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A message from the Chair



Dear colleagues of the Community Museums Network, Firstly, thank you for your continued support of the network. The reach of the

network in Australia wide, and it seems to me now after twelve years on the committee at various levels that the present committee, Zoe Scott [Kalgoorlie], Julie Baird [Newcastle], Lee Scott [New England / MANO] and me, wish you all well in your endeavours to engage your communities through your museum.

Secondly, there are challenges for the network right now. Many of our members give their time to their museum voluntarily and are reluctant to take on the additional so-called burden of the wider community of the Community Museums Network. The consequence is that the 'Committee' sits around in isolated splendour, having given many years of service to the network [as well as their own organisation], trying to imagine what members need the National Network to achieve. Some of us need this responsibility to be taken up by others - perhaps YOU.

This year is the scheduled two-year committee elections. The network needs people to take on the various committee roles. None of the positions on Committee is onerous [that is, not much work is required]. What is needed is a commitment to think about the idea of community museums and communicate your ideas through the Network communication systems of committee teleconferences [infrequent], CMNN Newsletters [3 or 4 per year] and listen to our colleagues in small museums about their issues so national strategies can be developed.

Another challenge is the increasing desire in the profession for museum accreditation. This aspect is one of the issues to be discussed at the MA National Conference in Canberra 17-20 May 2013. Please recognise that an ostrich approach [forget it, it might go away] to this subject will not influence the outcomes. A National Accreditation program is most likely be very attractive to funding authorities at State, Territory and National levels and can be an advantage for the community museum sector if we are players, we negotiate, we procrastinate and we co-operate in the discussions about the concept and program, NOW.

Our network reminds me of the circumstances I worked in at the Wanaaring School, on the Paroo River in western NSW. It was a village with a one teacher school, the next nearest school was in Bourke, 120 miles away. There was a community that wanted a school teacher, but there was no professional network to support the teacher, the nearest professional help was 120 miles away and

there was no phone at the school. The only assistance available was to travel to a meeting of colleagues up to 300 miles from home. Obviously the meetings and travel were undertaken over holiday weekends, or during vacations, to minimise the disruptions to the school routine. It worked, the network of small schools in that remote corner of NSW worked collaboratively and successfully for many years.

The outcome for me was I got more benefit by sharing my experiences and learning from the experiences of others in similar circumstances. Yes, it required some sacrifice of personal time and other resources but was worthwhile. Being in an isolated situation, with few resources is not a handicap, unless to you make it one, by staying isolated from the collegial support available through the network. We are fortunate that there is an Australian-wide group, with some international input, for us to use to the benefit of our museum.

Best wishes

Bill Storer



MAGNA

MAGNA 2013: call for entries will be opened in February. We encourage Community Museum National Network members to enter.



MAGNA

2012 MAGNA Winners from Small Museums

Again the small museum representation in MAGNA 2012 was excellent. In 2012 the criteria was changed so that the levels were dependent on the budget of the project, which the judges felt was a more realistic comparison point than the size of the museum.

The overall winner of the national award was a small regional museum in WA. While the budget for the project was quite large the human resources were similar to many of the small remote museums across regional Australia and the metropolitan community museums. This excellent project from Gascoyne, ***Burlganyja Wanggaya: Old People Talking – Listen, Learn and Respect***, will be covered comprehensively in the next *Museums Australia Magazine*, and is a remarkable example of working together with the community to present shared histories.

The 2012 MAGNA winners booklet outlines the highly commended and winning entries and can be found at:

http://museumsaustralia.org.au/userfiles/file/MAGNA/2012/MAGNA%20Winners_web.pdf

Mapping Memories

Winner: Level 1 (budget less than \$20k)

Temporary Exhibition, MAGNA 2012

This winning entry was submitted by the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (RWAHS). The temporary exhibition at the State Library of Western Australia drew on the collections of the Society and the Library to explore family stories. Artifacts, maps, ephemera and documents intermingled with the curator's (Wendy Lugg the artist in residence of the RWAHS) own memorabilia and artworks in a rich layered personal story of collective memory.

Everyday household items such as embroidered tableware and cushions and books, often evoke childhood memories and family stories. Such items often form the basis of community or folk museum collections, and can be the butt of derogatory comments about small museum long term exhibitions, often described as visual storage. But well interpreted, such as in *Mapping*

Memories can enhance, and even form the basis of great temporary exhibitions that will engage the community.

Judges comments: *'This entry covers a wide range of subjects; it uses good images and strong contextual*

material. It has surprising content. Very good utilisation of material was made within parameters

established. An innovative combination of community connections and collaboration.'

Newcastle Museum

Winner: Level 1 (budget less than \$20k)

Sustainability, MAGNA 2012

Newcastle Museum Green Team

The Newcastle Museum has recently undergone major redevelopment. Sustainability and environmentally responsible practices were a high priority for the redevelopment, but also for ongoing operation of the museum.

In collaboration with the Newcastle City Council, Newcastle Museum made proactive efforts to enhance the environmental sustainability of their facilities as the pilot department of the Council's 14 Step ClimateCam Framework. In particular, the Museum utilised lighting programs that offer stable, controlled lighting that adheres to environmental and conservation best practice. These changes also have very positive economic benefits in the long term.

Newcastle's 14 Step program of Sustainable Water and Resource management is explained at:

http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/170597/ClimateCam_Framework_Workbook_v11-email.pdf

Judges comments: *'The carefully managed light replacement project is part of the ongoing, integrated, staged sustainability framework adopted by the Museum as part of its redevelopment. The environmentally responsible 'Needs Pods' redevelopment of the museum is enhanced by these projects that continue to manage and reduce the museum's carbon footprint and reach sustainability goals.'*

We will highlight some of the other outstanding projects in CMNN Newsletters through 2013.



MA2012 National Conference Bursary Reports

The Community Museums National Network awarded two bursaries to the MA2012 National Conference held in Adelaide in September. As a part of the bursary acceptance agreement recipients complete a report on their experiences of the conference.

Museums Australia usually has a number of bursaries, funded by the Office for the Arts (OFTA) to assist delegates from regional, remote and small museums to attend the MA National Conference. These OFTA funded bursaries are often augmented by bursaries offered by MA state/territories and networks.

I urge you to consider applying for a bursary to attend the MA2013 Conference to be held 17-20 May 2013 in Canberra.

CMNN awarded bursaries to Bronwyn Phillips and Nicholas Reynolds. Their reports follow:

Bronwyn Phillips

From Monday 24th September until Friday 28th September 2012 I attended the Museums Australia Conference at Adelaide University as a representative of the Unley Museum. Three of us attended,

Elizabeth Hartnell (Curator), Jane Dunn, (part time Curator and volunteer) and me (volunteer).

The whole week was extremely well organised and everything appeared to run like clockwork. It was fortunate for the Unley Museum, that we had three attendees which meant we could spread ourselves amongst the different talks at all times and therefore get a broader perspective of the many and varied interesting subjects on offer. This allowed us to meet during morning and afternoon tea breaks and lunch time to compare notes. It was great to catch up with people I have met previously at other conferences, some lecturers from Flinders University who I had not seen for a while and others I studied with who are working in the museum sector.

It was a great thrill and a feather in our cap to win an award for the best permanent exhibition valued between \$20,000 and \$50,000 for 'Gorgeous Gardens'.

We were stunned and could not stop smiling. It is great for a small museum that is funded by a Local Council to be recognised as it lets the Council know how professional and valuable we are to the local community. We are already accredited with History S.A. so we have another certificate to frame and hang on the wall. The other volunteers are very proud.

When we have our A.G.M. soon I will be happy to relate to the other volunteers some of many ideas and thoughts that have come out of the lectures I have heard. I will put out a flyer for them as well; as I work there one or two days a week I do not have contact with all the volunteers except for meetings. It seems to me that whether an institution is very large or quite small many of the same principals apply and it is always best to go with the best practices and the latest technology that are available and to liaise with other institutions in order to all help each other. Something that really impressed me was the way all

the institutions along North Terrace pulled together for this Conference.

Personally I made some valuable new contacts that were not aware of some of the significant items in our collection. We may loan items to these institutions at some stage in the future. I found Dr Jacqueline Healy of the Medical History Museum' talk particularly interesting and I'm sure we will be able to do some reciprocal loans to our mutual benefit. I found the innovative ideas of attracting new young audiences particularly illuminating especially David Bock speaking about the Jurassic Lounge and how hugely successful it had become with 1,000 to 2,000 people turning up every Tuesday night. Elizabeth Pascale ideas of using art in non-traditional spaces had me envisaging images of past volunteers projected onto the side wall of our museum building. Some dedicated historians (alive and deceased) have worked tirelessly for 25 years for the Unley Museum.

The tours I attended were fascinating. Although I live in Adelaide I have been remiss in not attending the many museums and galleries we have on offer in South Australia. Ayres House tour was truly an 'eye opener' and I had not seen the inside of that magnificent house for many years and much has changed since I was last there. After the Ayres House tour a few ladies in the group introduced ourselves and went to the Botanical Garden for lunch. Whilst there we realised a tour of the Museum Of Economic Botany was about to begin so we joined in and were all extremely pleased we did. What a wonderful hidden gem in our Botanical Gardens. We were so taken in we missed half of the next tour but joined others at the Art Gallery of South Australia for more enlightening insights about how the Gallery has conducted their renovations. The tour of Art Lab was instructive and informative. The author is grateful to have had that privilege.

Dennis Stevenson from the New York Botanical Garden gave a captivating talk and I was interested to

learn that the United States conducts DNA processing on modern plant materials for identification. This made me think of the old plant materials stored in the Museum of Economic Botany and whether this process could be applied to some extinct plant species by racimising ancient plant materials to identify the diet of earlier humans and what wild species had been cultivated. Could DNA research of plant materials be utilised and combined with phytolith research? The archaeologist in me kept asking questions.

Abby Cooper's talk 'from possum skin to cow hide' of how Australian Rules football originated in western Victoria many thousands of years ago, shed new light on our National sporting obsession. For many years most people thought it was passed down to us from the Celts. Even though not many people turned up for the 'Ask an Expert' session and it turned into an informal chat session, it was still very informative about conservation practices. One of the last talks by Pauline Cockrill on 'finding significant items' was interesting to me and related to the work I have been doing because I have spent the last year developing Statements of Significance for the Unley Museum.

The Museums Australia Conference was a great success on many levels and for me personally I learnt a great deal and really enjoyed myself. By the end of the week I felt overloaded with information, however I have had time to digest it since and plan on sharing the many ideas and inspiration I gained from attending to the other volunteers at the Unley Museum. Thank you for allowing me that opportunity.

Nicholas Reynolds

My attendance at the Museums Australia National Conference in 2012 was a worthwhile and valuable experience for me as the curator of a regional community museum. This is the first year that I had been accepted to present a paper at the conference

and its delivery was a success with audience levels higher than expected and positive feedback received. I am now at a stage where I can bring best practice ideas back to my community in terms of displays and other elements of my work. Also, with my employer placing construction of a regional heritage centre on its capital works plan it was vitally important that I speak to those who have been recently involved in developing new museums and this I was able to do with ideas that I received already being planned to be integrated into the completion of our museum's schoolroom gallery.

Some highlight presentations and keynote addresses included:

Keynote 2

Reframing research: The art and science of strategy

This addressed the fact that research is not an area that should stand alone in ICOMS definition. It should be a part of the rest of the ICOMS areas. Melbourne Museum undertakes much research, with the Elephant Shrew discovery example. Research occurs across many diverse areas, and in particular, research needs to be collections based.

Dennis Stevenson, NY Botanical Garden. Research and collections: past, present and future.

Collections have changed, no longer are they cabinets of curiosities but something needing organisation, and an institution must share the benefits of research with society in a meaningful way that is comprehensible to people. Once again, collections are at the heart of research. Also, storage of information is becoming a problem, both electronic and physical.

Dr Rob Amery and Ms Alitia Rigney.

Lost collections Regained. Holdings of Kaurua artefacts, repat from Germany to SA.

This paper discussed the bi-cultural narrative of objects. It's the stories that make the things so

significant, it's the people who make the objects. This paper was a real eye opener as to how objects have symbolic power and importance on many levels. They can only tell story of country when 'in country'.

Keynote Dr Cathrine Hughes Atlanta History Centre

Issues touched upon included defining museum theatre as something other than street theatre. How do we connect collections to visitors? How do we continue their support as visitors and funders? Dr Hughes is trying to make more inclusive museum theatre in Atlanta that reaches broader audiences. The museum initially suffered from declining visitation, old methods of interpretation which were informative but not entertaining. They had a mainly older, racially homogenous audience. Her solution to this was a 'Meet the Past Manifesto' which was:

- Inclusive of other perspectives
- Participatory
- Thought provoking
- Emotional

Rebecca Bilous. "All mucked Up": Sharing stories of Yolngu Macassan cultural Heritage at Bawaka, North East Arnhem Land.

This presentation dealt with the theme of Intangible Cultural Heritage with the example of pottery shards that needed to be returned to the sand beneath the tamarind tree. How can we interpret this for others when they cannot be removed? Anchors are used as ways to remember the Macassans, even when the anchors are modern intrusions. Singing about anchor remembers the story, and also "discovers" the anchor. It was always there waiting to be discovered is the correct way to look at it.

Know your audience workshop

Why? To stop it from being emotional when it comes to why people visit your institution and make it empirical to those who finance us, allowing for better use of limited resources. You need to find out why

visitors are here, and ask the same questions all the time. Don't do research if you're not going to use it!

Ideas to be used included:

- Visitor Book,
- "Postcards" i.e. feedback form,
- Social media (Friends can do this if you can!)
- 'Day book' for incidents reported by staff or general feedback (Lots of Moms in today, why all the schoolkids etc...)
- Paper based survey (Can alter days of week so not so much of a strain on time),
- Survey Monkey
- Whiteboard idea board for visitors (take a photo when it's full),
- Let visitors put coloured stars on what they like in your museum
- Direct mail
- Focus Groups (Friends can bring a friend to group over wine and cheeses)
- Have a directed conversation.

Developments in exhibition Practice

Georgia Rouette

Leadership and management was the biggest problem in this exhibition. It stifled creativity, and corporate business structure was blamed for this. But was this really the case? Despite the talk, not many museums really do have a "business model". The risk averse nature of organisations can also hold things back. Consultant design companies can also cause difficulties in not understanding objectives, just coming in, doing and leaving. Be inclusive and cooperative in exhibition management. Include your designer in the process from the word go. Give creativity a go, experiment, make it okay to fail. Leadership is very important!

Janet Mack and Penny Grist: After the curtain goes up: Making Permanent Galleries Last.

Landmarks exhibition, June 2011 at the National Gallery. This replaced a 10 year old gallery. Galleries

change through their lifespan, mostly accidentally! Conservation, registration (things coming in and out), curatorial decisions are the reasons changes happen in the lifetime. Loans: Make them due at the same time! Otherwise cases slowly empty... Activity reports for changeover of objects for loan, curatorial discretion moves, conservation moves all need to be carefully reported. eMu was not able to perform this as well as would have been liked, so Excel/Word document had to be used. The levels of workload and costs change over the lifecycle of an exhibition and this must also be taken into account.

Besides these highlight presentations, the social networking opportunities provided during breaks between sessions, lunch, and the conference dinner were invaluable in linking in with not only likeminded staff in similar museums, but also gave the opportunity to meet people from larger institutions with different experiences. Despite these different experiences, one of the most valuable insights that I received through networking was just how similar the problems are which face our organisations, both big and small. I feel that attending presentations by, and networking with, museum professionals on a national level is required to bring new ideas back in to my regional museum setting. This, I think, has been achieved at an important time for my museum. Attending this year allowed me to repeat this and build on networks created at the last conference here in Western Australia. Being able to absorb these new ideas, and then put them into practical use back in the regions is the major benefit of attending. Being able to share these benefits in the MA local chapter organisation during November means that others who cannot attend will also share in the experience. I am most grateful to Museums Australia for allowing me to attend and present at this conference. I feel that I, my institution, and my community have benefited greatly.



Museums Australia National Conference 2013

MA2013 will be held 17 – 20 May 2013 in Canberra. The Regional Remote & Community Museums Day will be hosted by the National Museum of Australia on Friday 17 May 2013 and will include some highly relevant plenary speakers and a choice of afternoon workshops and behind-the-scene tours.

MA2013 Theme is: ***How museums work: people, industry and nation.***

We will reflect on how museums and galleries work in the 21st century and what ideas will drive them in the future:

- ***Working in museums***- The nature of work is changing in society at large, so it is little wonder that work in museums is also changing, both for museum professionals and for volunteers. Where are you in your career and what's next?
- ***Working together***- Museums operate in very different environments but as one national community. What opportunities exist for collaborations, partnerships and alignments across the country and internationally?
- ***The business of museums***- Museums are both a business and an industry, and have close connections with other industries such as education, tourism and entertainment. How will we manage with resources under challenge and audiences looking for more?
- ***Telling our stories and imagining the future***- The contesting of ideas about nationhood occurs around the country, not just in Canberra. What are our stories and how are they interpreted in regional, state and national museums and galleries? And

what ideas will we explore as we move into the future?

Registrations are open:

<http://ma2013.org.au/index.asp?IntCatId=14>



Newcastle Maritime Museum – Collection Store

It is five years since we moved into the BHP Quality Control Laboratory at Mayfield. In that time the collection store team of volunteers have put in 10,000 hours to catalogue over 6,500 objects, and clean and provide storage racks for them.



Some objects were more than your average two-person carry. The team have constructed cradles [with wheels] for the boats in the collection, including this one. Boarding boat No. 3 is from the pilot vessel Birubi, built and operated in Newcastle and was delivered from Throsby wharf storage in January 2008.

We only had verbal authentication of the origin of this boat, although the stories were quite credible. Persistence does pay off. In the past week we have come across three photographs of the Birubi and Boarding boat No. 3.



The gentleman in the suit is the pilot, returned from guiding a vessel into the harbour. The boat is about to be recovered to the port side davits of Birubi.



Community Museums National Network

AGM

Teleconference

Tuesday 26 February 2013

3.30pm

All welcome

CMNN Committee Elections

Nominations for the CMNN Committee are welcome from all Museum Australia members.

A nomination form is attached. Or can be obtained from the MA National Office, call 02 6230 0346.

Nominations close Tuesday 5 February 2013

CMNNNews

Contributions to CMNNNews are welcomed. Send your stories to the CMNN Secretary, Lee, at manager@museumsaustralia.org.au.

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