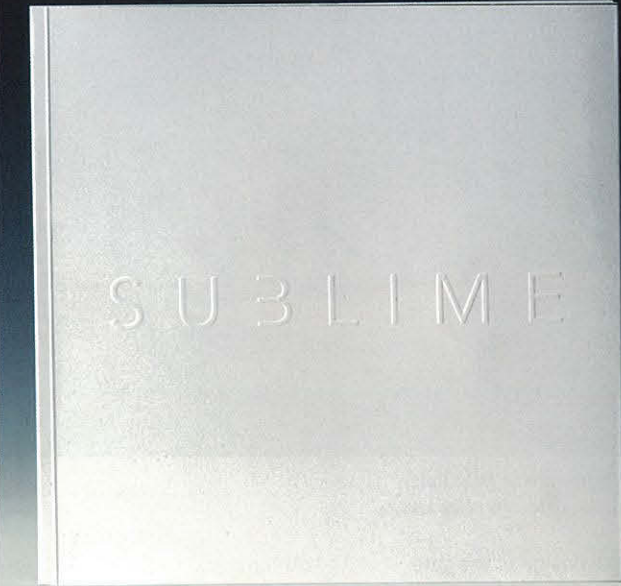
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UK MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION'S MAGAZINE ON MUSEUM PRACTICE

The United Kingdom Museums Association has redesigned its magazine on museum practice.

Museum Practice Magazine deals with issues of interest to all museum practitioners — new technologies and practices, deaccessioning, best practice examples, and 'how to' sections contributed by experts in a particular field. This issue, for Summer 2003, has a special section on education rooms.

Articles in *Museum Practice Magazine* can now be accessed on line at www.museums association.org/mp.

THE TANJA ANNIVERSARY GATE: 'OVERLAYERS OF EXISTENCE'

Alan Watt, one of Australia's leading ceramic artists, has recently completed a significant commission to design and build a sculptural gate to mark the Tanja Public School's 125th anniversary and the forthcoming centenary of the Tanja Hall. Tanja is a small rural community on the far south coast of New South Wales.

This culminates a busy year for Watt with a major retrospective exhibition opening at the Canberra Museum and Art Gallery this month (exhibition closes 23 November). The exhibition, *Alan Watt — Survey* spans forty years of work, from 1962 to 2002, and highlights Watt's career from his student years at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, through to his time as Head of Ceramics Department at the National Institute of the Arts, Australian National University (1979 to 1998).

Watt was delighted to win the sculpture commission and deferred the opening of his retrospective show to accommodate its formal opening. In accordance with the commission brief, which encouraged the use of recycled materials, Watt sought fragments of old farm machinery formerly used on pioneer properties throughout the Tanja/Wapengo area. These were incorporated into the

Alan Watt with the Tanja Gate
Photograph courtesy of Penny Amberg

overall design of the gate without compromising its sculptural integrity.

Most components used in the gate were found among the detritus of earlier farming occupation. Watt feels that they exist as a kind of *memento mori* to the individuals and equipment that worked and developed the land. These humble objects of the past, while celebrating the past achievements of the Tanja district, will be given new life as they contribute to the sculptural and decorative qualities of the celebratory gate. Contrast to the mainly steel structure has been created by incorporating copper, bronze and ceramic elements.

The tiled paving beneath the gate, incorporating clay dug from the Tanja Hall site, has been 'hand stamped' and signed by all current students of the school. It uses age-old and universal symbols of hand and signature signifying 'presence'. Given the permanence of ceramics, the tiles are likely to remain as a record and a form of time capsule until the next

centenary and beyond.

Watt has lived in the district for over twenty years, commuting to Canberra to the School of Art. His work is held in the collection the Australian National Gallery, in many state and regional galleries as well as numerous overseas museums and galleries. He has won many prizes and awards for his work and regularly exhibits in Australia and overseas.

Watt has always been fascinated by old farm equipment, rusted tools and other material found on his property as humble memories of past human endeavour. He has often incorporated such elements into his exhibition work and feels strongly about the relevance the commemorative gate has to the local community.

The commission has been made possible by financial support from the NSW Ministry of the Arts through its Country Arts Support Program.

PENNY AMBERG IS ON LEAVE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

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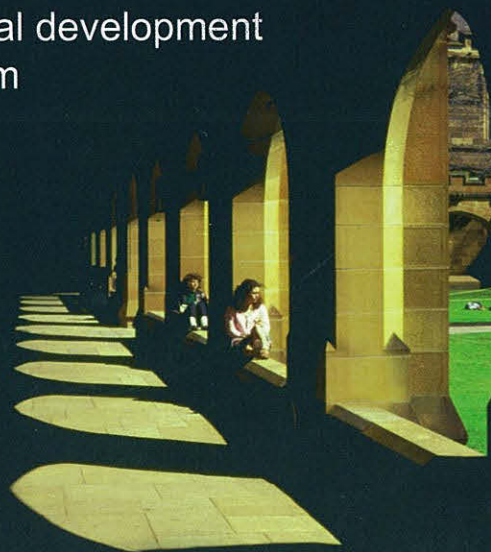- Master of Philosophy
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