THE MAGAZINE OF MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA INC.

MUSEUM NATIONAL

VOL 7 • NO 1 • AUGUST 1998

MUSEUMS AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS: DIALOGUE, PROTOCOLS AND GOODWILL

This issue of *Museum National* is dedicated to issues concerning Indigenous people and museums: collections of Indigenous cultural materials, their preservation and presentation in the public domain. I thank Trevor Pearce for guest-editing this issue and the editorial committee for developing the focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their cultural heritage.

Museums Australia has demonstrated its concern for collections of Indigenous materials in its promulgation of the policy document *Previous Possessions: New Obligations*, a policy first developed under the auspices of the Council of Australian Museum Directors (CAMD) in 1992.

More recently, in February 1998, the Cultural Ministers' Council, meeting in Adelaide, unanimously agreed to endorse a strategic plan for the repatriation, where appropriate, of ancestral remains and secret/sacred materials. The acceptance by the Federal Government and State Governments of their responsibilities in this area of museum activity is the culmination of years of close co-operation between the Department of Communications and the Arts and Museums Australia, working through its Standing Committee, co-chaired by Katrina Power and Dr Des Griffin.

Museums Australia continues to work with governments and key agencies to advance outcomes for Indigenous people whose cultural heritage is in the collections of Australian museums. We are working as the key cultural agency with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and non-government organisations (NGOs) to address joint concerns relating to collections and the dissemination of information through museums to Indigenous communities. We are also engaged with the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities in their work to develop the Australian Indigenous Cultural Network. Again, the emphasis on cultural materials and their locations means that Museums Australia can play a vital role in the implementation of such strategic liaisons.

National Sorry Day on 25 May was marked by events in a number of museums across Australia. A good many Australians would like to see this become an annual occasion to push forward the process of reconciliation, and to redress the Federal Government's reluctance to say 'sorry' in recognition of past events between Indigenous and other Australians, particularly those who identify with the stolen generations. Museums can continue to provide a place for these issues to be debated publicly, in context with cultural materials and the research about them that has been supported through the museum network.

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MUSEUM NATIONAL

VOL 7 • NO I • AUGUST 1998

4 People are more important than things — The Indigenous Australians Special Interest Group
TREVOR PEARCE

5 Museums Beyond Mabo
WILLIAM JONAS, AM

7 The Return of Indigenous Cultural Property
DES GRIFFIN, AM

9 Access to museum archives — whose information is it anyway?
LYNDON ORMOND-PARKER

10 Taking the Time ... Working Appropriately with Indigenous Communities
ANN BAILLIE

11 The Utopia Room
MARGO NEALE

13 Museums and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights
TERRI JANKE

16 The Haddon Commemorative Exhibition
MARY BANI

18 Larrakia Art and Artefacts in a Contemporary World
RICHARD BARNES KOOLPINYAH

20 Shorts
Collections! Are they assets? – Helen Tyzack
Frontline: communicating with visitors to the National Gallery of Australia – Barbara Poliness
Museums and the Web 1998 – Angelina Russo
Obituary

25 Reviews

Noticeboard
i Conferences/Events
ii Professional development; Publications
iii News
iv Association news

Cover image
Trevor Nickolls, *Political-Spiritual*, 1981, synthetic polymer on canvas. Collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia.
Photo Greg Woodward.

Museum National is published quarterly by Museums Australia Inc., and provides a major link between the association and its membership. *Museum National* aims to present news and opinions and to encourage debate on issues of museum practice, including the business of the association as appropriate. It seeks to represent the diverse functions and interests of the many institutions and individuals who comprise Australia's museum community. The content of the magazine reflects the policies of Museums Australia Inc., and is guided by an Editorial Committee. Contributions from those involved or interested in museums and galleries are welcome.

DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND THE ARTS

'"Kuku-Yalanji bama balkan ngayu bama ngulkurr bajaku yambayamba" Indigenous people of the rainforests of northern Australia have a saying, "people are more important than things."'[1] The Indigenous Australians Special Interest Group

TREVOR PEARCE

This edition of *Museum National* examines a range of issues critical to the ongoing debate surrounding museums and Indigenous peoples. These issues are of the utmost importance at a time when native title is under attack and relations between Indigenous Australians and the rest of Australia are subject to increasing scrutiny. It is imperative that museums provide our disparate communities with better understanding and recognition of a range of perspectives. Museums are uniquely placed to help lead the way towards genuine reconciliation.

Dr William Jonas recognises the significance of Mabo and its unique legacy in his article 'Museums Beyond Mabo'. He identifies the implications this seminal High Court ruling had on museums within an Australian context and provides some challenging paths beyond Mabo.

In 'The Return of Cultural Property', Dr Des Griffin examines national and international responses to the critical issue of repatriation. He looks at Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives based on extracts from recent American Association of Museums conferences and Museums Australia's 1997 national conference, Unlocking Museums. In so doing, Dr Griffin provides us with clear perceptions about this complex and sometimes fraught issue.

Lyndon Ormond-Parker is a research officer with the Brisbane-based Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA). Currently based in the UK, Lyndon comments in his article 'Access to museum archives — whose information is it anyway?' on the reluctance of some overseas museums to provide information and access to documentation relating to holdings of Aboriginal remains.

Museums are often uncertain about protocols concerning diverse communities, including Indigenous people. To address this problem Museums Australia (Qld) has developed a resource kit designed to provide guidance in dealing with a range of communities. Ann Baillie was employed to develop the kit and outlines some of the issues in 'Taking the Time... Working Appropriately with Indigenous Communities'.

In her article 'The Utopia Room', Margot Neale examines the dilemma confronting curators of Indigenous art who deal with the work of Aboriginal people from regions such as Arnhem Land and central Australia's desert communities. How does one present a single Indigenous artist's work, such as Emily Kngwarreye, using a European model of the 'white space', within a tradition that is alien to the artist's work?

The issue of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property has been a very important one. The Australian community has not always recognised that Indigenous Australians are entitled to the same kind of protection under the law that non-Indigenous Australians expect, in relation to cultural property rights. It is imperative that this situation is rectified. To this end, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) has recently supported a proposal for practical reform instituted by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). A discussion paper entitled *Our Culture, Our Future* was distributed nationally for comment. Terri Janke's article provides an overview of the issues.

In 1898 the Haddon expedition to the Torres Straits was initiated. It was to be the most important and comprehensive expedition of its period. In late 1996 Mary Bani, herself of Torres Strait Islander descent, received a Museums Australia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Internship grant to travel to Cambridge University's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, to prepare work on an exhibition to commemorate the centenary of the Haddon expedition. Mary's contribution was extremely important as it provided a personal link with the project and insight into the implications today for her people.

In 'Larrakia Art and Artefacts in a Contemporary World', Richard Barnes Koolpinya, a contemporary Larrakia artist, explores his heritage through museum and art gallery collections dating back to the 1890s. As a Larrakia man he finds himself constantly confronted by the impact of contact history. As an artist, this history has inspired and motivated a very creative expression of Larrakia society, from both an historical and contemporary perspective.

These articles provide us with a diverse range of views on significant issues currently facing Australian communities. It is hoped that this edition of *Museum National*, guested-edited by Museums Australia's Indigenous Australians Special Interest Group, will provide a platform of ideas to support the quest for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Museums both large and small, metropolitan and regional, must take up the challenge and be prepared to assist their communities in reaching this all important goal.

I would like to thank my colleagues Katrina Power, Franchesca Cubilo-Alberts, Peter White, Tina Baum, Alissa Carter and Mary Bani, who provided me with guidance and support with this edition. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the colleagues who contributed by sharing their perspectives on the changing relationships between museums and Indigenous people. I would like to especially acknowledge Linda Richardson and Simeon Kronenberg for their patience and support in bringing this edition to fruition.

Trevor Pearce is a former program manager for museums and Indigenous people at Museums Australia's national office and is currently a freelance consultant in Indigenous cultural heritage issues.

References

1 Dr Chris Anderson speaking at the 1998 American Association of Museums Conference.

Museums Beyond Mabo

WILLIAM JONAS, AM

Introduction

There is an interesting and often quite bitter debate occurring in Australia about the concept of 'wilderness'. The term wilderness has been imported into this country, mostly from North America and Europe, where it has been used to describe places which are, by and large, remote. When it is applied with this meaning in Australia, the term is very problematic because Aboriginal people have been all over this land, have known it intimately, have sung it and dreamed it, and it has been anything but remote. Proponents of wilderness, and wilderness societies and wilderness preservation groups, all acknowledge this long relationship between Aboriginal people and the land while clinging to, and continuing to apply, the wilderness terminology. Aboriginal people quite rightly agree that in Australia there is no wilderness.

Today, the better museums will not present, for example, an exhibition on wilderness without acknowledging that this debate is occurring. Some may even make the debate the focus of an exhibition, with both sides being presented as objectively as possible and with visitors at least getting an understanding of the entire picture.

The wilderness example, and the way in which museums may now treat it, is a useful introduction to Mabo.

Louis De Sainson, *Baie Jervis (Nouvelle Hollanoe)*, 1833. Colour lithograph, 235 mm x 230 mm. Christensen Collection. From the National Museum of Australia's travelling exhibition 'Painting the Land Story'. Courtesy National Museum of Australia.

Mabo

In 1982 Eddie Koiki Mabo initiated a common-law land claim to the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait. Ten years later, and after the deaths of Mabo and two of the four plaintiffs who had joined him in the claim, the High Court of Australia handed down its decision. By a majority of six to one, the High Court ruled that Australia's common law recognised a form of native title which its Indigenous inhabitants held and which the High Court said had not been abolished or extinguished when the Murray Islands were annexed by the Crown in 1879.

It would be a brave and silly museum which today based its programs on an acceptance of terra nullius as fact. Yet for years museums did this.

The implications of the Mabo decision are still being played out and the ongoing Wik debate is part of this. There have also been developments which are not directly related to Mabo but which, however, have important implications for Indigenous people and museums. Nevertheless, the Mabo decision did expose fully and widely the myth of terra nullius and the invalid assumptions which flowed from this myth. The High Court decision stated to the world that the Murray Islands had been occupied by Indigenous people who had owned the land prior to 1788. For the first time, for many people, the implications of actions based on the assumption of an empty land became clear.

It would be a brave and silly museum which today based its programs on an acceptance of terra nullius as fact. Yet for years museums did this. Like the rest of the population, museums realised that it was a falsehood. It was known that Indigenous people lived in Australia long before Captain Cook or Governor Phillip reached these shores but, as with the wilderness issue, it was convenient to accept the myth.

Changes in Museums

Fortunately, the situation is changing. As with many developments, the changes in museums reflect changes in broader society, and a more general recognition of the reality of Indigenous Australia has permeated most cultural institutions. And in this regard the Mabo decision has been one of many other factors reflecting and leading to change. These include the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation; the report, and the responses to the report, of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; the activities of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous populations; and various State and Territory reviews of heritage, such as the

NSW Joint Ministerial Task Force on Culture and Heritage. It is fair to say that some museums at least were taking these activities into consideration when the High Court's Mabo decision was brought down and that, for them, Mabo was another contributing factor in changing attitudes and challenging assumptions.

Within museums these broader changes have interacted with changes in museum practice, especially as the (no longer new) 'new museology' took these institutions away from pure collections exhibiting and towards presenting the stories and issues which those collections can portray. As part of this process different perspectives were brought into museums and multiple voices began to be heard. Increased Indigenous involvement in museums has been a result.

Indigenous people are now increasingly involved in museums in a number of ways. Most Australian museums have advisory boards which contain some Indigenous people, or advisory boards which are wholly Indigenous and which advise on all relevant matters. From the point of view of bringing Indigenous views from the background to relevant prominence, having Indigenous people in these positions is highly significant. General policy guidelines, advice and directions can be provided, and these groups in the process can provide conduits for communications between museums and Indigenous communities.

Of more importance, possibly because of the potential for greater power, is Indigenous people employed in museums. This is again a fairly recent phenomenon but as we move from the employment of basically untrained Aboriginal liaison officers to people with formal qualifications in museology, the influence of some Indigenous people in some decision-making positions spreads. When trained Indigenous people are concerned about doing their jobs well as professional people, increased debate about Indigenous priorities, and allocation of resources to meet those priorities, is an inevitable consequence.

Increased Indigenous involvement at the levels of committees and staffing has also been related to increased Indigenous access to museum collections and exhibitions. Museums have been in tremendous demand when they have made available those aspects of their collections which relate to family and community histories.

Access to museum collections now goes beyond Indigenous people playing a viewing, even a curatorial role, to the issue of repatriation of materials. We are all familiar with the debate over the return of human remains which took place during the 1980s. Aboriginal people wanted returned from museums the remains, especially the skeletal remains, of people they regarded as their ancestors, while scientists claimed that the bones were needed for scientific research and that science and, indeed, humankind would be the poorer if even one bone was returned to Aboriginal communities. The debate and the politics were bitter but in many cases Aboriginal remains were returned, the scientific sky did not fall in, and we have now reached the stage where we wonder what all the fuss was about.

Appropriate Policies

What ultimately has developed is a very fruitful and useful dialogue between some museums and some Indigenous people. Perceptive and far-sighted people like Dr Des Griffin have encouraged this dialogue which, in 1993, resulted in the Museums Australia policy paper entitled *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*. This policy recognised and had as its underlying premise that, 'Museums can no longer function on the basis that they alone can determine what use is made of cultural material and what access is allowed by Indigenous people. The continuing responsibility of museums to respond to the concerns of Indigenous people is a moral imperative.'[1]

The policy has been widely accepted where museums are aware of it, but this tends to be mostly the larger museums, with smaller museums and Indigenous communities still needing to be reached. Shortage of resources to change this is an ongoing problem and, as Museums Australia president Dr Sue-Anne Wallace has recently pointed out, 'Museums Australia needs to work with these groups, as well as other relevant authorities such as ATSIC, to achieve the following outcomes:

- a national program that effectively deals with the return, to Indigenous communities, of ancestral remains and secret/sacred items held in Australian museums;
- a national program that puts into place adequate consultation with communities to deal with the alternative arrangements agreed in cases where communities do not wish for the return of Indigenous ancestral remains and secret/sacred items;
- greater national co-ordination of repatriation issues between museums and Indigenous communities;
- funding programs to Indigenous communities to deal effectively with repatriation issues;
- funding programs for museums to deal effectively with repatriation requests by Indigenous communities.'[2]

I would add to this that in order for this to be done, in order for invalid assumptions to be identified, and for actions based on those assumptions to be discontinued, ongoing research of the highest quality must remain an activity of museums and the results of this research must be fed into the broader community, especially, but not only, through the programs which museums undertake.

When the High Court made its 1992 recognition of native title over land there was interest that this title might be extended to cover other aspects of Indigenous life, such as intellectual copyright and objects in museums' collections. These issues are still being pursued though not yet with the same interest and widespread passion as the debate over title to land. Nevertheless, museums should be aware of developments in this area.

Conclusion

Museums construct models of reality. They present idealised representations of that reality in order to demonstrate certain of its properties. They do this best when the assumptions on which those idealisations and representations are based in truth and not in myths or partial stories. For Indigenous models this means Indigenous involvement, the best research, goodwill and the courage to expose myths. One of the legacies of the Mabo decision, and of Eddie Mabo himself, was a contribution to all of these.

Dr William Jonas, AM, is director of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

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2 Wallace, Sue-Anne 1998, Personal Communication to Museums and Indigenous Peoples Standing Committee of Museums Australia.

The Return of Indigenous Cultural Property

DES GRIFFIN, AM

'The people came into the museum, into the collections where their cultural material was stored. They conducted their ceremonies, they sang. Then they thanked us for looking after their cultural heritage. These native people from British Columbia had come to the Museum to help install the exhibition of their cultural objects.'
Curator at the Seattle Art Museum speaking at the 1992 American Association of Museums conference.

'We gathered at around 4.00 a.m. in the morning, outside the Museum. President Robyn Williams had asked pointedly why we had to be there so early. "Because it's important to Maori tradition," I said. It was near dawn, the right time. We were called in by a Maori woman from the steps of the Museum. Preceded by protecting warriors, we filed in, past the wonderful *taonga* on display in the exhibition. I recalled the film of the opening of "Te Maori" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, after more than ten years of planning, and of what that had done to the pride of Maori people. We sat down at the far end, the guests and us facing each other. The speeches began, in Maori, strong and recalling the ancestors.'
Recollections of the opening of 'Taonga Maori' at the Australian Museum.

When we as non-Indigenous people focus on the return of cultural property from museums, we recognise that artefacts have an enormous significance, that there is a relationship between cultural material — those artefacts — and the people. Museums hold items in trust for the community: they can no longer treat their collections as booty or as treasures enhancing the status of those who manage them or work in them. We recognise also that there is more to relationships between museums as cultural organisations and Indigenous peoples. For museums, to return artefacts may not be enough. And to those who believe they control museums, especially politicians, return may be easy, easier than actually recognising the rights of Indigenous people: rights to land, health care, clean water, clean air and education — their rights under the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights.

International commentary on the importance of cultural property to the people who created it and those whose traditions it represents, clearly shows that contemporary cultural institutions recognise the significance that cultural material has to people as a tangible expression of tradition and history. The inalienable right of peoples to freedom of belief and the expressions and exercise of tradition, including the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rights, is acknowledged and the relevance of cultural items to those practices is recognised. These are challenges to which museums must respond.

Museums hold items in trust for the community: they can no longer treat their collections as booty or as treasures enhancing the status of those who manage them or work in them.

International codes acknowledge that respect for the dead shall be accorded to all irrespective of origin, race, religion, nationality, custom or tradition and that the wishes of the dead, and of the relevant local community, concerning disposition shall be respected wherever possible. Agreement on the disposition of fossil, skeletal, mummified and other remains is to be reached by negotiation on the basis of legitimate concerns of the communities about their descendants, as well as the legitimate concerns of science and education.

Public commentary on cultural material and cultures appropriately acknowledges that those who are the subject of inquiry and presentation have the right to have their stories told. Indeed, it can be asserted that it is those people who have the right, through tradition and Indigenous lore, to tell the stories about objects who are the owners of that material.

These kinds of considerations form the basis of *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, launched in 1993 by the Council of Australian Museum Associations (CAMA). A comprehensive statement of principles and policies covering relations between museums and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the document received wide attention and a plain English version was launched in 1996.

A policy with similar aims was formulated in Canada about the same time. *Turning the Page* was developed by a task force representing museums and native Canadians — the Assembly of First Nations. First peoples have applied for grants under schemes established after the publication of the policy. Many museums are still considering what their policies will be. In some provinces, the issue of return is linked to negotiations about treaties.

In the USA actions in accordance with the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) continue. Increasing numbers of museums, their curators, conservators and public program people recognise the absolute appropriateness of forging close and meaningful relations with native peoples.

The recent annual meeting of the American Association of Museums brought together views from Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom on the topic of the Repatriation of Indigenous Cultural Property: International Connections and Differences.

Chris Anderson, of the South Australian Museum, spoke first. This is a summary of what he said.

'Museums and their relationships with Indigenous peoples in Australia have come a long way in the last twenty years. Curiously, legislation and legal process have been almost irrelevant to these changes. In addition, the debate has moved well beyond discussion simply of repatriation. A number of initiatives have taken place which suggest development of a more mature and fruitful Indigenous people-

museum dialogue and relationship, one not based on rigid legal structures and not driven by a presumptive, outcome-predetermined notion of repatriation.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, concerns were raised by senior Aboriginal people about museum collections, particularly those of secret/sacred objects and ancestral remains. Some museums, such as the South Australian Museum and the Australian Museum, set up programs to address these concerns. However, it wasn't until the early 1990s and the formation of Museums Australia and the development of the ground-breaking policy *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, that issues began to be systematically and properly dealt with. Museums Australia's Standing Committee, Museums and Indigenous Peoples established, with Commonwealth funds, two national projects to provide information and to create better access for Indigenous people to sensitive collections. A new strategic plan has recently been developed by the committee to broaden awareness in the Indigenous communities of these collections and to create a context in which discussion can occur as to their future. This plan has the support of both Commonwealth and State governments. Another initiative, the Meeting Place Network, facilitated by the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, has emerged which aims to provide comprehensive access for Indigenous communities to museum collection information.

Formal rules and regulations and laws have nothing to do with these initiatives. Nor do they exclusively concern "repatriation". Museums are changing and are being turned inside out in terms of recognition of the rights, obligations, knowledge and responsibilities of "outsiders" in our collections. This is not a bad thing!

We are starting to consider the collective collections not merely in terms of who controls them and where they physically sit, but also in terms of what other people out there in the community have rights in them, in terms of their knowledge about them, and the fact that they have something to say about them.

We have started to think about the collections from the users' point of view instead of only from our own fairly narrow institutional perspectives. Once we considered the Australian Indigenous collections as a whole (as a national set of linked collections), we had to then deconstruct this notion of "national collection", not in terms of institutionally defined boundaries but in terms of the perspectives of the originating communities for the objects.

We began then to think of the collections as networks bound in an intellectual and cultural sense rather than as merely being bound by institutions, legislation or funding arrangements. This opened up a whole new range of options; from co-ordination of policy for the national good through to databasing so we know what we've got; through to exhibition and other forms of interpretation and analysis.

One of the reasons that the issue of repatriation of Indigenous property exists is that the basis of the action by museums is a view about race.

More importantly, it has created for us a network whereby museums themselves are working much more closely together. It has certainly also enriched our collective relationships with the bush and with Indigenous Australia, thereby strengthening our future capabilities to play a more significant role in defining and documenting a national identity.

Those old men, those wise elders from the bush have taught us something about the museum business: objects are about people. To recognise the originating human context for collections revitalises them; quite literally, it gives them new and humanised meanings. Lawyers need not apply!'

Moira Simpson also spoke at the AAM meeting. From the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick, Coventry, she has conducted surveys of museums in the United Kingdom to identify their policies on the return of human remains and other cultural property. By and large UK museums do not have explicit policies even though staff of the museum may consider that there should be policies which specify return of material in appropriate circumstances. The Museums Association has no specific policy and there is no clear statement by the group. So while Australia, Canada, the USA and New Zealand have made significant advances in relations with Indigenous peoples, museums in the UK still pose problems.

Indigenous peoples are interested in not only the actual objects in museums but the information associated with them. Attempts to obtain information from the British Museum's Museum of Mankind can be difficult: requests that senior staff make every effort to respond to Indigenous people was met with the assurance that the request would receive the attention it deserved. Access to information about human remains held by the Natural History Museum (London) is under review, according to deputy director, Paul Henderson. Currently, access is provided to bona fide scholars.

One of the reasons that the issue of repatriation of Indigenous property exists is that the basis of the action by museums is a view about race. Professor Marcia Langton, in her keynote address to the 1997 Museums Australia conference, quoted American scholar Richard Dyer, 'As long as race is something applied only to non-white peoples, as long as whites are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. There is no more powerful position than that of being just human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that — they can only speak for their race. But non-raced people can, for they do not represent the interests of race.'

Professor Langton has suggested informally that there should be a 'Place of Honour' for the unprovenanced human remains held by museums. 'Some Indigenous people have suggested that there might be such a place near the Australian War Memorial. It is important that these objects are not stored (and to state the obvious, certainly not displayed) at museum sites to which Aboriginal people are visitors. This category of museum, that is, institutions visited by Indigenous people would now include every museum in Australia that houses any object or information relating to Indigenous people ... Respect for Indigenous people can be expressed not only in the already high standard of exhibitions of most major public museums but as well by honouring the past of Indigenous people in ways that affirm the humanity of Indigenous people and their contribution to Australian society, both as the first people of the continent and its islands and as citizens in the most recent period of Australian history ... Names, biographies and devices which pay homage can render the Indigenous peoples of Australian

history with dignity. Such simple measures might give effect to Robert Hughes' suggestion that the great task of scholarship and museums is to help us "to discover a great but always partially lost civilisation: our own."'

The most important initiatives that museums can take is to involve Indigenous peoples in their programs as they relate to Indigenous cultural property. Most especially to recruit Indigenous people to the staff of anthropology and public program areas and functions, and involve them in the care and protection of the cultural material, the provision of access to information about the material, and the interpretation of it and their history to the public. Through that we all might make some progress in eliminating the notion of Indigenous peoples as raced.

Dr Des Griffin, AM, is director of the Australian Museum and former president of Museums Australia.

Access to museum archives — whose information is it anyway?

LYNDON ORMOND-PARKER

For many Indigenous communities, the repatriation of ancestral remains is an ardent necessity, strongly tied to issues of tradition and spirituality. As a major step towards enabling these communities to fulfil this need, the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action's (FAIRA) ongoing effort to document and catalogue Aboriginal ancestral remains has now been extended outside of Australia to include overseas collections.

In my role as FAIRA's researcher, a recurring obstacle has been the reluctance of museums to provide information and access to documentation relating to their holdings of Aboriginal ancestral remains.

Approaches made to various British and European institutions about their collections of ancestral remains have been met with a variety of responses. Some institutions have co-operated in providing catalogue listings and/or access to archives, while others deny access or refuse to disclose details of their holdings. Some simply ignore repeated requests.

An example is the Natural History Museum (NHM) in London, which responded to FAIRA's initial request by suggesting that research had already been undertaken within the NHM by the World Archaeological Congress (WAC), stating 'We have in the past, in co-operating with WAC, had one researcher on a once-and-for-all basis to research our archives. We see no further need for re-analysis.' This was refuted by WAC which was, in fact, also denied access to the archives.

FAIRA again wrote to the NHM requesting access, which responded by stating that the 'Museum is happy to grant access to this archival material to bona fide scientists carrying out research on human variation and origins'.

By restricting archival access to scientists carrying out research on human variation, the NHM is not only discriminating against all other research interests (i.e. historians/museologists etc.), but ultimately trivialising genuine interest from Indigenous communities, and effectively 'protecting' the museum from 'unwittingly' disclosing details of their holdings to anyone outside of their scientific domain.

The NHM's associate director has been quoted in the *Museums Journal* (June 1998) as saying, 'it was necessary for the museum to recognise the sensitivities surrounding such archives'. A museum which claims 'sensitivities' as an excuse to deny disclosure is in no way being 'sensitive' to the needs of Indigenous communities that wish to be informed of the whereabouts of their ancestral remains.

It's rather farcical that the NHM, a member of the Museums Association, continues to deny access to certain archives, despite the *Museums Association Code of Conduct for People Who Work in Museums, 1997*. It states, 'Ensure that public access is given to all documentation and other information held by a museum for the public benefit (including the knowledge of staff), unless the information was imparted in confidence or the wider public interest clearly demands that access be restricted'.

The Department of Biological Anthropology at the University of Cambridge has also refused FAIRA access to its relevant archives. Although the department has published information about the collection, it provides minimal detail. The University has a policy of returning to 'close kin' the remains of known individuals. However, by refusing access to archives it is impossible to determine whether there are individuals within the collection that fulfil the University's own criteria for repatriation.

Such attitudes towards access to archives are not restricted to European institutions. Departments within the University of Adelaide have 'continually' refused to disclose details of their 'extensive' collection of Aboriginal ancestral remains and denied researchers access to relevant archives.

However, not all institutions take this attitude. Schuyler Jones, former director of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, stated in *Museums Journal* (July 1994), 'I am in favour of a curatorial policy in which full and frank information about the museum's holdings are always made available to the enquirer, no matter who is asking. Any refusal to provide information of this kind or to discuss issues such as the removal of certain culturally sensitive objects from display or to return them to their country of origin only damages the scholarly integrity of the institution and its staff.'

There should be no question that museums and other publicly funded institutions have an obligation to provide full access to information about their collections. Indigenous communities have as much right to know the location of their ancestral remains as those within the museum or scientific community who study or curate such collections.

Lyndon Ormond-Parker, a research officer with the Brisbane-based Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action, is currently based in London.

Taking the Time ... Working Appropriately with Indigenous Communities

ANN BAILLIE

In 1997 I was employed for three months as a part-time cross-cultural research officer with Museums Australia (Qld). With funding from the Queensland Arts Office and the Distributed National Collection Program of the Department of Communications and the Arts, my brief was to develop a cultural protocols kit. The aim was to outline appropriate methods and approaches for museums working with culturally diverse communities, including Indigenous communities.

The first stage of the project is now complete and the draft materials for museum, gallery and heritage workers have been presented to the Project Reference Group. This group comprises Libby Quin as coordinator (former executive officer of Museums Australia, Qld); Bob Anderson, Queensland Museum Consultative Committee for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities; Michael Aird, curator of Aboriginal studies at Queensland Museum; Judith Bartlett, curator of cross-cultural studies at Queensland Museum; and Shayne Rawson, Indigenous exhibitions officer at the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland.

The kit focuses on museums and their work with Indigenous and ethnic communities. It does not cover other communities or groups which are defined by gender, disability, class, sexuality and so on, but the format does allow for future additional sections to be developed to support museums working with these communities.

The full set of materials will be presented in two parts. Part one comprises a folder of easily updated materials: an introductory approach to cross-cultural communication; advice on how to work in culturally appropriate ways with diverse communities; protocol tips for various Indigenous and multicultural customs; policy guidelines for museums, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse communities; and case studies of collaborative projects between museums, Indigenous and multicultural communities.

The second part, presented as a set of readings, contains copies of reference materials: important guideline documents such as *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*; conference papers highlighting key issues; and resource directories of contacts, recommended reading lists and sources for training.

In developing the kit I contacted people who could talk about their experiences of museum practice within culturally diverse communities. While no set of guidelines can substitute for the hands-on experience of working in a cross-cultural environment, interviews with these busy but generous people provided insights into protocol issues. For example, Michael Aird outlines some of the principles which guide his approach to the management of the 10,000 artefacts and 6,000 photographs in his care at the Queensland Museum. These include making object stores accessible; allowing easy access to the documentation; encouraging people to look through the photographic and object files and to add or correct information; encouraging people from the communities to be curators and making loans of material to these communities.

If there is one message from the kit it is that there is no single culturally appropriate way to work with communities, which are very diverse in themselves. There is no set formula. The important lesson is that it takes time to build and retain trust, time to understand the political connections and alliances within a community, time to overcome the propensity for misunderstandings and time to work through the various issues.

Ann Baillie is program coordinator of training and professional development at Museums Australia (Qld) and the Regional Galleries Association of Queensland.

The Cultural Protocols Kit will be published and distributed in November. Museums Australia (NSW) will also publish some of the draft materials as *Museum Methods*. Material from these summary sheets will also be made available through AMOL.

Darryl Pfitzner (Milika), Installation with ochres, pebbles, timber, sand and paper.
From the exhibition 'Same Story, Different Places — an Urban Dreaming'. Photo Eric Algra.

In one of the case studies Marie Boland (former curator of the City of Unley Museum, South Australia) describes the impact of the Museum's collaborative project with Mr Darryl Pfitzner (Milika), an Aboriginal artist, sculptor and designer. The exhibition 'Same Story, Different Places', presents an Aboriginal interpretation of local history, nominally focusing on the Kaurna experience. The title and exhibition itself, however, express the endemic nature of these experiences throughout Australia.

'Our museum has never felt so fresh and dynamic and visitor numbers have shot up, in fact doubled, since it has opened. Partly this has been the response from the schools. The Aboriginal Curriculum Unit has taken the exhibition on as a model and has held in-service workshops at the Museum involving both the artist and the curator.

Word of mouth is attracting people through the doors who never would have visited before.

The experience of developing the exhibition has also had an impact on the Museum. Darryl worked at the Museum over a long period and informal discussions went on over morning and afternoon teas that certainly had an effect. One way this is evident is in the language of many of those associated with the Museum. From a starting point of "What have Aborigines got to do with our Museum and our history?", there is a new recognition of the Kaurna people and of their place in the local story.'

The Utopia Room

MARGO NEALE

> 'Utopia is not one place but a grouping of five places or "countries" named after the ancestors who formed them. Utopia's Indigenous place names — Alhalpere, Rreltye, Thelye, Atarrkete and Ingutanka — are also the particular names of families who are custodians for these "countries". Emily Kngwarreye's "country", Alhalkere, is technically outside Utopia, having been separated early this century by the artificial borders of the pastoral grid.'
> *Anne Brody, exhibition label, 1998.*

Gloria Petyarre strode proudly into a small darkened room in the Queensland Art Gallery the day before the opening of the Emily Kame Kngwarreye retrospective, clutching a small bundle wrapped in cloth. 'These special women's things are for the Utopia Room,' she said. Her voice lowered and in hushed tones she told us that the as-yet-unrevealed contents of the bundle had belonged to Auntie Emily and had never been out of Auntie's care until just before her death, when they were passed on to her. She wasn't about to hand over the precious contents of the bundle that she had guarded all the way from Utopia without some kind of ceremony. Within minutes, members of the Gallery's directorate, management and exhibition staff assembled before her. She told the stories as she handed over, one by one, exquisite items woven from human hair and ochred: the women's dance skirt, the dance belt, the head piece and so on. She sang, she talked, she laughed, she demonstrated how the items were worn, and performed in a way only Gloria Petyarre could. Senior male relatives in the room added to the story, photos were taken and everyone was satisfied that this impromptu hand-over ceremony was complete.

Meanwhile, Greeny Purvis Petyarre and Lindsay Bird Mpetyane, senior male custodians of Alhalkere, the country that is the subject of Emily Kame Kngwarreye's paintings and the title of the exhibition, inspected the collection of rocks or 'pieces of country' they had sent earlier to 'show that the paintings in the exhibition have important stories'. Placed on top of a light box display these sacred rocks, as they were called, emitted a special glow and appeared to float. The men handled the rocks in various ways, reconnecting with the place of origin, reconnecting with the woman they called Auntie Emily. And they sang.

This cultural hub, or keeping place of sorts, was being transformed from a place of objects to a spiritual domain with the animating power being invested into the space by the presence of these men. They roamed the room checking out portraits of themselves, dwelling for a while in front of the large classical portrait of Auntie Emily which has become an iconic image of her ceremonial status. The pierced hole in her nose echoing the pierced hole in an impressive rock formation featured in a photograph nearby.[1] She was the last Anmatyere woman to have her nose pierced in honour of this ancestor/creator, Alhalkere, from whom the surrounding country takes its name.

Another significant landscape image was a marbled rock face with a small womb-like cave at the base. This, they explained, was Emily's most important yam dreaming site and some of the rocks in the glass case were taken from this place. These noduled rocks are the embodiment of the yam seeds from which Emily took her bush name, Kame. The complex and complementary cultural roles of men and women were clearly being demonstrated in this authoritative telling. Women's dreaming sites exist on this patch of country along with images of men's dreaming sites. While women have responsibility to care for particular sites,

From the exhibition Emily Kame Kngwarreye-Alkalkere — Paintings from Utopia.
Left: Gloria Petyarre singing the works. Right: The Utopia Room, view from the back wall of the sacred rocks displayed. Courtesy Queensland Art Gallery.

the prime responsibility for looking after Alhalkere belongs to the patrilineal clan of the same name, to whom she is connected through her father and grandfather. The addition of the women's ceremonial dance garments created an aesthetic and cultural balance to the collection of rocks supplied by the men.

Connections between country, body and painting were further reinforced through slides, many of them sent by Greeny and Lindsay: grooved rock surfaces featuring grid and parallel stripes, and images of body paintings were juxtaposed with striped paintings showing similar markings; fields of wildflowers; images of tracks, grasses and seeds gave the viewer a point of entry into other works. These visual narratives provided a view of an environment rich in colour, texture and markings so evident in Emily's paintings.

This six by eight metre constructed space evoked a sense of the spiritual. It became as much a place for gaining information relevant to the paintings in adjoining galleries as a place of contemplation and, indeed, revelation for some. Of critical importance was its role as an active site of negotiation between appropriate members of the Utopia community, who became the custodians of this place, within a surrounding white space overseen by QAG custodians.

The evolution of the space was in part a response to the dilemma often faced by curators of Indigenous art who deal with the work of Aboriginal people from regions such as Arnhem Land and the Desert, particularly in relation to solo exhibitions.[2] There was the issue of how to present a single Indigenous artist's work, in this case Emily's, using a European model of the monograph in 'white spaces', within a tradition that was alien to Emily's lineage? We had a responsibility to fully acknowledge the differences: the cultural traditions that informed her work, her living environment, work practices and her community at Utopia, of which she was an integral part. At the same time we also had to produce a successful show of great contemporary Australian art which was not marginalised through cultural difference. The paintings had to function simultaneously as cultural narratives without becoming objects of anthropological scrutiny, and as works of 'abstract' art without being sanitised of cultural content.

Our response was to mirror the realities as they appeared to exist for the artist, within the limitations of an art museum — to deal with differences by avoiding the temptation to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable, and to acknowledge the cultural gap as an unavoidable reality and deal with the two sites of engagement, that is, Utopia, the place of production, and the Gallery, the place of consumption.[3] The two sites in the Gallery were represented by the cultural environment of the Utopia Room and the exhibition of paintings in the Gallery spaces. The two areas were intentionally separate but connected visually and culturally through aesthetic considerations.

Outside the Utopia Room the monographic format of the exhibition of paintings was a serious acknowledgment of the reception to Emily's work in the national and international art world, and the arena where she earned a place as one of Australia's most significant contemporary artists. But inside, the direct involvement of the elders and other relatives gave the Utopia Room a particular presence and power beyond the illustrative and affirmed her Aboriginal cultural lineage. 'While the room did not focus on anthropological issues such as women's business or the complexity of kinship relationships and obligations it acknowledged that these were intrinsic to her personal cultural expression of which painting was a part.'[4]

The exhibition's development was embedded in the processes of community and shared ownership, consultation and appropriate collaboration. The artist was part of the curatorium from early 1995 until her death in late 1996 and, after that, those closest to her in the community took over the role. Various other levels of cultural transactions also existed as part of a concept of shared ownership. A local Indigenous Community Consultative Committee attached to the Indigenous Australia Art Department and a group of senior community members supported the exhibition processes. From this core a special interest group was formed and a series of workshops were conducted for community groups. While the Gallery was responsible for the art works as objects, it was only the local Indigenous community who could be cultural host to the Utopia community and ensure that the spiritual life of the works was acknowledged and 'looked after'.

This exhibition was as much about the paintings as it was about the process, the journey to this place epitomised by the elders and relatives who 'blessed' the show by touching and singing the works into place. In a final gesture of endorsement the elders pronounced, 'She's here ... we can feel her, Auntie is all about — in these paintings of her land, our land ... she is happy'.

Margo Neale is curator of Indigenous Australian art at the Queensland Art Gallery. This article was developed in collaboration with the Gallery's Indigenous Community Consultative Committee.

'Emily Kame Kngwarreye-Alhalkere — Paintings from Utopia' was displayed at the Queensland Art Gallery from 20 February to 13 April and the Art Gallery of New South Wales from 8 May to 19 July. It will show at the National Gallery of Victoria from 8 September to 22 November. The descriptions of the Utopia Room refer to its full installation at the Queensland Art Gallery, where the Utopia community was involved.

References

1 This widely used image was approved for viewing in the culturally sanctioned Utopia Room but was not approved for use in the accompanying book. For publication the community instead chose a portrait of Emily as an artist and not as a ceremonial figure. Sensitivities to the use of some photographs can change over time depending, amongst other things, on various stages of the mourning process.

2 In 1994 the Yiribana Gallery at the AGNSW, co-curated by Daphne Wallace and Margo Neale, included a 'special viewing room' which highlighted the importance of women's ceremonial business in the production of their art. However, because it was included in an exhibition of the collection and was not the work of a single artist, its function was different. The space was given to senior women artists from Yuendumu who, through various forms of consultation, including a videoed satellite link-up which became part of the exhibit, felt such a degree of ownership of the space that they, like Gloria Petyarre, entrusted valuable and rarely seen ceremonial objects taken from their private keeping place to the Gallery's care.

3 See Butler, Rex 1998, 'Emily Kame Kngwarreye and the Undeconstructable Space of Justice', *Eyeline*, no. 36, pp. 24-30.

4 1998, Preface, *Emily Kame Kngwarreye-Alhalkere, Paintings from Utopia*, Queensland Art Gallery and Macmillan Publishers, Melbourne.

Museums and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights

TERRI JANKE

In 1997 the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), with funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), contracted Michael Frankel & Co. Solicitors to develop practical reform proposals for the improved recognition and protection of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP). A discussion paper entitled *Our Culture, Our Future,* which outlined the concerns of Indigenous Australians, and put forward some possible solutions, was distributed for comment. The discussion paper received a total of 70 submissions, which are summarised here. The ICIP project's final report will be considered by the ATSIC Board of Commissioners later this year.

What is Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property?

The following definition was adopted as a working term to set the scope for the ICIP project's research:

'"Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property" refers to Indigenous Peoples' rights to their heritage. Heritage comprises all objects, sites and knowledge, the nature or use of which has been transmitted or continues to be transmitted from generation to generation, and which is regarded as pertaining to a particular Indigenous group or its Territory. Heritage includes:

- Literary, performing and artistic works (including songs, music, dances, stories, ceremonies, symbols, languages and designs);
- Scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge (including cultigens, medicines and the phenotypes of flora and fauna);
- All items of movable cultural property;
- Human remains and tissues;
- Immovable cultural property (including sacred and historically significant sites and burial grounds);
- Documentation of Indigenous Peoples' heritage in archives, film, photographs, videotape or audiotape and all forms of media.'[1]

Indigenous peoples' heritage is a living heritage and includes objects, knowledge and literary and artistic works which may be created in the future based on that heritage. This heritage is collectively owned, socially based and continuously evolving. Many generations have contributed to its creation.

Responsibility for Culture

There are many different Indigenous Australian groups and each has ownership of rights over its particular inherited cultural heritage. One common factor between all these groups, however, is that laws generally exist to govern rights to use and deal with their cultural and intellectual property. These laws are based on the premise of responsibility for cultural knowledge and the need to ensure that the culture is maintained, protected and passed on to future generations. There is often an individual or group who is the custodian or caretaker of a particular item of heritage. The traditional custodians are empowered as trustees in relation to the particular item of heritage only in so far as their actions conform to the best interests of the community as a whole.

Similarly, consent to share Indigenous cultural knowledge must be given by the group as a whole. Such consent is given through specific decision-making procedures which differ depending on the nature of the particular cultural item. Consent procedures may differ from group to group. Furthermore, consent is not permanent and may be revoked.[2] The notion of what heritage material can be shared also shifts over time and according to use, and perhaps even territory.

Culture vs Commerce

Indigenous cultural and intellectual property is an important part of the Australian economy. Bark paintings and boomerangs are sold in increasing numbers; Indigenous music, dance and bush knowledge are becoming highly sought after as commodities. The commercialisation of such property has often been done without respect for Indigenous cultures, without Indigenous control, and without sharing the benefits with relevant communities. Indigenous cultural heritage has often been distorted and mutilated for commercial interests and there is concern that this cultural heritage is being eroded.

The majority of respondents to the ICIP discussion paper agreed that Indigenous people should receive royalties and/or compensation for the commercial use of their intellectual and cultural property if appropriate and prior consent has been given by the relevant group.

Indigenous Concerns in the Museum Sector

The commercial trade of Indigenous cultural material, such as sacred objects and human remains, is offensive to Indigenous people and is not condoned by them.

Indigenous people are concerned about the unauthorised use and reproduction of secret/sacred material for commercial purposes as it results in its disclosure to those who are not authorised to know or view such material.

A large amount of Indigenous movable cultural property, such as art, stone implements and carvings, is now held by universities, museums, galleries and other collecting institutions. Indigenous people are concerned that much of this material was taken from them without their free and informed consent. They feel that ownership of this material should be vested in the relevant Indigenous group and that secret/sacred information or material should be returned to or controlled by the relevant Indigenous group.

Many Indigenous people feel it is

inappropriate for universities, museums and galleries which are controlled by the dominant culture to own and exhibit Indigenous cultural items as artefacts. Such cultural objects were created for cultural purposes and were not intended to be preserved forever.

Indigenous people are also concerned about the repatriation of their cultural objects held by collecting institutions. Many museums reported that they are now taking part in repatriation programs, however, Indigenous people are concerned that the return of such material is often conditional and on a permanent loan basis. For instance, museums return material on loan to Indigenous groups only if they have the adequate storage and maintenance facilities within their cultural centres or keeping places.

Another concern is that repatriation of cultural material is often seen by collecting institutions as a *moral* or *ethical* obligation, rather than a *legal* requirement.

Under Indigenous belief systems, the deceased do not enjoy spiritual rest until they are returned to their ancestral home and given the last rites in accordance with tradition. Indigenous people feel a deep responsibility to their ancestors to respect their remains and to repatriate them, if necessary, to their rightful burial grounds.[3]

Collecting institutions house a substantial number of Indigenous remains but the origin or identity of these is often not revealed. It is up to Indigenous people to investigate, locate and seek to repatriate their ancestors' remains.

Museum Legislation

It was generally felt by Indigenous people that most museum legislation in Australia is anachronistic as it focuses on anthropological and scientific significance and not on the cultural and spiritual value of collections to Indigenous people. In Commonwealth, State and Territory museum legislation, Indigenous cultural property is loosely categorised as 'anthropology', 'natural history', 'relics' and the like. Only the National Museum of Australia and the Western Australian Museum recognise Aboriginal galleries or collections within their legislation.

Nor is there provision in the various museum laws for Indigenous peoples' ownership rights to the cultural property which is held in collecting institutions.

Another concern is that while there is a general practice for museum boards to appoint an Indigenous member, this is largely dependent on the political climate and is not provided for by legislation.[4]

The discussion paper noted suggestions for museum legislation to be amended to require that:

- museums establish Indigenous cultural heritage management committees;
- museum boards include at least one Indigenous member, appointed from the Indigenous management committee;
- Indigenous departments and other staff dealing with care and management of Indigenous collections work under the direction of the Indigenous cultural heritage management committees.

It was also suggested that similar amendments need to be made to legislation establishing other cultural institutions such as universities, galleries and libraries, which collect, house and exhibit Indigenous cultural material.

General comments included:

- The concept of ownership of cultural material by Indigenous people relates to their role as its custodians and their duty of responsibility towards its ongoing integrity and maintenance. This includes issues relating to display, interpretation, commodification and protection against mutilation or derogation. Such notions are not necessarily incompatible with those of museums and private collectors.
- While several museums noted that they already include Indigenous representatives on boards and cultural advisory committees, some Indigenous groups considered that institutions holding large collections of Indigenous cultural material should be required by legislation to have this representation.
- Human remains and associated funeral objects must be repatriated to their descendants and territories in a culturally appropriate manner.[5] Furthermore, movable cultural property should be returned wherever possible to its Indigenous owners, particularly if the Indigenous people assert they are of significant cultural, religious or historical value to them. Movable cultural property should only be retained by museums, private institutions or individuals in accordance with the terms of recorded agreements with Indigenous owners for the sharing of the custody or interpretation of the property.[6]

  While several museums reported that they already repatriate ancestral remains and secret/sacred artefacts to Indigenous communities, it is noted that there is no legal requirement for museums to do so. In the United States, the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 1990* established the legal framework for repatriating human remains and ritual objects to Indigenous peoples of the US, provided claimants can prove direct descent or, in the case of objects, prior ownership. Michael F. Brown notes that, 'the implementation of this legislation, which imposed substantial administrative burdens and was in some quarters regarded as disastrous for the future of American museums, has now become a routine part of museum practice. In fact, many curators hail it as the first step in a historic reconciliation between native peoples and museums, a process that may lead to new and rewarding partnerships.'[7]
- Amendments to museum legislation in Australia will also depend on whether or not there will be separate legislation providing Indigenous people with rights to their Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. While it would be ideal to have separate legislation giving effect to Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights, or to perhaps have an Act similar to the 1990 US Act, there may be scope for museum legislation, and other cultural institutions' legislation, to include provisions relating to Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. Some provisions suggested are:
  - provision for Indigenous representation on museum boards;
  - repatriation to Indigenous communities under certain circumstances to be determined in consultation and negotiation with Indigenous groups;
  - to make compulsory the development of policies which address the display, handling and use of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property held at museums and cultural institutions.

Developing Effective Policy

The discussion paper suggested there should be wider acceptance and implementation of the 1993 *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* policy,[8] and asked for feedback on whether any changes should be made.

However, the museum sector showed overwhelming support for the policy and several museums noted that they have adopted practices and policies in accordance with its objectives. These include repatriation of ancestral human remains, the establishment of Indigenous consultative committees and the appointment of Indigenous representatives to museum boards.

While it is evident that there is considerable policy development and implementation by some museums in the spirit of *Previous Possessions*, there is no obligation for museums to develop or adopt such policies. There is scope for the policy to become national or put into effect by legislation.

The ICIP discussion paper also noted that there is scope for codes of ethics or ethical protocols to be developed by professional associations, such as anthropologists and researchers. If clearly communicated and enforced these could be more effective in improving the current issues than simply amending laws.

Conclusion

It is impossible to address the problem of inadequate recognition of Indigenous peoples' cultural and intellectual property rights outside of the more fundamental debate of self-determination. There must be recognition of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights within the Australian legal and policy framework. This means recognising the uniqueness of Indigenous culture and respecting the culture, and understanding that Indigenous customary laws concerning use and dissemination of cultural material are equal and parallel to intellectual property laws. Such recognition is necessary in order to encourage a relationship of mutual responsibility and trust between museums and Indigenous people.

Hence, the use or, rather, the sharing of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property by museums and all those who seek to make use of Indigenous cultural material other than in its traditional or customary way, must proceed on the basis of **respect, open communication, negotiation and prior informed consent.**

Terri Janke is a solicitor with Michael Frankel and Co. Solicitors and acted as solicitor and principal consultant on the ICIP Project. This is an abridged version of a longer paper. For a copy of the full article plus the guidelines and principles for the protection of Indigenous peoples cultural heritage, please contact the editor.

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Cultural network to link Indigenous communities and collecting institutions

Prominent Aboriginal leader Mr Patrick Dodson is to head the Australian Indigenous Cultural Network (AICN), a group developing a national network to identify collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material. Using the Internet, the Network will be a 'virtual' organisation that links Indigenous communities to major museums, galleries and other collecting institutions that house Indigenous cultural property.

Co-ordinated by the Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities, the Network is planned as a joint Indigenous and non-Indigenous effort involving the public and private sector. A two-way process will allow museums to share information about collections with Indigenous people, and Indigenous people will provide advice on the culturally appropriate management, care and interpretation of collections.

For Indigenous people, the Network will mean improved access to cultural heritage material relevant to their communities. Non-Indigenous Australians will have access to information regarding Indigenous cultural identity at a national level, promoting greater understanding, recognition and respect for Indigenous people's culture and history.

Mr Dodson said some protocols and ethical questions have to be worked through, in co-operation with Indigenous communities as well as institutions, because people have deposited cultural material under certain conditions. 'I acknowledge that this is a very sensitive area, and we're not talking about making available secret/sacred information through the system. That's not an option. That's a domain that is subject to very well thought through protocols now and, thankfully, most institutions have taken a more positive approach to this in their direct dealings with Indigenous communities in relation to secret/sacred information.'

Patrick Dodson's position is funded by Mr Richard Pratt, AC, chair of Visy Industries, as part of his contribution to the AFCH, of which is he also chair.

National Steering Committee members of the AICN are: Mr Patrick Dodson (head), Dr Chris Anderson, Dr Gaye Sculthorpe, Mr Djon Mundine, Dr Martin Nakata, Mr Jim Berg, Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra, Mr Gabrielle Nodea, Mr Rob Palfreyman, Mr Tracker Tilmouth, Ms Helen Morris, Dr Sue-Anne Wallace, Mr Ron Castan, QC, Ms Olga Havnen, Ms Jill Reichstein, Mr Darryl Kicket and Mr Michael Abott, QC.

The Australia Foundation for Culture and the Humanities brokers national projects and fosters individual and corporate sector support for the arts, cultural activities and the humanities. The Foundation will be encouraging a lead donor or major sponsors for the AICN and will be accepting tax deductible donations on behalf of the network.

The Haddon Commemorative Exhibition

MARY BANI

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the 1898 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait, led by Alfred Cort Haddon. Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (CUMAA) is celebrating the anniversary with an exhibition which opened in July. During the exhibition's planning Mary Bani, assistant curator at the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, National Museum of Australia, was invited to Cambridge to participate in the research process and to contribute to the exhibition's development.

Introduction

Much has changed since Alfred Cort Haddon took his salvage approach to recording the 'vanishing' Torres Strait culture. Today, with self-autonomy imminent, the diaspora of Torres Strait Islanders has resulted in the establishment of communities in all States and Territories across Australia. A strong sense of cultural identity and kinship has enabled Torres Strait Islanders to maintain links to their home islands and cultural heritage, which is still rich and diverse despite the ramifications of colonialism and Christianisation. Traditional material expressions of cultural heritage in the form of artefacts, however, are well out of reach of most Islanders, with only a few examples in Australian museums. As a Torres Strait Islander and a trained museum professional, I found that most historical collections of Torres Strait Islander material were stored in museums all around the world. To get a sense of the richness of traditional culture and the origins of contemporary forms, it was necessary to travel to these institutions to view their collections.

I was invited to spend three months in Cambridge, from September to November 1997. During this time my three main tasks were: to contribute to the early planning stages of the Haddon commemorative exhibition; to systematically view and photograph most of the Haddon collection at CUMAA; and to view and photograph Torres Strait Islander collections held in numerous museums in the United Kingdom, Dublin and Berlin.

As part of the exhibition's early planning, Anita Herle, senior assistant curator of anthropology, and I viewed most of the Haddon collection to select objects for individual displays. During this process I was amazed at the remarkably good condition of the objects as well as their true aesthetic appeal. Previously, the Haddon collection had been publicised in the *Expedition Reports* (1912), and books by Douglas F. Fraser (1978) and David R. Moore (1984). These are extremely important publications, however, due to the limited number of copies these works are just as rare as the objects themselves. By taking colour photographs of the material I hope to make this information more accessible to Torres Strait Islanders in Australia.

The expedition

The 1898 Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Strait marked an important turning point in the development of anthropology and was, in fact, the most comprehensive anthropological expedition of its period. Haddon's team was able to record an important period of contact history in the region and the expedition's findings encompassed ethnology, physical anthropology, psychology, linguistics, sociology, ethnomusicology and material culture studies. An enormous corpus of information was generated, including the six-volume *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait (Reports)*, a comprehensive collection of nearly 2,000 artefacts, several hundred field photographs, the first ethnographic film sequence, plus numerous drawings, sketches and sound recordings. The Haddon Papers also contain a significant amount of unpublished material such as field notes, journals and correspondence. Most of this material is housed at CUMAA and the University's libraries.

The exhibition

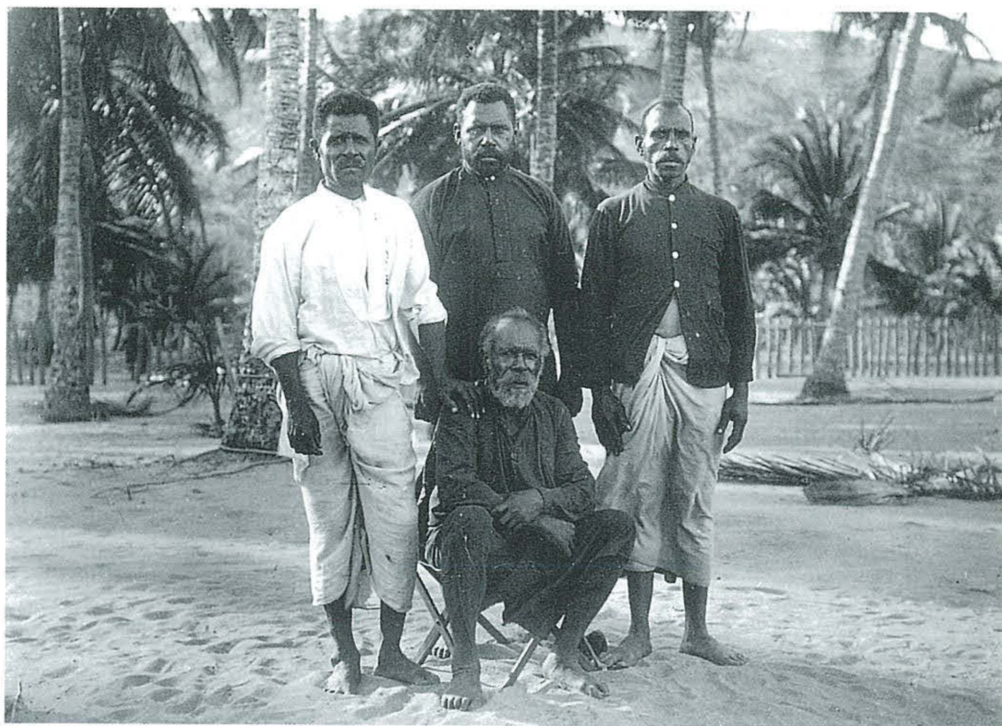
The exhibition provides an historical and cultural context to the expedition and the Torres Strait in the late nineteenth century. It not only marks the centenary of the expedition, but also presents the richness of Torres Strait Islander culture. It explores the interaction between the expedition members and the various Islander informants, and the relationships that developed, looking at both the strengths and weaknesses of the expedition to anthropology and contemporary issues in the Torres Strait.

Initial planning for the exhibition involved careful study of Haddon's *Reports*, which remain a crucial source of information for Torres Strait Islanders, and other publications to obtain information on the whereabouts of relevant collections. It was obvious from the start that Haddon was the major key to finding many of these collections. After his first visit to the Torres Strait in 1888, he donated parts of his collection to the various institutions in which he held positions. The majority of his collection was donated to the Museum of Mankind (MOM), with material also donated to the Pitt Rivers Museum, Horniman Museum, National Museum of Ireland, Smithsonian Institution and the Queensland Museum. The collection from the 1898 expedition was specifically commissioned for Cambridge and is stored at CUMAA.

I viewed as many collections as possible, especially those containing rare and significant material. These include material collected by members of the HMS *Fly* (1844-45), housed at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, and the HMS *Rattlesnake* (1848-50), housed at the MOM. These collections contain some of the earliest Torres Strait material in existence. Other significant collections are those collected by the Reverend Samuel MacFarlane and Robert Bruce. The MacFarlane collection, stored at MOM, contains many examples of elaborate composite turtle shell masks which MacFarlane collected for the London Missionary Society during his time as a missionary in the Torres Strait. The Bruce collection was donated to the

Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery and consists of significant material Bruce collected during his time as a boat builder and trader in the Torres Strait, including the only known examples of ceremonial turtle posts in a museum collection.

During the exhibition's development, various Torres Strait Islander representatives, community organisations and administrative bodies, including all Island councils, were sent a brief about the exhibition's plans for comment. To ensure contemporary representation of Torres Strait Islander culture, numerous objects were also purchased for inclusion in the exhibition. This included material collected by Anita Herle and Judith Philp during previous visits to the Torres Strait, plus two objects — a Dari, or feathered headdress, and a shark headdress — which I purchased from a Meriam artisan living in Townsville, North Queensland.



Caption: Torres Strait Islander informants on Mabuaig Island, 1898. Gizu seated. Left to right: Waria, Peter and Tom. Photo courtesy of Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Haddon Photo Collection, Torres Straits, no. 21.

Repatriation

Over the years there have been numerous formal and informal discussions concerning the repatriation of historical Torres Strait cultural material from overseas museums. Discussions have usually occurred within the debate which concerns the development of a proposed cultural centre or keeping place in the Torres Strait. These discussions continue amongst Torres Strait Islanders regardless of recent government funding cutbacks. Repatriation, however, is a complicated process which requires political and community support as well as understanding from all parties involved. During my visit to the United Kingdom, I kept the issue of repatriation in mind and discussed the possibility informally with professional staff at a number of museums. This was a useful exercise as it provided me with an understanding of the internal processes and procedures which occur in various institutions. Apart from understanding the internal workings of different museums, I came across a number of important issues which need to be discussed by Torres Strait Islanders. Such issues will not be discussed in depth here due to cultural sensitivities, however, they deal with human remains, objects related to magical and sorcery practices, and the complex context in which the material was obtained by collectors such as Haddon. I am now discussing my findings with relevant Torres Strait Islanders in the hope that these issues will contribute to the repatriation debate.

Outcomes

As a result of this research project I was able to compile an extensive photographic record of historical collections and associated documentation. When photographing many of the objects, especially the elaborate turtle shell masks, I was able to focus on detail in construction and design. This level of photographic information is important to ensure Torres Strait Islanders get a real sense of the complexity of the objects.

The collaborative nature of this project has enabled me to gain important museum and research skills and has provided an opportunity for a Torres Strait Islander perspective to be applied to those collections which left the Torres Strait last century.

My visit will help to make information about the collections more accessible to Torres Strait Islanders, and contacts made in the various institutions will be useful to the community during future collaborative projects and discussions about repatriation. My aim now is to develop a database on all Torres Strait collections in Australia and overseas. The next stage of this research will be to visit relevant mainland and Island communities to discuss my findings. Alfred Cort Haddon recorded a great deal of important information and I would like to compare the historical data he collected with the extensive oral history tradition as a way of improving current levels of information.

Mary Bani is assistant curator, Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, National Museum of Australia.

Mary Bani's visit was supported by Museums Australia's Professional Development Grant program, the James Love Winston Churchill Fellowship Trust (part of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust), the Crowther Beynon Fund at Cambridge University and the National Museum of Australia. Special thanks to Anita Herle, senior assistant curator of anthropology, CUMAA.

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Larrakia Art and Artefacts in a Contemporary World

RICHARD BARNES KOOLPINYAH

Richard Barnes Koolpinyah is an established artist who has been painting and exhibiting since the early 1960s. He is represented by public institutions in Darwin, including the Museums and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory (MAGNT), as well as private collections around Australia. He has a BA in Fine Arts from the Northern Territory University and is currently undertaking a master's degree which involves researching museum and art gallery collections for remnants of Larrakia heritage.

In 1890 the Port Darwin natives, commonly known as Larrakia, performed a public corroboree for some visiting dignitaries. The accoutrements included peaked hats and a decorated pole around which they danced. These items were in the possession of Paul Foelsche, founder of the Northern Territory Police Force, until about 1911 when he donated them to the South Australian Museum.

The designs on the pole are similar to Tiwi designs, reflecting the shared ceremonies of the Larrakia and the Tiwi people. For example, the *Gulida* (in Tiwi *Kulama*) were ceremonies used by both people to make young men. This sharing of ceremony could have been an attempt to make peace after many years of war over the taking of Larrakia women by the Tiwi. When Aboriginal people make peace they sometimes share ceremonies.

As a contemporary artist I have begun to explore my Larrakia heritage through museum and art gallery collections. Due to the historical link between the Northern Territory and South Australia — the Territory was administered by South Australia until 1911 — the South Australian Museum holds the largest collection of NT artefacts and most of my research has been on its collection.

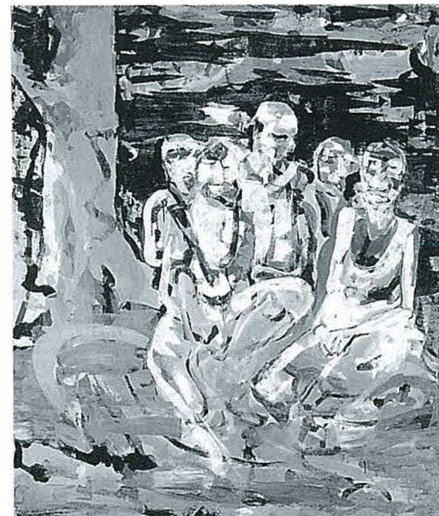
Seeing the objects used in the 1890 public ceremony, 107 years after the event, caused many images to rise in my mind, as if I were there. I have used these images and the feelings they evoked, along with my cultural knowledge, to document my impressions of what happened long ago.

This early association between Larrakia and Tiwi people also helped to preserve the Larrakia language. There are now more Tiwi speaking the Larrakia language than Larrakia people. This provides an opportunity for Larrakia people to learn the language from the Tiwi and on occasions this has helped me with the correct use of language for naming individual art pieces. For example, *Gwalwa Dorrenage* (1995), collection of MAGNT, means 'this is our land' and was taught to me by my uncle, George Mungalu.

There are many collections of notes on Larrakia words in museums and other institutions, such as the ones collected by Thomas Parkhouse.[1] An accountant and paymaster for the South Australian Railway, Parkhouse was based at Port Darwin. His original notes in the South Australian Museum inspired me to draw on my own knowledge of Larrakia words to use as titles for my art work.

While I question Parkhouse's conclusions on the enmity and alliances he describes between Larrakia and neighbouring tribes, the Wagait to the west and Wulnar to the east, I have no hesitation in supplementing my language knowledge by using Parkhouse's list because I recognise and concur with many of the words he uses and defines. For example, he lists *kulpala* as 'frog' and *mayuma* as 'to gather them up', which corresponds with my understanding of *kulpala mayuma* as meaning 'frog hunter'.

In the 1940s, about 50 years after the 1890 corroboree, a Larrakia man was languishing in Fannie Bay Jail, pining after his loved one, when he received a 'Dear John letter' in the form of a bundle of message sticks. He was being told that his intended bride was to be married off to someone else.



Richard Barnes Koolpinyah, the *Harvesters*, 1997, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 163 x 135 cm. From the exhibition 'Contemporary Territory 1998'.

I can imagine the anguish he would have been feeling, locked away in prison, and being subjected to the indignity of losing his promised wife to another and not being able to do anything about it!

I tried to capture this feeling in another piece of work, which is not yet completed, by recycling some wood from an earlier installation. I wanted to capture the essence of the moment by showing the natural timber painted up to reflect both the secular and sacred life of an Aboriginal person, and the promise of marriage reflected in a peaked hat as would be worn by a Larrakia bridegroom.

During my research at the South Australian Museum I obtained a list of some 500 items collected from the Darwin area, which is all Larrakia country. However, knowing that many non-Larrakia Aboriginal people were brought into this territory, and that they probably had their own art and artefacts, I decided to shorten the list to include only Larrakia items. I did this by noting the date it was collected, the description of the item and its Aboriginal name. If the item was collected very early, during the 1800s for example, and it fitted the oral description passed

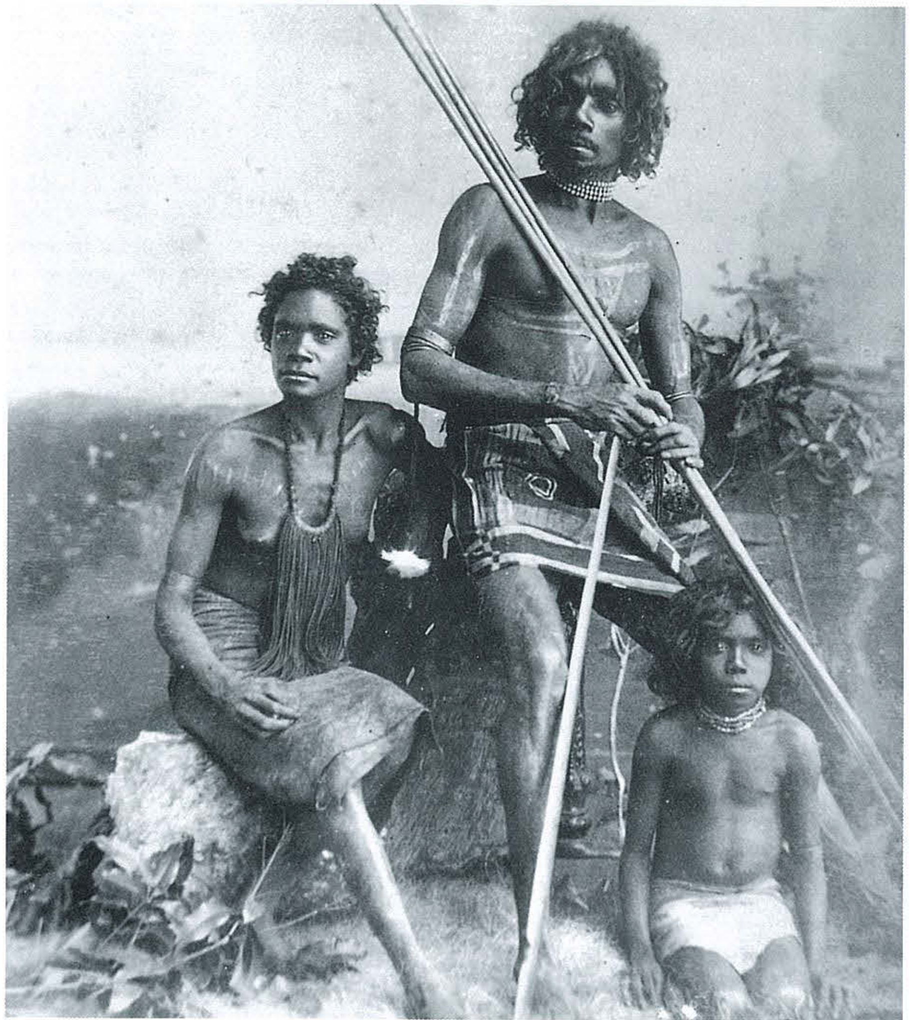
down to me by senior Larrakia, and it had a Larrakia name, I included it on a short list of items I wanted to look at. I ended up with a list of about 60 items and found about 30 of these in the Museum's storeroom. I found spear throwers, bamboo didgeridoos and string body decorations.

I did not want to simply reproduce the artefacts so I again drew on the emotions that the discovery of the artefacts produced in me. I visualised how the items may have been used. In my mind's eye, I saw Larrakia men and women dressed in the string body decorations, wearing sarongs and dancing to the bamboo didgeridoo. I saw the men had designs painted on their bodies and carried spear throwers.

My family always talked about the unusual length of Larrakia spear throwers and I discovered photos of these in MAGNT's Paul Foelsche Collection. The original glass plates of the Foelsche collection are held by the South Australian Museum and I understand additional photographs and/or copies are held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Foelsche documented the Larrakia people in photographs taken in and around Darwin from approximately 1879 to 1920. These show the unusually long spear throwers the Larrakia men carried with them.

Larrakia were familiar with sarongs through their early contact with the Macassans, who visited north Australia to collect *trepang* (sea cucumber or *beche de mer*) during the 1800s, and possibly earlier. During the 1940s and 1950s the pearling industry employed a number of Larrakia men on board their diving vessels and, as the Asian divers wore sarongs, many of the Larrakia also adopted this mode of dress.

I decided in 1997 that the best way to show the string, spear thrower, didgeridoo, sarong and body paint was to form a dance group made up of Larrakia men and women. Workshops were held for participants to learn traditional dance, string making and artefact production, including the spear throwers. Gary Lang, a Larrakia man and former member of Bangarra, was the dance trainer and Shirley Gundhumawuy was the trainer for string making. The dancers wore the items during performances at various civic functions. I painted the body of each dancer prior to the performance according to the body marks I had 'seen' as a response to the discovery of the artefacts in the South Australian Museum.



Larrakia family group, c. 1890, photographer unknown. Collection of Museums and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

The whole process has been recorded, including photographs of the workshops and video footage of one of the dance performances. The video will form part of my master's thesis, 'Larrakia art and artefacts in a contemporary world'.

Recent work exhibited in 'Contemporary Territory 1998' refers to the issue of exploitation and objectification of Indigenous people through the harvesting of human bones for scientific research — many of which ended up in museum collections. Confronting this issue when I visit museums evokes powerful emotions of discovery and recovery. The *Harvesters* is an example of what Margie West, curator of Aboriginal art at MAGNT, calls the 'dark side' of my response. These feelings and contemplations about artefacts from the past have also informed my more celebratory paintings on Larrakia, such as the *Rainmaker*.

As a Larrakia man in Darwin I find myself constantly confronted by the impact of contact history on the Larrakia people. As an artist I find that my response to this history is a key motivating force in my creative output. It fills me with the full range of emotions, from despair over the collection of our remains, to a celebration of the richness of our culture represented by artefacts, documents and photographs. As a researcher my engagement with museums is essential in discovering and recovering aspects of our history.

Richard Barnes Koolpinyah is a practising artist whose work has been selected for the last two 'Telstra presents NATSI Art Award' tours. He is senior training co-ordinator and acting director of the Aboriginal Development Unit in the Northern Territory Department of Education.

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Collections! Are they assets?

HELEN TYZACK

For over a decade the accounting profession has been developing mandatory accounting standards for the preparation of financial reports in museums and galleries. The standards apply whether a museum or gallery is a company, a trust or an incorporated association; they apply whether the museum or gallery is attached to local, state or federal government. Underpinning the standards and legislation is a conceptual framework designed to provide clear and useable definitions of reports and their contents, including appropriate criteria for recognising assets in financial reports. Using this information it should be possible to determine the place and value of heritage collections on a museum's balance sheet. But it is not such a simple matter and most heritage assets cannot be included in financial reports because the accounting standards provide inappropriate definitions and fail to determine an appropriate valuation system.

Defining an Asset

The first step is to *define* an asset and the second is to *recognise* the asset in a financial report.

The conventional definition of an asset emphasises separability, marketability, cash-flow-based service potential, individualised accountability and finite 'productive' lifespans.[1] But these dimensions are often inappropriate to heritage assets.

According to the accounting standards an asset is not an object but a representation of 'future economic benefits'.[2] If an object has no 'future economic benefit' it is not considered an asset — which may surprise some museum personnel. Further, the definition requires that these 'future economic benefits' must be accruing to the organisation which prepares the financial reports. Any argument that there will be future economic benefits to the community is irrelevant.

Certainly, public heritage collections have a number of future benefits for individuals and the community generally, but is there any future benefit deriving from the collections which is economic to the museum? The future economic benefits suggested are: income received from admission; other user-pays fees; grants and sponsorship.[3] However, these can be discounted for various reasons, including the fact that the value of receipts is a minimum and variable measure of the benefits flowing from the overall operation of a museum. It is not the collections that are the chief generators of museums' net revenues but the package of services offered by the museums.

Auditors of financial reports need to have evidence to support the probability of whether future economic benefits will eventuate. But even if museums can find future economic benefits for their collections, can they list them with any degree of certainty? Can museums use current or past data to provide evidence of a future benefit? No, of course not. Yet this is what the accounting profession seems to be encouraging in the conceptual framework and accounting standards.

Certainly, public heritage collections have a number of future benefits for individuals and the community generally, but is there any future benefit deriving from the collections which is economic to the museum?

The final defining characteristic of an asset concerns a museum's control of the future economic benefit. Control 'means the capacity of the entity to benefit from the asset in the pursuit of the entity's objectives and to deny or regulate the access of others to that benefit'.[4]

In Australia we have upwards of 3,000 public museums and galleries which collectively house the national collection. Most have the use of loaned artefacts or works of art, and the care and use of these loaned items is usually the same as for those artefacts which are owned by the museum. I suggest then that loaned items are being controlled by the museum in much the same way as the owned items. If the owned collection is a probable 'future economic benefit' and it is controlled by the museum, then it follows that the loaned collection should also be defined as an asset, remembering, of course, that control is the issue, not ownership.

Recognising an Asset

The accounting standards provide two criteria for recognition (or disclosure) of an asset in the balance sheet: it must be recognised in the financial reports if its value or cost can be measured; the value or cost, which is measured, must be a reliable measurement. Museums are bound by these criteria and they cannot disagree or develop their own at the time of report preparation.

But valuing museum collections means valuing each individual item and accountants and academics cannot agree on a method. All cost/value systems have limitations. Problems include: the original price or cost of an artefact might be unknown; lack of current market value — valuing service flows from non-marketed goods is a real issue and does impinge on the reliability of the exercise;[5] the possibility of thin markets; artefacts are not for sale; the value in Australia as compared with a different value overseas.

Many argue that heritage assets cannot be reliably measured because there is a subjective nature and arbitrariness about the valuation. The use of independent valuations is a requirement of the standards, the expense of which can be enormous. Questions about the benefits of such a cost have been raised.[6] The real issue is that curators value by examining objects from an artistic or scientific perspective and take into account an object's fit and significance within a collection of works.[7] Valuers have a different perspective and value on the basis of marketplace prices. Our heritage collections are not being retained for market sales, therefore, a market value does not reflect heritage value or the history of our society. An accurate financial value of this history is not measurable. Option, existence, bequest and prestige are not values which can be measured reliably however beneficial they may be to the museum or community.

So, using the prescriptions of the accounting profession via the conceptual framework and accounting standards,

many museum collections cannot be defined as assets nor recognised as assets in the financial reports. There are future benefits but not necessarily any future economic benefits because these are conjecture and the degree of certainty is small. Acceptance that museums do control collections would then define artefacts on loan as assets. Valuation systems as accepted by the accounting profession are inadequate to represent the complexities within collections. Valuation methods are not standardised and therefore cannot provide financial reports in different museums which allow for reliable comparison.

Management Issues

It has been suggested that by recording the value of collections in the balance sheet, museums gain information to help management. However, in practice, the costs of managing collections will have no direct relationship to any value of future economic benefits that might be given to it. And, while the accounting standards desire a set of practices, the prescriptions fail to be of use at a practical management level.

There are numerous fallacies and examples relating to the management consequences of recognising collections as assets in the financial reports. For example, there is an idea that the financial report figure helps museums manage by giving them information for purchasing insurance premiums. This forgets that the values ascribed to an object for insurance values are usually based on a deprival method of valuation, in which case it is generally the replacement cost which is the value. But remember, the figure on the financial report should be representing the valuation of future economic benefits. Who can reliably tell whether an insurance valuer's replacement cost is the same value as a future economic benefit? If a future economic benefit can be valued, it is conceivable that the future economic benefit might be less than the replacement cost supported by the insurers.

New Relationship

The majority of museum and art gallery collections cannot be disclosed in financial reports as per the current accounting standards. The community, via its museums, is not making an investment for future financial gain, as in the private sector. The collections are not an investment, rather artefacts/works of art are collected for different types of non-financial gain. The gains are qualitative and non-financial so a different type of report may be needed for disclosure of qualitative, non-financial and non-business museum factors.

There are two key issues: whether the standards permit museums to recognise heritage collections as assets in the financial reports (yes or no); and whether the financial reports should include a value for the assets.

A few accounting/economic academics are leading the discussion about defining and recording the value of museum collections in financial reports. The museum industry needs to support this group and to pursue the issues with the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the Public Sector Accounting Standards Board. If the museum industry doesn't get involved then considerable time, effort and money will be allocated to an activity which has spurious goals and for which minimal or no benefit is perceivable.

It is time for a new relationship between the accounting profession and the museum industry.

Helen Tyzack is a consultant in museum and gallery management and a qualified accountant. She writes about financial issues affecting museums and galleries in ARTeFACT, the newsletter of Museums Australia (Qld).

This is an abridged version of a longer paper. A similar version of the longer paper was presented at Griffith University's 1997 conference Cultural Crossroads. For a copy of the full paper, please contact the editor.

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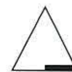

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Frontline: communicating with visitors to the National Gallery of Australia

BARBARA POLINESS

'So how much did we pay for this rubbish?' shrieked the woman to the security attendant. The attendant remained silent, ever alert to any surrounding dangers. Security personnel are approached with outbursts and more general questions every day. How they react can greatly affect a visitor's experience of the Gallery.

While security personnel were once discouraged from speaking to visitors, today at the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) they are asked to play a dual role in protecting the collection and providing information to the public. In an endeavour to ensure accuracy and to promote a positive attitude towards the Gallery and its collections, the Gallery's Education & Public Programs section has developed a course in communicating about art to visitors. The first of these was held in April 1997.

The major objectives of the course are to help participants develop a greater interest and understanding of the Gallery's collections and layout, to collectively discover ways of discussing the Gallery and/or the art on view, and to address the reasoning behind purchases and exhibitions.

Participants attend the course one day a week for three weeks. Many have not been involved in formal learning for some time, so emphasis is placed on a two-way exchange of information. Prior to day one, a survey form is distributed asking participants about their expectations of the course and desired outcomes. These are often informative and insightful: 'I want to broaden my knowledge to counter the aggressive and personal attacks of our patrons,' Sue. 'Who are half of these artists in the national collection and for what reason were they purchased?' Anon.

Day one is about understanding art in the NGA and begins in front of the works of art. Issues such as how and why each exhibition space is divided, the acquisition process, and why certain works are included in the collection are covered during a walk through and group discussion.

Then it's time to get messy and make some art. Through a hands-on session the group learns to recognise different art materials and techniques and begins to develop a visual arts language.

Michael Fensom-Lavender (Front of House) experimenting with watercolour.
Photo Elini Kypridis. Courtesy National Gallery of Australia.

Day two covers communication skills and strategies for looking at and discussing art. Participants begin by arranging postcards of works of art for a hypothetical exhibition. They are then asked to justify their selection to the group. The variety of approaches reinforces the idea that there are many ways of looking at art.

This is followed by a session called Hot Topics, in which key works are discussed. This session is about coming to terms with works that some may have previously found difficult. Participants throw in ideas, contrary opinions or snippets of information and the educator draws attention to the many good ideas that can be used in support of a work of art.

The afternoon session combines games and role playing to revise listening skills and body language. The participants also share useful strategies for addressing groups or ways of diverting attention when a visitor is too close to a work of art.

The final day looks beyond the front line: finding out more. It begins with a unit on Aboriginal art and culture, which is particularly important as visitors often ask questions about these areas. Current issues, such as land rights, are discussed to help participants formulate objective responses to differing points of view.

The day concludes with visits to other departments within the Gallery. These visits emphasise the integration of all departments and enable staff to learn about the broader services the Gallery provides. For security attendants patrolling the Gallery each day, the opportunity to spend time in other areas is generally viewed as a highlight of the course.

When security personnel had completed the first Frontline course it was evaluated, revised and, in response to popular request, offered to staff throughout the Gallery. Front of house, building maintenance, curatorial, interns and records management staff attended the next three courses during 1997. Revising the course to include all departments has allowed for greater interaction and sharing of knowledge between people who, in a staff of about 200, may not normally work together.

Evaluation comments have been overwhelmingly positive. Many participants have said the course has given them more confidence in discussing the collection and answering public enquiries. 'The course was far broader, informative and interesting than I had expected. I thought all aspects were relevant to working in the Gallery and dealing with the public,' Carmel. 'It has broadened my knowledge and understanding towards the collection and taken away the fear factor,' Anon.

The next Frontline course will run in November 1998.

Barbara Poliness is educator at the National Gallery of Australia.

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Museums and the Web 1998

ANGELINA RUSSO

Museums and the Web is an annual conference organised by Archives and Museum Informatics and sponsored by the Canadian Heritage Information Network. It is the only international forum devoted to issues related to transferring and translating traditional museum practices to the world wide web.

The 1998 conference, held in Toronto, in April, proved an insightful window into the problems and anxieties faced by museum managers, curators, educators and designers as they grapple with the web as a means of delivering museum programs.

The opening plenary was delivered by Maxwell Anderson, director of the Art Gallery of Ontario, who established an overall context for defining the position of web-based material within the museum program. Anderson determined that the experience of the museum web page should enhance the physical experience of visiting the museum. He suggested that by defining types of information, methods of presentation and accessibility to contextual material, the web page could enrich the physical experience by achieving a greater understanding of collections, their histories and of the museum itself. This session remained a powerful reference for participants and was the catalyst for many impromptu discussions throughout the conference.

The world wide web has been recognised for its interactive, educative and accessible delivery systems and is now part of contemporary strategies for delivering museum programs. As a delivery tool, the web's power is unsurpassed. In terms of content, interactivity, interface and innovation, however, museum sites struggle to translate traditional programs to this medium.

One presenter engaged the audience in an impromptu policy establishing exercise, asking participants why they believed the web to be important to their institutions. While the audience agreed in principle on the web's relevance to museum programs, few could state any defined strategies for identifying appropriate material, presenting information, or methods of evaluating the benefits of web delivery.

Whether or not web delivery of museum programs is directly beneficial in terms of enhancing the physical experience of visiting the museum, there is no doubt of the political power the web holds. An institution with the resources and ability to digitise its collection promotes its political and financial ability to do so, thus setting it apart from those unable to deliver their collection in this way. The public recognises the web for its entertainment value, and it also holds enormous political sway.

Two overwhelming issues came out of the conference. Firstly, museums around the world seem to be grappling with similar issues of content and technology, web delivery and evaluative benefits of the medium. Secondly, most museums have focused their exhibition services to address the issues of web delivery, and with this has come a new design position, i.e. the new media design manager.

The first issue is not surprising. Given the relative newness of the world wide web, the lack of research and examples of compelling or original web sites, the fact that museums have not developed strategies for web delivery is understandable.

The second issue is more compelling. The museum space is being redefined. The traditional museum is a space, both two and three dimensional. Within this space objects are displayed. Collections would have very little impact and would do little to educate or entertain the public if they were left in storage indefinitely.

The traditional point of contact for the public has been the museum foyer, but the web now allows the visitor to enter the museum via a home page without visiting the physical site. This home page, as space and face of the museum, is as significant and valuable an experience of the institution as is the act of walking through the museum foyer.

Few museums would allow their volunteers to design and maintain their foyers yet it would seem that museums are allowing this to happen with their web pages. There are many museum web pages that do little to uphold their institution's integrity. For example, within Australian museums there are departments that publish their own achievements outside the formats of existing institutional web protocols.

With the realisation that collections on the web form part of the informational content that needs to be displayed, the growing need for specialist designers to establish museum web pages as metaphors for institutional foyers is also becoming increasingly obvious.

It is no mistake that criteria defined by the CIDOC Multimedia Working Group, in its revised draft of the Multimedia Evaluation Criteria for Museum Multimedia, are, in essence, visual and spatial conditions. Content, interactivity, interface, implementation and overall impact are now defined as the core criteria for evaluating museum web sites.

The jury paid regard to these issues in announcing the best overall site winner, The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). This site, along with the paper delivered by Greg van Alstynne, design manager, new media, 'Cybernetics, Modernism and Pleasure in the MoMA Web Site' proved one of the most compelling, thoughtful and innovative responses to the issues of space, place and navigation on the web.

Two other participants require mention. The first is the prize for Best Museum Professional site, an award for excellence in resources for members of an international or distributed museum community, which was won by Australian Museums Online (AMOL). Sarah Kenderdine, information architect for the project and chair of several sessions at the conference, proved a valuable and articulate spokesperson for Australian museums.

The second is Steven Smith of United Focus. His paper and subsequent workshop 'Digitising Collections: the Redefining of Museums', drew on a report prepared for Arts Australia. This determined strategies for identifying and understanding key issues in establishing and overseeing museum web sites. Smith's approach to combining issues of access, security, navigation and marketing with the cultural issues of collection management proved an insightful reference for many of the participants.

The conference attempted to identify issues and to promote approaches to museum theory, practice, entertainment and education. Australian content was noticeably missing, however, and the focus remained Eurocentric. Given the number of major and special interest museums around Australia, the extraordinary wealth of information stored within their collections, and the emphasis on web delivery within our major museums, it was disappointing not to see a strong Australian contingent broadening international understandings of our particular attempts and approaches to the subject.

Museums and the Web is calling for proposals for the 1999 conference, to be held in New Orleans. Perhaps this conference will see submissions by some of our curators and museum professionals in recognition of a truly international approach to the complex issue of web delivery within museum programs.

Angelina Russo is a Master of Architecture student at the University of South Australia's School of Architecture and Design. Her thesis area is virtual museums.

Addresses

Museums and the Web 99 – www.archimuse.com/mw99

Best of the Web – www.archimuse.com/mw98/frame_best.html

ICOM/CIDOC Multimedia Working Group, Multimedia Evaluation Criteria – www.archimuse.com/cidoc.mmwg.eval.crit.html

MoMA – www.moma.org

Australian Museums Online – http://amol.phm.gov.au

Smith, Steven. United Focus – www.unitedfocus.com.au/unifocus

Obituary

For over twelve years Jim Logan stood out as one of the most lively and inspiring figures on the Australian art scene. His enthusiasm, verve and originality left an indelible mark across the field of museum practice in this country.

A strong and practical sense of community service marked Jim's involvement with his cadres in the museum world. From 1988 to 1993 he filled a number of key roles with the Art Museums Association of Australia (AMAA). Continuing to serve on committees and as an office bearer of Museums Australia (NSW) from 1994-96, Jim assisted with the organisation of the association's annual conference in Sydney in 1996. At a regional level Jim was active in the National Exhibitions Touring Scheme in Tasmania and Victoria, the National Arts Industry Training Council in Tasmania and, finally, as president of the Crafts Council of the ACT.

Making art meaningful and bright was Jim's special talent. He always maintained that he was not a theorist. Ideals appealed to him as much as objects but it was always in terms of imagery and anecdote that he interpreted the world around him. This he did with aplomb through the acquisitions he made, the exhibitions and displays he organised, and the way he felt completely at ease with beautiful things.

Jim studied ceramics and textiles at Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin, graduating in 1978. Shortly afterwards he pursued a career as a potter - a time he later referred to as his 'brown and chunky' phase. In 1981 he moved to Sydney, armed with the nursing qualification which supported his further studies at the former City Art Institute, first in painting and later in gallery management. From this point, Jim's achievement as a curator of Australian art was to be swift and practical.

Jim Logan
Born Dunedin, New Zealand, 29 August 1958.
Died Canberra, Australia, 8 June 1998.

During 1987 he was assistant director at Milburn+Arte, a commercial gallery. By 1988 he was in Hobart, as director of Chameleon Contemporary Art Space, making it the State's leading art space and one of the most exciting venues for contemporary art in the country. In 1991 Jim surfaced in Melbourne, directing the Waverley City Gallery. A host of beautifully conceived and hung exhibitions established Waverley's reputation. In 1993 he returned to Sydney and reinvented himself as a curator with the National Trust, supervising the transformation of The Merchant's House, an 1848 building, into a museum of childhood.

In 1995 he was appointed curator of Australian Decorative Arts at the National Gallery of Australia. We were warned by his referees he would disregard the bureaucratic machine as extraneous to the real business of curatorship. For Jim, what mattered was art. Art and exhibitions of art should fizz with life, touch ordinary people, have evident style. His concept of art as life meant that his taste was never academic or precious, he did not consider art a refuge, didn't care for wisdom, or correctness.

The latest of his exhibitions 'Everyday Art: Australian Folk Art', is about to tour from Canberra to every State and Territory, ending next year in Tasmania. Jim's incomplete and perhaps most important project is a retrospective of the Melbourne-based jeweller, Susan Cohn, scheduled for a national and international tour in 1999.

Art, work and everyday life were inextricably linked in Jim's world. He possessed an effervescent will to experience life at its best. The infamously irreverent humour, warm cheeky grin and raucous laugh atomised the room wherever he went. His tall thin frame, closely cropped hair and distinctive features were the perfect foil for his striking clothes and jewellery. Above all, Jim loved people. With his life partner and survivor, Greg Ralph, he created a home filled with hospitality, art and friendship, which will be remembered fondly by many.

Roger Leong is assistant curator of international decorative arts at the National Gallery of Australia.

Marketing the Museum

By Fiona McLean. Routledge, London, 1997.

The redevelopment of the Museum of Victoria (now Museum Victoria) and the opening of TePapa Tongarewa in New Zealand have generated considerable discussion, highlighting the philosophical issues and commercial challenges facing museums today. The definition of a museum's core business, how to respond to the marketplace, and issues of relevance and postmodern interpretation have created ongoing controversy.

The changing role of museums, and how they present themselves and their collections to the public, are all presented in Fiona McLean's introductory analysis in *Marketing the Museum*.

The first few chapters set the scene for the discussion on marketing, the philosophy of meeting visitor needs and addressing the challenges facing modern museums. The issues are not new: What is a museum? What is its relevance in postmodern society? How do we resolve conflicts between collection, preservation, display, entertainment, elitism and public access? This analysis of issues helps explain why marketing is still a contentious topic in many cultural organisations.

McLean's discussion of marketing and its development follows traditional lines, beginning with reference to Peter Drucker as one of the first to formalise marketing's customer focus. She credits Kotler and Levy, in 1969, with broadening the concept of marketing to cover the services sector.

However, the issue has been argued ever since Theodore Levitt's *Harvard Business Review* article in 1960, proposing that General Motors marketed a service, and that the motor car they produced was simply a by-product — a theory with interesting implications in any discussion of museum services and products.

McLean concludes that museums are complex organisms, operating in complex environments, juggling conflicting goals. Responding to the needs of people — visitors, scholars, future generations, even non-visitors — is the challenge. Marketing can help museums understand and reach these audiences and deliver appropriate messages.

The marketing sections of the book are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They will assist museum staff to gain an overview of the marketing process, and to understand the links between research, market segmentation, promotions and planning. However, the detail is sometimes uneven — the section on product is comprehensive; the difficult issue of pricing is abbreviated.

Readers will identify some differences between the levels of sophistication of Australian and UK marketing. McLean's discussion of market segmentation includes demographics, geographics, social class and lifestyle. But the lifestyle discussion is confined to 'outer-directed' and 'inner-directed'. Australian research is more detailed. The Roy Morgan/Colin Benjamin Values Segments, in common use in Australia, provide far more practical information.

McLean also writes that focus groups 'have rarely been used in museums'. Australian museums use focus groups for everything from front-end research to post-exhibit evaluation, and have done so for some years.

McLean discusses customer service delivery in terms of 'blueprinting' (a technical process-oriented approach for mapping service processes). She expands on the more common term 'moments of truth' (instances when visitors interact with service providers), coined by Jan Carlzon of SAS airline. Karl and Stephen Albrecht, who developed the 'cycle of service' and others who favour the use of customer 'scripts' have probably addressed the concept in a more user-friendly fashion.

Chapter 9, 'Implementing the Marketing Effort', is an excellent and concise summary of the marketing planning process and will assist both beginner and experienced marketers to prepare a marketing plan. A pity it is followed by a fictional case study.

The book concludes that museums have '... the capacity to fulfil the individual. Marketing can enable this fulfilment.' Although the book is recommended as a valuable reference, I wondered if McLean doesn't protest too much. Negative references to marketing and the section on marketing 'baiting' seemed to be written with more passion and conviction than were the sections on marketing's potential to contribute. *Marketing the Museum* will certainly generate some interesting arguments and heated discussions about the role of marketing in the modern museum.

Dr Sharron Dickman
Museum consultant and foundation director of the Ford Heritage Centre, Melbourne.

Making the Internet Work for Museums

By Sue Gordon. Science Museum/Museum Documentation Association, London, 1996.

As Sue Gordon points out in *Making the Internet Work for Museums*, the museum world is moving from '... a position of ignorance about the Internet to enthusiastic acceptance of the benefits of international mail (email) and a desire to exploit global electronic publishing in the form of the world wide web'. Her book fills an information gap occurring in many museums, individual collections and heritage organisations as they grapple with the myriad of issues involved in exploiting (rather than being intimidated by) internet technologies.

There is always a lurking hesitation in the minds of people who seek to publish in an area where the baseline facts are in a state of flux. The documentation of internet technology, its evolution and implementation are subjects fraught with the complications of almost immediate obsolescence. I applaud anyone who negotiates the risk and goes to traditional forms of print.

The publication had its genesis in two workshops held in 1995 at the Museum Documentation Association's annual conference in Edinburgh, supplemented by papers given at the Museums and Heritage Show in London. A small volume (50 pages), it has specific applications to the needs of smaller museum groups who are largely unfamiliar with the Internet. In a text free from the rhetoric of techno-evangelism, the book sets forth both technological and management implications of establishing internet and email functionality. It is organised into four parts.

Part 1 outlines the basic requirements for a connection to the Internet for those with existing network infrastructure. It outlines the decisions that museum managers must make when contemplating installing internet connections and networks. The A to Z of getting connected is outlined, together with useful references for those working in the UK information technology scene.

Part 2 targets those who are interested in setting up a website in their own museum. It summarises the use of text and images, editorial considerations and hypertext, and includes some other technical issues of website development.

Part 3 highlights the history and use of electronic mail and its value to academic groups and museum researchers, including a discussion of email forms and protocols.

Part 4 looks to the organisational issues involved in website development, including commitment to skills and training, planning, staff confidentiality and net etiquette.

Each section also contains tips, case studies and diagrams. The tips are certainly useful for practical advice or specific courses of action in a particular scenario. In an otherwise explicit volume, the diagrams are slightly more difficult to interpret, but I note that it is rare to find clear visual explanations for information about technological infrastructure and schema.

The book contains a glossary of terms, suggested further reading and information on service providers and useful contacts (the latter is UK-specific). The further reading section could be expanded to include the major conference and museum information webs. A list of professional museum websites and newsgroups concerned with new media implementation and museum documentation would also be useful.

Much of the book acts as a precursor to further information that would be required by museums to install internet and electronic services. It could be a useful volume with which to arm oneself when making an application to museum management. The value of the web often flourishes among staff, while management takes a more cautious approach to the investment that such initiatives require.

The book also has an audience among museum web managers, who could give it to their curatorial and other staff as a reference on some of the implications the web may have for their own publications and integration of the Internet into museum programs.

Making the Internet Work for Museums could also be a model for a similar book on the Australian museum market. It is my experience that any material published on this subject (and we have witnessed an explosion of titles about the Internet) are keenly sought after and will be taken up with eagerness. The special success of *Making the Internet Work for Museums* is that its information still has currency, despite being published in 1996. This is due to Sue Gordon's great experience: she is widely published on the subject of internets and interactivity in museums.

Sarah Kenderdine
Information architect and creative producer for Australian Museums On Line (AMOL), Powerhouse Museum (http://amol.phm.gov.au).

Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880–1939

Russell McGregor. Melbourne University Press, 1997.

Imagined Destinies is a welcome addition to that archive of material loosely described as Aboriginal history. McGregor himself would, however, reject such a label as he describes the book as '... not a history of Aboriginal Australians; it is a history of textual representations of Aboriginals'. This subtle but extremely important distinction between Aboriginal history and history of European textual representations of Aboriginal people is a structuring feature of the book.

McGregor divides his task into six chapters and a prologue. The prologue, 'The Eclipse of Antipodean Enlightenment', considers first contact and the European descriptions of Aboriginal Australians beginning with the arrival of the First Fleet. Focusing on Enlightenment thought, in particular the notion of progress and social development, McGregor sets the scene for the next 100 years of Australian race relations. Despite some attempt to 'civilise and Christianise', McGregor shows that settler-colonists fully expected Aboriginal people to simply wither away. The doomed race theory was, he notes, '... a manifestation of ultimate pessimism in Aboriginal abilities ...' to adapt and live within civilised society.

Chapter 1 extends the Enlightenment focus of the prologue. The polygenesis-monogenesis debates which were vitally important in the first half of the nineteenth century are fully explored and considered. McGregor shows that the doomed race theory grew out of and dovetailed into the various racial theories of that time. The impact of evolutionary theories, and especially the work of Darwin, are shown to have had a profound impact on the way that Aboriginal people were perceived. In short, they were assumed to be on the verge of extinction. The assumptions were that '... a race that had not progressed could not progress' and that extinction was a regrettable but entirely unavoidable consequence.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the missionary efforts of churches and governments, showing the policies of segregation and the development of mission stations to have been motivated by a mixture of paternalism and genuine Christian compassion. Often misguided, these motivations resulted in attempts to shield Aboriginal people from the corrupting influences of the whites. Perhaps the most pernicious result was institutionalised Christian indoctrination to the view that Aboriginal protection was a medical matter and required medical intervention. The removal of 'half-caste' children is shown to be a consequence of these motivations, and the full ramifications of the removal policies are more fully developed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 examines the role anthropology played in the treatment of Aboriginal Australians. McGregor links the development of the academic tradition of anthropology and shows how this related to the doomed race theory. The ideas of 'half-caste' removal and the hope that the whiter children could be 'bred' white are explored. This shameful period in Australia's history is well documented: difficult material is presented in as impartial a manner possible. McGregor strives to let the evidence speak wherever possible and, where it is not, he is an eloquent interpreter.

McGregor uses to advantage the black and white photographs, presented as a centre wrap. These images well illustrate his arguments and are an excellent supplement to the book. The pictures document the range of visual representations of 'half-castes', often included in the reports of protectors and other government officials. McGregor observes the disparate relationship between the images and their captions in an exploration of the relationship between historical context and report writing. The reports he draws on are shown to be complex documents replete with text, sub-text and what we might now refer to as hidden agendas.

Chapters 5 and 6 document the decline of the doomed race theory. In part the decline arises from the obvious fact that extinction failed to be a reality. However, McGregor shows that the failure of the theory was also due to political pressure when assimilation became a preferred option.

Imagined Destinies offers an excellent background to many important debates in Australia's race history. Although finishing at the end of the 1930s, McGregor lays a foundation that can be followed through to today. My problems with the book are few and concern issues of the appropriation of Aboriginal voices. The descendants of Cooper, Ferguson and Patten, the

activists described in Chapter 6, should have been consulted and interviewed for their recollections of the period under discussion. I would also have liked to hear from survivors of the 'half-caste' institutions. But perhaps I was looking for something else, something that this book does not pretend to do. McGregor's contribution is timely, well researched and interesting, and, whatever its shortcomings, we are so much the better for having this volume. I recommend this book to those who are interested in the finer details of Australia's racial history.

Dr Lynette Russell
Museum Studies at Deakin University.

Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era

By Moira G. Simpson. Routledge, London, 1996.

In 1992 in a Minnesota museum, a native American activist, Vernon Bellecourt, climbed aboard an exhibition replica of the *Nina*, one of the ships that brought Christopher Columbus to the Americas. In the midst of a press conference, he dashed a container full of blood over the ship's sail and deck, in protest at the celebration of the Columbian quincentenary. A swift and sympathetic response by curatorial staff and a hasty reinterpretation of the exhibit converted a potential disaster into a minor triumph for cross-cultural understanding. But a situation in which such a protest was unnecessary would be far more desirable.

In 1997 an exhibition of Aboriginal art, 'The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937-1997', opened at the National Gallery of Australia. 'Wagilag' was the culmination of seven years' work by its curators in association with the Yolgnu artists and custodians of the story. On the opening night, one of the custodians handed Governor-General Sir William Deane a feathered spear, indicating that custodians and artists were happy with the exhibition, and that they were delivering their story into the hands of the National Gallery as its temporary custodian. The official party, followed by the guests at the opening, walked through smoke from burning green gum leaves, to purify them before they entered the exhibition. Observing cultural conventions, and time spent in consultation to meet the concerns of Aboriginal people, had reaped its reward in affirmation and reconciliation.

Making Representations is an international survey of the ways in which the tricky question of representing Indigenous cultures in museums has been tackled in recent years by Indigenous people themselves, and by curators. Moira Simpson has surveyed museums in North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and also in the United Kingdom, where representations of slavery and the stories of non-European immigrant groups are subject to similar problems.

Examples from Australia are numerous and varied — from discussions of keeping places as 'museums' and the return of Aboriginal skeletal material from Australian museums to communities, to successful collaborations between Aboriginal communities and the Australian Museum in Sydney — although the book's publication in 1996 has meant that many more recent examples of interpretation of Indigenous culture in Australia are omitted.

Simpson addresses the appropriateness of Western-style museum culture to the representation of the histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples. The central problem is the representation of Indigenous culture as the 'other' by members of the dominant cultural group in colonised countries. This is a situation fraught with possibilities for insensitivity, where displaying historical material describing Indigenous people in the language and terminology of other times can cause pain and offence, even if the curator's intention is to point out the error of such attitudes.

Is the Western-style museum the correct place in which to consider the cultures of peoples for whom notions of museum display and even the preservation of certain types of cultural product are as alien as the culture which practises them? How do museums overcome the distrust of Indigenous people, built up over centuries, that their culture will be interpreted in their own terms and not in those of the dominant invading culture? And what can museums do to bridge the cultural gap and create what management jargon calls a 'win-win situation'?

Simpson gives a range of solutions. On the issue of repatriation of cultural material she cites examples of situations in which objects, taken from their context many years before, have been restored to their originating communities, either permanently, for housing in a keeping place or Maori *marae* museum, or temporarily, for use in ceremonials.

As museums gain the confidence of Indigenous communities that they are sincere in their efforts to represent their culture appropriately, those communities begin to see value in what museums can contribute to them by way of restoring parts of their culture, 'Museums can provide resources for the rekindling of skills and knowledge, which have been virtually lost in recent decades'.

The key factor in successful interpretation — and successful relations generally with Indigenous people in the museum context — is consultation with Indigenous communities. Simpson describes the methods adopted by museums around the world to ensure that the culture of Indigenous peoples is interpreted correctly and sensitively: community involvement in oral history, photographic documentation and other research, advice to museum staff and the ratification of the use of plans, texts and images, guest curatorship and curatorship by a community. Above these 'hands-on' elements is often a consultative superstructure: formal bodies such as advisory boards composed of Indigenous stakeholders.

This book is an optimistic account of the possibilities of fruitful and harmonious interaction between the museum sector and Indigenous people, and a useful compendium of world practice in this area.

Roslyn Russell
Project manager at Australian Heritage Projects, Canberra.

Managing Museums and Galleries

By Michael A. Fopp. Routledge, London, 1997.

The corporate world's enthusiasm for management texts has finally caught up with the museum world with a spate of recent publications on museum management. This latest offering, *Managing Museums and Galleries*, is based on the belief that there is something special, if not unique, about managing museums. Author Michael Fopp is a highly experienced museum manager with extensive academic and practical knowledge in the broader management context. His book goes to some lengths to relate the core management theories to the world of museums.

The book is reviewed here in the context of the practising museum manager, assessed according to its potetial to help improve one's capacity to operate

effectively in the field. Management training for regional museum directors is not easy to obtain. Detailed training in major institutions is limited to a selection of the very senior management staff attending courses such as that at Mt. Eliza or overseas, often at their own expense. Texts such as this at least help to fill part of the gap in the provision of training.

As a museum director, Fopp is able to lend a solid practical element to his writing. The theory is balanced with practical ideas for managing people and organising museums more effectively. Commencing with a useful overview of the history of management theory, Fopp provides convincing reasons for taking the subject of management more seriously in the museum context. The safe and precious walls of the museum have long since been battered by the grim reality of reduced government support, the need to diversify sources of funds, and to better cope in the ever increasing competition for education and leisure activity. It is surely time to learn from the wider world some of the techniques which may help the museum community not only to survive, but to prosper.

Fopp has divided his analysis into the management of individuals and the management of museums as organisations. He reviews the individual as manager, the attributes they need to be successful and the intricate relationship that exists between them and their staff. Practical issues of staff selection, staff development and the hidden traps of interpersonal communication are all discussed. The notion of leadership and what constitutes a good leader rounds out the review of the individual as manager. In the organisational context, the book assesses the function of strategic planning.

Organisation theory provides a backdrop to the dramatic structural changes occurring in museums. An interesting analysis is made of how the museum is best structured to achieve its goals. After a rather solid burst of theory, Fopp moves on to methods for dealing with the conflict arising from the current climate of rapid change. A very brief overview of Total Quality Management (TQM) is given, mainly as a warning to managers to be on the lookout for the latest fashionable theories and any implications this may have for the ways they operate! An extensive glossary gives a useful guide to management jargon. A Code of Financial Practice also provides a concrete reminder of the implications of the profession's ethical standards.

Managing Museums and Galleries is primarily aimed at larger museums where complex structural or personnel problems may occur. Many of the principles, however, can apply to smaller institutions, whether run by paid staff or by volunteers. The process of getting people to work together towards a common vision is as challenging in these contexts as in any others.

Fopp has produced a text which sets some useful benchmarks for analysing one's own effectiveness in the management role. He gives a fairly intellectual discourse on the nature and art of management in museums; he will stretch your ideas on the process of managing.

Museum management in the 1990s is a multi-layered complex of often contradictory activities and conflicting ideologies. Managers in regional and specialised museums or those operating in large institutions are faced with a myriad of challenges and choices each day. Any text which can help one become better able to confront the management maze is good for the profession.

Roger Trudgeon
Manager of the Gold Museum, Ballarat.

News from Museum Studies at Deakin University

Calling all graduates!
A reunion of all our Museum Studies graduates and their lecturers will be held on the eve of the ICOM conference—Friday 9 October 1998 at 5.30 pm. If you have a connection with Museum Studies at Deakin University, Victoria College or Prahran CAE and you would like to join the reunion field trip (by train to the Old Castlemaine Gaol), please register your current address with:

Alumni Office, telephone (03) 9244 6851, facsimile (03) 9244 6684, or e-mail louisek@deakin.edu.au

20th Century Graduates: 21st Century Practice
A forum for new museum workers and students will be held in Melbourne on Friday 9 October. This 'fringe' ICOM conference is being organised by current students in Deakin's Museum Studies program. For further information contact Wendy Doolan, telephone (03) 9885 9976, facsimile (03) 9251 7048 or e-mail wdoolan@deakin.edu.au

Training and professional development
Museum Studies at Deakin is now in its twentieth year. Postgraduate courses in Museum Studies and Natural and Cultural Heritage Interpretation offer theoretical and practical opportunities for professional development. Some Museum Studies units are available in off-campus mode, and current students are located in most parts of Australia. Enquiries about courses in 1999 are welcome on telephone (03) 9244 7218.

Introduction to Museum Studies
A short course for newcomers to the museum sector will be held on the Burwood campus (Melbourne) on Thursday evenings in August and September 1998. For further information telephone (03) 9244 7218.

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Care of Collections: Conservation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Keeping Places and Cultural Centres

Edited by Karen Coote. Australian Museum, Sydney, 1998.

Earlier this year, the Australian Museum launched the first comprehensive, easy-to-read manual designed to assist Indigenous Australians to protect and preserve their cultural material. *Care of Collections: Conservation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Keeping Places and Cultural Centres* is targeted towards Indigenous workers at cultural centres and keeping places. It incorporates *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, the central policy of Museums Australia regarding Indigenous culture in museums. Edited by Australian Museum senior conservator Karen Coote, the manual is based on the experience of many Indigenous individuals and groups.

Although the book can be used alone, it is not meant to be the sole reference for assistance. It contains a chapter about appropriate training and contacts in State museums, plus how to contact them. Used in conjunction with the knowledge and experience offered by the larger institutions, *Care of Collections* will have the beneficial effect of developing partnerships to help in the preservation of cultural material.

Funded by ATSIC, *Care of Collections* is the first conservation manual to be specifically prepared for Indigenous museum workers. It balances professional museum conservation standards and practices with those achievable in cultural centres and keeping places, which are customarily limited by distance and lack of funds. For example, it recommends quick responses to pest infestation such as putting any infested item in a sealed plastic bag to protect other items.

Care of Collections offers advice on issues such as environmental control inside buildings, handling objects, good storage conditions, and packing and transporting objects. It also offers instructions for dealing with problems associated with specific types of cultural material commonly found in Indigenous cultural centres and keeping places, such as the preservation of carved and scarred trees. It suggests options for dealing with the different conditions in which objects may be found, for example, whether a carved/scarred tree is to be left in the ground, if a mould is to be made of it, and how to document it if it is removed. The advice on storing painted barks is particularly useful.

The instructions, together with photographs and diagrams, are helpful for readers who want to gain a better understanding of conservation issues through practical issues rather than theoretical ones. The photographs illustrate many of the common problems that occur and are especially good on the topic of storage.

An interesting feature is Karen Coote's advice to artists currently at work, such as the artists of the Central Desert. Her advice is designed to prevent the numerous problems associated with the long-term life of canvas paintings. For example, she advises that two thin coats of primer on a stretched canvas will preserve the final painting better than one thick coat. Some have queried the appropriateness of this advice to traditional painters, but, in my view, and in the light of the close association of many cultural centres with practising artists, this information will benefit the preservation of their paintings.

Given the audience at which *Care of Collections* is aimed, a glossary of terms would assist many readers in coming to grips with conservation jargon. However, the references to State museums for assistance offsets the oversight to some degree.

Care of Collections will be an invaluable tool for Indigenous workers in cultural centres and keeping places, but it will also be widely sought after by conservation students and the managers of collections of cultural materials.

Peter White
Aboriginal heritage officer at the Australian Museum, Sydney.

NET WORKS: Ingenious Solution to a Problem

South Australian Museum, Adelaide. March-June 1998.

'NET WORKS: Ingenious Solution to a Problem' combined aesthetics with a glimpse of the multifarious use of nets by Australian Aboriginal people in traditional food retrieval situations. This survey of practical ingenuity was combined with the breathtaking aesthetic afforded by the airy and insubstantial nature of nets and the way their form responds to light. Net shadows abounded.

The exhibition was titled and designed to reference the ephemeral networks of computer technology, both visually and conceptually. The subtitle — 'Ingenious solution to a problem' — refers to problem-solving, an activity closely associated with mathematical principles and their transfer into a technological framework. An incredibly appropriate steel mesh was used to ensure the connections were not missed, forming the graphics on the introductory panel, as well as the means by which the physical space within the exhibition was divided (and inquiring fingers kept away from works which in some cases date back to the nineteenth century).

Such was the pull of the net forms (it is no wonder creatures were caught in them — how could they resist?) that one was immediately drawn into looking, looking, looking — following the trail of knots, threads and spaces like the donkey after its carrot. It was only later, after you were well entangled in the exhibition, that you realised you had been taken on a journey from game hunting in central Australia to coastal fishing in north Queensland. In fact, like the nets, the structure of the exhibition was intricate, delicate and flyaway — but as strong as the steel mesh used throughout.

Within the groupings of nets — used for catching birds, game and fish in various settings — the oppositional formal qualities demanded attention. Here the exhibition brought home the importance of context — if the viewer had been searching for fishing tackle, for instance, no doubt various other aspects of these items would have been weighed up and analysed first. However, in this environment the qualities which immediately made an impression on this viewer were

Aboriginal net fishers with their catch at Burton Lagoon, north of the Palmer River, Qld, c. 1890s. Photographer unknown.
Anthropology Archives, South Australian Museum.

the juxtapositions — of tension and release; tautness and slack; curve and angle; fine and bulky; large and small.

The sculptural qualities of the works made a strong statement because there was minimal interpretive accompaniment. The few photographs which accompanied or provided a backdrop — such as the enlarged photograph of wallabies in their bush environment placed behind the wallaby net — provided sufficient cues for the audience to make possible/probable connections between the objects and their functions, and to recognise the ingenuity which led to their manufacture. The information which accompanied the exhibition was concise but useful, giving plenty of leeway for understanding the scope of the works and their origins, and the diversity of creative thought underlying their use and construction.

Some of the wonders of this exhibition. Firstly, the large tubular inland fishing net from the Diyari people. The north-east of South Australia is not a place usually connected with fishing, so the pleasure to be gained from the satisfying form of this large hourglass-knotted cylinder was associated with a sense of amazement that it could be used at all. Then there was the game net which measured over 55 metres in length, and was collected near the Darling River in the 1850s. Used to catch emus, one hoped that its loss from the cave where it was 'found' might in some way be compensated for by our intense wonder and enjoyment of its robust vegetable fibre strands. This was an enormous net. A baby (but not an emu) could easily crawl through its loops. And then the flat scoops from north Queensland on oval frames — there were many variations on the fishing net form in northern Australia, where water, both salt and fresh, was such a bountiful element. Shrimp nets, nets for catching fish in small pools and under rocks, nets for driving fish into bigger nets, casting nets ... the list goes on, and was undoubtedly longer before fishing grounds disappeared, people were moved, and the rhythms of seasonal cycles disrupted.

Museums, however, are giving back an enormous amount. We can be grateful that amongst the general disruption, such items were being collected and are now either being repatriated, made accessible to the relevant people, or exhibited in forums like the South Australian Museum. 'NET WORKS' was assembled by Philip Jones, Philip Clarke & David Kerr. Thank you South Australian Museum.

Doreen Mellor
Curator of Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide.

(The South Australian Museum's website has a record of the 'NET WORKS' exhibition at http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/networks/nethead.htm)

Te Papa Tongarewa: Museum of New Zealand

Wellington, New Zealand.

Years ago I received a small dish lettered in gold with a bilingual name, 'Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa'. In the final days of the 20th century the Kiwi national collections of art, scientific knowledge and social history were to be brought together under the policy and practice of bi-cultural engagement, symbolised by the appointment of co-chief executives. Ever since then, Te Papa, as it became known by popular usage, has been a place to watch.

I recently spent two days exploring this vast enterprise, and offer here a few snippets on a topic which could take a whole issue of *Museum National*.

The new building, one of the biggest in Wellington, bulks along the harbourside on its state-of-the-art cushioning against earthquakes and tsunami. Inside the rather overwhelming entrance, Maori and Pakeha hosts meet, greet and help visitors orient themselves in a complex interior. Way-finding proves a major challenge.

Is it a temple or a forum? The mission of Te Papa takes a clear line, 'a forum for the nation to present, explore and present the heritage of cultures and knowledge of the natural environment in order to better understand and treasure the past, enrich the present and meet the challenges of the future'.

From the first moment, this is a 'feel good' museum with an unashamedly populist approach to celebrating the things New Zealanders find interesting about themselves and their country. And why not? Kiwis have suffered Rogernomics, their absolutist version of economic rationalism. Perhaps successive governments thought it time to celebrate the things which unite. Museums have always been the instruments of the people in power, those who run the dominant cultural agenda. There's nothing new in that. And the Government gave well over $300 million. Put another way, every man, woman and child in New Zealand contributed $100 per head. No wonder the place is a centre of interest.

Within the building, some spaces are high, wide and handsome; some quiet and reflective; many crowded and busy. Right at the top, facing north across the water is the marae, the meeting place, brilliantly carved in modern style by the *kaihautu* or co-chief executive, a master carver in the contemporary idiom.

The distinctive bi-cultural approach is manifest in the use of language and image throughout the Museum, much of it very compelling. Yet I was also looking for a more self-conscious conversation of views and perspectives, the dialogue between knowledge systems.

The treatment of the *Treaty of Waitangi*, the foundation document of New Zealand political life, gave a glimpse. What little is left of the original document is reproduced as an etching on a vast piece of glass which hangs as a kind of altar piece. Here is the temple at the heart of the forum. Behind this screen there is a place to hear the views of many 'ordinary' New Zealanders, with some vigorous Maori voices offering counter views about the 'Cheaty'. This was a rare example of the dialogue for which I was looking.

Much of the Maori *taonga*, or treasured cultural material, is extraordinary. There were moments of great beauty and significance; the haunting sounds of various Maori flutes on display, the extraordinary Hawaiian cloak of feathers, the chance to bow your head and enter a fabulously carved marae and listen to great stories. Yet despite the size and generosity of the public spread, I thought that many of these extraordinary objects needed more space in which to breathe, expand and commune.

The museum offers young and old many different ways of exploration apart from the exhibitions. Four discovery centres extend the themes of each major exhibition through collections, activities and the mass of information on the Te Papa On Line website. But in the end, such facilities can only ever act as a valuable supplement to the intellectual platform of the exhibition. It cannot take the place of depth in both concept and design, nor substitute for the encounter with the significant object.

Antipodean and cross-Tasman contrasts and comparisons became an absorbing sub-agenda for me. As an introduction to New Zealand it was marvellous, although I felt my lack of local knowledge keenly. I could only guess at the meaning of the many objects and stories which engaged so many visitors, judging from the very intense interest and interaction.

With attendance figures at four times the expected rate and with fifteen per cent of those being Maori as compared with twelve per cent in the whole population, Te Papa must be a museum which matters to a lot of people. One elderly man gave me a clue as we marvelled in front of the whale and dolphin skeleton display. He said that he and his wife were making their second long visit, and next week he was bringing the Probus club from his small town. He added, ' It's so interesting. It's about us.'

Rachel Faggetter
Natural and Cultural Heritage Interpretation, Deakin University.

Recycled Canberra

Canberra Museum and Gallery, Civic Square. Until late September.

The city of Canberra opened its own local, non-national museum and gallery in February 1998 after many years of political and bureaucratic talk. It occupies part of a 1960s office block, whose stark elegance is heritage-listed as a species of classicism, with consequent constraints on its transformation into a functional museum. Yet the new spaces have style and flair; the museum services areas appear comfortable; and as long as the cash-strapped ACT Government can find it recurrent funding, CMAG has the makings of a dedicated community museum.

Photo frame, 1926, recycled from the wreckage of a fatal plane crash in Canberra.

'Recycled Canberra', its second show, might be said to express the essential nature of the institution itself. It is the outcome of a long-term project of community historian Jill Waterhouse and a team of contributors loosely gathered under the banner of the ACT Regional Studies Group. The 'recycled' products range through nostalgia, necessity and thrift to environmental consciousness to art — producing overall a character that could be monstrous but ends up utterly engaging. It's summed up by a statuesque 'burly griffin' (named Marion) made of green plastic bottles by Roban Thomas.

No visitor resists the invitation at the entrance to sound the whistle of the Kingston Power House, the Big Ben of Canberra from the 1920s–60s. It produces a double shriek that is satisfyingly loud but, amazingly, doesn't appear to aggravate other visitors already making their way through the exhibition.

The first display of recycled bits and pieces turns out to be the original hardware of radio station 2CA, which reveals the *Song of Canberra*, commissioned by the station during the World War Two years. Charmingly rendered to piano accompaniment, it begins 'Canberra, our Capital, beloved city wide ...' It may never have been a truly national sentiment but in these beleaguered days of Canberra-bashing, it's specially wry to locals.

There are poignant recyclings made by refugees: a teddy, a child's overcoat made of German, American and Russian military uniforms. To today's lily-livered taste, some items verge on the bizarre, such as the photo frame made of metal from Canberra's first aircraft crash in 1926, and a ring made of a silvery Japanese bomber, set with a 'jewel' of red plastic toothbrush handle. Taking the cake in the weird stakes is the small marble headstone of a teenager who died in 1943; when it was replaced with something grander, the marble slab became a pastry board.

The heart of the gallery is occupied by a wonderfully dense installation-cum-assemblage: a whole recycled house and garden. Here is furniture made of kerosene tin cases and other boxes 'too good to throw out'. The frugal, the thrifty and the inventive are evidenced in a chook feeder made of a billycan, a yabby net made of chicken wire and broom handle, a laundry trolley cut down from a pram. There are ingenious repairs, such as a high chair buttressed with offcuts from 1950s works at Old Parliament House. In the garden are flower pots made of rubber tyres.

Around a corner, culture meets nature to show that humans are not the only recyclers in our world. 'Recycled Canberra' pays homage to the dung beetles introduced by CSIRO to Australian paddocks; by swiftly degrading cow pats, the beetles effectively rid the environment of bush flies. This miracle enabled the proliferation of outdoor eateries in Canberra, a pleasure that had been prohibited by health authorities before the 1980s.

Most magical in the exhibition are Ederic Slater's recordings of local frog songs, accompanied by a graphic wavelength rendition of each call, here shown to be literally scintillating. What has this to do with recycling? Answer: more music, in the form of *Frog Symphony*, an electronically-assisted melding of frog songs and percussion by composer Bill O'Toole and band Sirocco.

As suggested by this earthy, intimate, everyday selection of objects, 'Recycled Canberra' is sourced from kitchens, sheds and backyards throughout town, the pieces lent by CMAG's eclectic friends, relatives, next door neighbours and taxi drivers. Such networks are the essential stuff of a community museum, and it is exciting to see how an idea has grabbed the imaginations of so many participants.

'Recycled Canberra' is a delight. Humour, sensibility and idiosyncrasy touch every display. They make it a most unusual exhibition, a playful survey of popular culture within a very human frame. It expresses all the best possibilities of CMAG's combined history and arts approach to the presentation of Canberra.

Dr Linda Young
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