

Magazine for members
Winter 2015

SL



STATE LIBRARY®
NEW SOUTH WALES



Message



Acknowledgment

I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal of the Eora nation, and pay my respects to their elders past and present; I acknowledge our shared freedoms and responsibilities, inherited from Magna Carta through the common law; and I acknowledge our multicultural combination of the peoples and cultures of the world; all three elements shaping our Australia.

This extended acknowledgment of country reminds us of the Indigenous ownership of this country and of our cultural roots: Indigenous, Anglo-Celtic and multicultural. It is a very important statement, which reminds us of the crucial importance of supporting libraries, museums, galleries and archives.

It is especially apposite at this time when we commemorate the sealing of the Magna Carta on 15 June 1215 and the 50th anniversary of the Freedom Rides that heralded the long overdue constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. Both are recorded in this Library's collection as are so many aspects of our heritage, from Magna Carta and other foundation documents to the marks of today such as the 80,000 Tweets sent during and immediately after the Martin Place siege last December.

Our collection continues to grow, recording the past and present of New South Wales and placing it in the Australian and global contexts. As illustrated in this issue, our physical collection grows apace, by two Harbour Bridge lengths a year, demanding that we plan for sufficient temperature and humidity controlled storage to preserve those irreplaceable items. Our digital collection is also multiplying as we bring in the born digital – such as those Tweets and today's digital publications – and make digital versions of our physical collections to support regional and international use for research, study and creation. We are implementing a state of the art digital preservation system to convey that irreplaceable heritage to future generations.

ALEX BYRNE
NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive

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THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AREA IS CLOSED ON SUNDAYS.

GALLERIES AND EXHIBITION ROOMS OPEN TO 5 PM, THURSDAYS TO 8 PM

COVER

PETERS ICE CREAM POSTER DESIGN, ALTHOUSE & GEIGER ALBUM, PXE 1514 / BOX 3, SEE ARTICLE. P. 24



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Physie

Photographs by Lyndal Irons capture the world of Physical Culture, or 'Physie', also photographed by Sam Hood in the 1930s. When it began in 1892, the Bjelke-Petersen School of Physical Culture aimed at improving health and posture in men and children. After the Second World War, Physie became the domain of females of all ages and continues today, building to a national final at the Sydney Opera House.

On display until 4 October

GROOMING ROUTINE FOR PHYSIE COMPETITION, SYDNEY, 2012
© LYNDAL IRONS

D



#electcollectNSW

#electcollectNSW was the hashtag we used to promote the Library's efforts to collect material from the NSW state election on 28 March. We asked people to send how-to-vote cards, promotional pamphlets, stickers, badges and T-shirts, and to suggest websites and social media activity for archiving. In partnership with the CSIRO, we used their social media monitoring and capturing tool, Vizie, to collect more than 500,000 posts from candidates, parties, interest groups and the media during the election campaign. The most popular topics were 'Mining' and 'Infrastructure'. The most popular hashtags were #nswpol, #nswvotes and #CSG. Follow us on Twitter for notice of future collecting campaigns.

MATERIAL COLLECTED FROM THE STATE ELECTION



Digital cultural heritage

The Library's vast trove of digitised manuscripts, books, artworks and photographs continues to grow, with support from the NSW Government. How people use this digital archive will be explored at the Library over 10 days this winter. On 29 and 30 June we host the LODLAM (Linked Open Data in Libraries, Archives and Museums) Summit, which brings together world experts in digital cultural heritage.

Also in late June, the Library will host the launch event of the Global Digital Humanities conference (DH2015), presented by the University of Western Sydney's Digital Humanities Research Group. And in July we're leading a national 'WWI Hack' — part of Gov Hack 2015 — which will see cultural organisations invite hackers to use their WWI data in new ways.

A LIBRARYHACK EVENT

Dust off your ancestors

The popular 'Irish ancestors' talk will be offered in August for National Family History Month. Other talks will focus on using newspapers and maps to track down your ancestors. These events are free, but places are limited and bookings are essential. Subscribe to our newsletter for monthly updates.

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/publications/

IRISH MIGRANTS ARRIVE TO SETTLE IN GRAFTON
AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY - 11068



Year of maps

During International Map Year, 2015–16, we're finding ways to help people explore our collection of over 180,000 maps and charts that document 500 years of exploration and settlement. Our recent Twitter campaign, #DigitiseMySuburb, saw NSW residents vote to fast-track digitisation of subdivision plans for their suburb. Woolloomooloo was the winner, with Parramatta and Chippendale runners up. In the next few years 40,000 subdivision plans will become available online.

We have also launched an online 'geo-referencing tool', which combines historical and current maps of Sydney. You can see how the streets and suburbs of Sydney have changed over the past 100 years, and identify streets that have changed their names or been affected by redevelopment.

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/using/map_georeferencing.html

PREPARING SUBDIVISION PLANS FOR DIGITISATION



Letters from home

The Library's collection of letters and diaries from the First World War is as close as we can get to the thoughts and feelings of those who served. But we don't have the replies. We're inviting the community to respond to letters written 100 years ago from the Front. Our 'Letters from Home' blog features contributions from writers Shirley Walker and Libby Gleeson.

www1.sl.nsw.gov.au/lettersfromhome

FAREWELL CARD TO A WWI SOLDIER, JAMES BRUNTON GIBB

NEWS



Interrobang

The following question, from Germany, is one of approximately 350 questions answered each month by the Library's 'Ask a Librarian' service.

? When Captain Bligh's logbooks were restored some years ago, volcanic ash was found between some of the pages. Is it known which volcano it was from?

! When specialist conservators treated the Bligh logbooks in 2005 they discovered sand in the gutters of the second volume. The sand was identified as hematite, the type of beach sand found on islands with a volcano. The conservators thought the sand may have been sprinkled onto the pages of the log as a blotting agent for Bligh's iron gall ink, but this theory could not be proven. The volcanic sand was an exciting find, but its origin and its part in the logbooks' provenance remain unknown.

www.sl.nsw.gov.au/ask

13 June 1816

The road to the popular Sydney Harbour lookout Mrs Macquarie's Chair is completed.

MRS MACQUARIE'S SEAT, GOVERNMENT DOMAIN, 1830, HAND-COLOURED LITHOGRAPH BY AUGUSTUS EARLE IN VIEWS IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VAN DIEMENS LAND DF 83/22



15 June 1862

Australia's largest-ever gold robbery is carried out when bushrangers Frank Gardiner and Ben Hall rob the gold escort at Eugowra Rock near Forbes, New South Wales.

BEN HALL, 1863, CARTE DE VISITE BY FREEMAN BROTHERS P1 / 693

10 July 1907

The first telephone call is made between Sydney and Melbourne. This image shows NSW Premier JH Carruthers with two telephones on his desk in October 1906.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1 - 10756



on this

DAY

COMPILED BY Margot Riley, Research & Discovery

13 July 1945

Ben Chifley takes office as Prime Minister of Australia after the death of John Curtin.

PEOPLE MAGAZINE COVER SHOWING BEN CHIFLEY, 1950 FA 920.09/1



9 August 1890

The first recital is performed on Sydney Town Hall's grand organ, the largest in the world at this time.

POSTCARD BY SAMUEL WOOD, C. 1930 a1470174

17 August 1801

The Female Orphan School is officially opened at Parramatta. This oil painting by FA Montague shows building after additions were made in 1861.

ML 703



LAW

of the Land

* WORDS Maggie Patton



June 2015 marks the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta by King John at Runnymede on the banks of the Thames.

The Magna Carta, regarded by many as the foundation of legal practice in England, has been a major influence on the development of democracy in countries around the world. In 1225 King Henry III reissued a much-revised version, and it was not until 1297 that the charter was enrolled on the statute books by King Edward I.

Edward's 1297 statute is the version of the Magna Carta recognised by English law today. It includes the famous clause 29:

No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.

The Library has a copy of the 1297 statute, which was bound in a unique volume with 20 other statutes in about 1330. Approximately 10 cm long, it remains in the original bindings with scraps of skin attached to the rough wooden boards. The text is handwritten on vellum in a mixture of Latin and French, with a few decorated initials. The volume also includes the Charter of the Forest, a companion document to the Magna Carta, which provided a right of common access to royal lands. Clause 10 of the Charter of the Forest repealed the death penalty for capturing venison.

The size and contents of this volume suggest it belonged to a practising lawyer, who would have carried it as he travelled around the courts of England and Wales. The pages have been well thumbed and there is evidence of water damage.



English landowner Nelson Moore Richardson bequeathed the volume to the Library in 1926 along with a collection of bibles and early manuscripts. Richardson presented the collection in honour of Australian troops who supported Britain in the First World War. 'We have liked them and the Australians so much,' he wrote, 'that it occurred to us that it would show in a small way our appreciation of the Australians and the noble way in which they have come forward to help us in this war, and all the sacrifices they have made, if we were to arrange that these bibles should eventually find a home in Australia.'

At the anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, the Library's 1297 copy of the statute has been digitised and is available on our website. The volume is on display and a number of public programs will recognise the Magna Carta as among the most influential documents in legal history.

Maggie Patton is Manager, Research & Discovery

On display in the Amaze Gallery

MANUSCRIPT BOOK OF STATUTES CONTAINING MAGNA CARTA AND 20 OTHER STATUTES IN LATIN OR FRENCH SAFE/RICHARDSON/14



INSPIRATION

by design

* WORDS Rowan Watson

From London's acclaimed Victoria and Albert Museum, *Inspiration by Design* celebrates 150 years of collecting by the National Art Library.

In the early nineteenth century, the London suburb we now call South Kensington was mostly covered in market gardens. Its history as a centre of culture began in 1851 when the 'Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations' was held in adjacent Hyde Park, attracting over six million visits. Over a century and a half later, the area is one of London's major cultural hubs.

Prince Albert, the German husband of Queen Victoria, was a primary instigator of the Great Exhibition. It was his vision that directed its considerable profits towards creating a centre of educational and cultural enterprise near Kensington. To associate it with that highly fashionable suburb, the area that had been Brompton was christened 'South Kensington'.

In 1853 the government established the Department of Science and Art to manage various museum collections, teaching programs and an art school. These were housed in the new South Kensington Museum in 1857. Thirty years later the scientific collections were split off to form what is today the Science Museum, while the remainder was renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 1899.

Aiming to lift standards of British design, and improve the quality of exports, the museum initially showed examples of excellence in contemporary design and manufacture. Its brief was soon expanded to include an encyclopedic account of historical



GEORGES LEPAPE
LES CHOSSES DE PAUL
POIRET (DETAIL), 1911
© GEORGES LEPAPE/ADAGP
LICENSED BY VISCOPIY, 2015
OPPOSITE: OWEN JONES
THE GRAMMAR OF
ORNAMENT, 1856
© VICTORIA AND ALBERT
MUSEUM, LONDON

styles. A major influence was design reformer Owen Jones, who believed that the principles of ornament revealed the nature of human societies. His colossal work of 1856, *The Grammar of Ornament*, gave a worldwide account of ornament and design.

Though objects were collected in abundance, only the museum's library could achieve anything close to encyclopedic coverage. A universal account of art and design would be captured through publications, facsimiles, commissioned drawings, photographs and, for a time, plaster casts of European monuments (which were eventually managed by another department). The library was open to everyone: the manufacturer, the scholar, the connoisseur, and the general public. When it became known as the National Art Library in 1865, it was already used intensively.

The exhibition *Inspiration by Design* shows a selection of works from the V&A's National Art Library, revealing its development and its influence. It opens with plates from four works, including Jones' *Grammar of Ornament*, which revealed the new museum's philosophy. The revolutionary new printing process of chromolithography was used to produce dazzling colour images. The library's multiple copies of these books were circulated to art schools throughout the British Isles.

The library's collection is surprisingly wide. Design reformers of Victorian Britain believed that design could only be successful if it followed principles of form and growth found in the natural world. Staff amassed contemporary and antiquarian illustrated volumes on botany, geology, zoology, and natural history generally, both popular and scientific. With these came works on the history of architecture, furniture, ceramics, sculpture, textiles and other media. The agenda was expansive, covering not only the design of individual artefacts, but also building, interior and landscape design.

Works on costume worn all over the world were collected. They not only provided models for designers, but also allowed any fine or commercial artist to portray any kind of scene with strict accuracy — an essential requirement for mid-nineteenth century audiences. If artists needed to know what a native American chief or a Tuscan farmer looked like, the National Art Library would be their first port of call.

Special provision was made for one kind of user: the graphic artist. Publishers of books, newspapers

and magazines had a great need for artists and graphic designers. From at least the 1830s, printing machines could print images embedded in text at low cost. Lithography and then chromolithography made it even easier to include illustrations in commercial, recreational and scholarly publications. Graphics became a major means of communication. The exhibition shows illustrations by George Cruikshank for Charles Dickens' hugely successful novels, and work by Thackeray as both writer and artist, as well as iconic works for children by Randolph Caldecott and Beatrix Potter.

The great revolution in image-making in the nineteenth century was of course photography. The National Art Library was a pioneer in collecting works by early photographers such as Julia Margaret Cameron and Roger Fenton. Fenton, who captured images of the Crimean War in the mid-1850s, is regarded as the first war photographer. When photography could be used directly to make plates for printing images, cheaply produced journals and magazines could convey their message pictorially. Photo-reportage of the 1930s still has great impact as an artform and in documenting the period. After 1945, photographers made books that rivalled the most sophisticated of artists' books.

The 1890s had seen fundamental changes in attitudes toward art. Proponents of what we call the Aesthetic Movement insisted that the value of art was not in its moral message or poetic quality but in its ability to satisfy and indulge the senses. Having initially prioritised documentation and source materials for designers and artists, the library began to acquire expensive books by contemporary artists and designers as works of art.

The exhibition reflects this message with the exquisite Renaissance Bentivoglio Hours, as well as works in Art Nouveau style by designers such as Eugène Grasset. Books made in Britain by private presses, emulating William Morris' Kelmscott Press, set a new standard in design and production. Remarkably, the library continued to collect contemporary work at a time when curators at the museum — reflecting the British prejudice against modern styles coming from the Continent — were instructed to acquire only objects that were over 50 years old.

Despite its aesthetic agenda, the library never lost sight of its role in supporting manufacturing and



commercial activities. The gallery it opened in 1909 was proudly titled 'Book Production Gallery', and gave an account of historic books, bindings and manuscripts next to contemporary works. The 1920s saw a boom in publications about commercial art and advertising.

In 1936, the library contacted prominent modernist designers, asking them to send examples of their work to be made available to students. Designers of the calibre of László Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer and Serge Chermayeff sent contributions, while Britain's Post Office, justifiably proud of its new modernist design strategy, sent a range of leaflets and posters. Today the collection is maintained as the 'Jobbing Printing Collection'.

Fashion became a central concern to the V&A in the 1960s, with material promoting designers such as Mary Quant and Barbara Hulanicki coming to the library. This was added to the haute couture publications of Paul Poiret and Norman Hartnell — the latter including a work promoting the use of nylon in 1950s high-class fashion. They sit rather strikingly next to punk magazines and recent



publications by fashion houses such as Prada and Versace, who employed avant-garde designers and photographers.

The exhibition's last section, on artists' books, ranges from the iconic publications of Ambroise Vollard — featuring the poetry of Verlaine illustrated by the painter Pierre Bonnard in 1900 — to Tom Phillips' *Humument* and beyond.

Underlying the exhibition is the argument that library collections have the capacity to tell stories about the way the environment in which we live has developed — and to demonstrate the continuing ability of collections such as these to inspire and instruct.

Rowan Watson is Senior Curator, National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Inspiration by Design: Word and Image from the Victoria and Albert Museum is showing from 8 July to 27 September.

ABOVE LEFT: CHARLES BIRD KING, *HISTORY OF THE INDIAN TRIBES OF NORTH AMERICA*, 1836
© VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

ABOVE RIGHT: EUGÈNE GRASSET, ADVERTISING POSTER (DETAIL), 1892
© VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON



The

WARATAH

* WORDS Sarah Morley

EXHIBITION

Complementing *Inspiration by Design* from the V&A in London, the Library is displaying items from its own collection as *Australian Inspiration*.

The exhibition illustrates how Australia's flora, fauna and architecture have inspired art and design over two centuries. The waratah has been selected to represent designers' use of Australian flora.

Since the foundation of the colony, the waratah's beauty and striking colour have made it a popular choice for natural history illustrators. As early as 1793 the flower was depicted by artist James Sowerby in James Edward Smith's *A Specimen of the Botany of New Holland*.

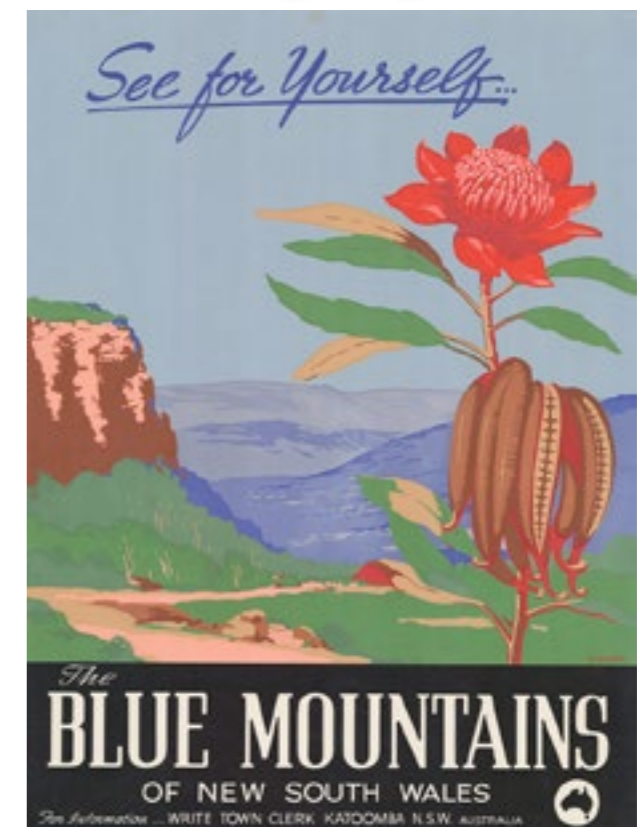
In the 1880s, the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted that 'Australians were beginning to provide locally for their own requirements in art', with sisters Helena and Harriet Scott producing "The Floral" series of 24 Christmas and New Year cards.

Around this time Frenchman Lucien Henry, living in Sydney, championed the waratah in artworks that would influence Australian designers. Henry was praised by RT Baker, curator and economic botanist at the Technological Museum, in his 1915 book *The Australian Flora in Applied Art: Part 1 the Waratah*. 'Australia certainly has an artist possessing real genius,' he wrote of Henry, 'and his originality in design ... will live long in the annals of New South Wales technical education.' Baker had been disappointed in 1910 when the wattle was chosen over the waratah as the national flower.

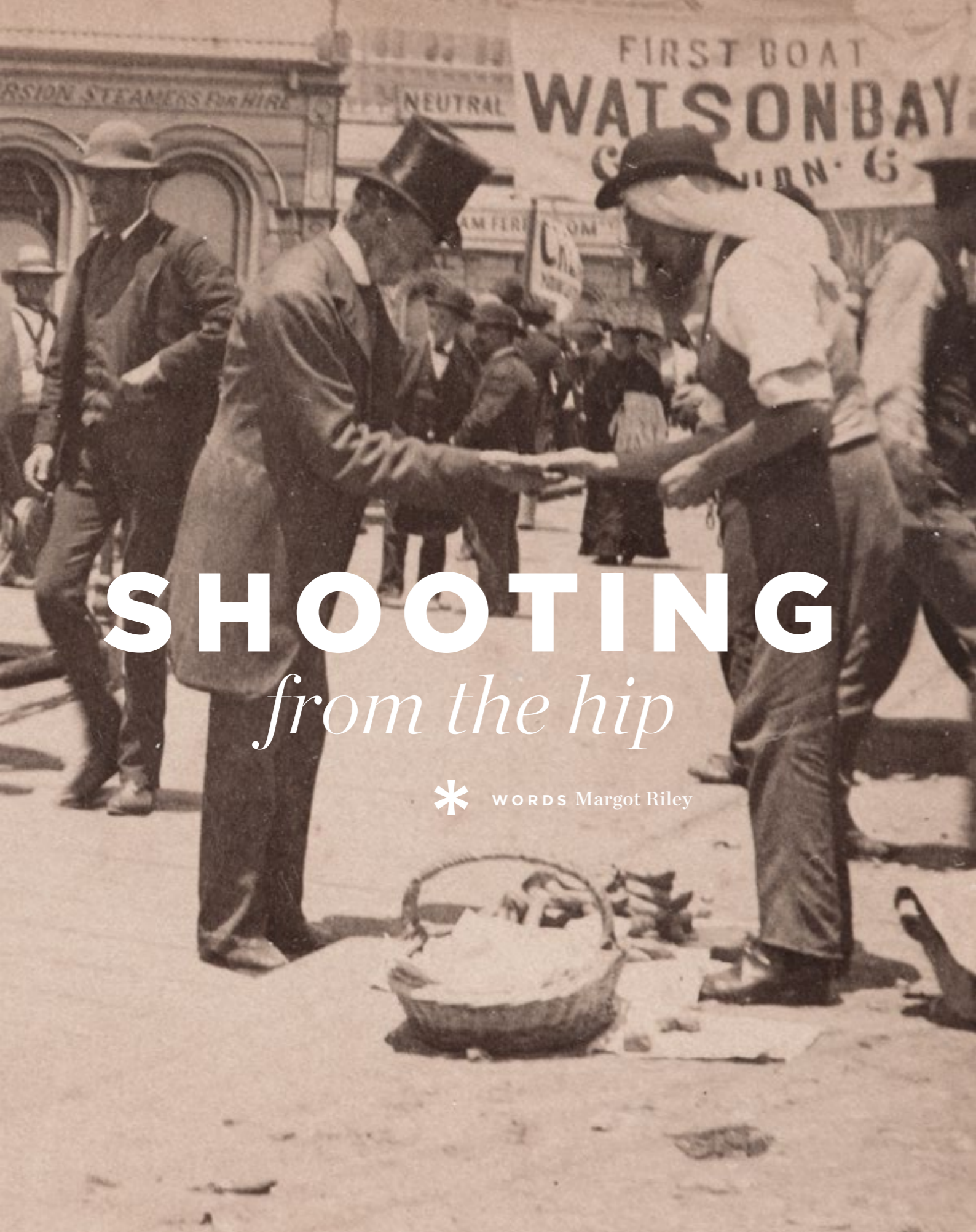
As the twentieth century progressed, the waratah's popularity as a design motif increased. It appeared in Wunderlich press metal ceilings, bookplate and costume designs, and tourism campaigns. In 1962 it became the floral emblem of NSW.

Australian wildflowers continue to offer infinite possibilities for design inspiration. The waratah is one example of how the Library's collections can be used to trace the development of design from the earliest depictions to the present day.

***Australian Inspiration*, curated by Sarah Morley, Research & Discovery, is showing from 8 July to 27 September.**



TOP: SOUVENIR OF SYDNEY WITH WARATAH MOTIF, C. 1869 PRINTED BY C ADLER, HAMBURG, PXA 1939
ABOVE: SEE FOR YOURSELF ... THE BLUE MOUNTAINS OF NEW SOUTH WALES, C. 1949, H ROUSEL, POSTERS 902
OPPOSITE: WARATAH AND OTHER BINDING TOOLS PHOTO BY JOY LAI



SHOOTING

from the hip

* WORDS Margot Riley

EXHIBITION

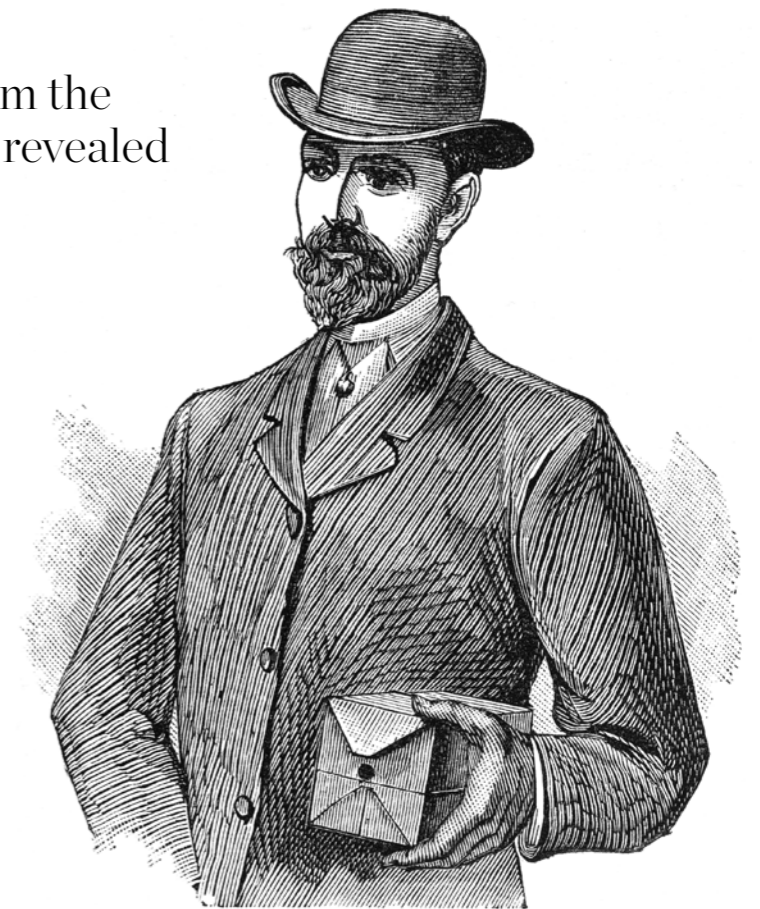
Arthur Syer's candid photos from the Sydney streets of the 1880s are revealed in the *Crowd Source* exhibition.

On a sunny Sydney day in the 1880s, as Circular Quay bustled with commuters and street traders going about their daily business, one young man stood stock still – a small hand-held camera tucked discretely at his side. While the crowds swarmed around him, Arthur Syer was taking photographs of passers-by without their knowledge. The images taken that day are among the world's earliest candid photographs, part of the street photography phenomenon which has seen such an enthusiastic revival in recent years with the advent of cameras in mobile phones and social media.

Invented in about 1880, the hand-held camera – initially marketed as a 'Detective Camera' – was the latest in photographic gadgetry. Along with dry plate negative technology, it was the most significant development in photography in decades. Photographers could now venture out of their studios unencumbered by heavy equipment. Their supply of ready-prepared negatives could be loaded and replenished without recourse to a darkroom. With a lens pre-set to take photographs from a distance of six feet, early models were intended to be used discreetly where raising the camera to eye height would have given the game away.

Looking at these photographs today, some Sydney landmarks are recognisable but others are difficult to place. The types of people shown are a mix of the familiar and unfamiliar – family groups, commuter crowds and sporting event spectators alongside hawkers, street sweepers and widows in black.

The name 'A.K. Syer' is stamped on several prints, but not much is known about this photographer. We do know that from about 1880 he lived with his widowed mother and siblings at 165 Alfred Street, Neutral Bay, where his older brother, the artist Walter Syer, gave 'character drawing' lessons. It was probably through Walter that Arthur met English cartoonist Phil May, who had been brought to



Australia by the *Bulletin* magazine to provide black-and-white art for its weekly editions between 1886 and 1888. According to Walter, May used Arthur's photographs in crafting character studies for the magazine. Arthur later followed the artist to England, where he continued to produce source images of European subject matter until May's death in 1903.

The Library has held a collection of 75 Syer images since the 1960s. Surprisingly, just as preparations got underway for the *Crowd Source* exhibition, a further set of these rare images was purchased, bringing the total number now known to about 150.

***Crowd Source*, curated by Margot Riley and Louise Denoon, Research & Discovery, is showing until 23 August.**

OPPOSITE: GENTLEMAN PAYING STREET VENDOR FOR BANANAS, CIRCULAR QUAY, 1880s, ARTHUR K SYER, C034720051
ABOVE: DETECTIVE CAMERA, PRACTICAL GUIDE TO PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTING, LONDON, MARION & CO, 1887, P. 52, ML 772/B

Eric Thompson's career as an architect, artist and filmmaker highlights the close connection between architecture and design in the development of the film industry.

In 1940 when my father, Eric Thompson, was an art director on Charles Chauvel's film *Forty Thousand Horsemen*, the production company built a replica of the famous garrison village of El Arish in the Cronulla sand dunes. I remember his story about a homeless man who was sleeping on the beach at the time and woke to the sight of a minaret, part of the set for the Battle of Beersheba. The man swore he would never drink again. Photographs of the *Horsemen* set, along with other reminders of my father's life in film — which began at Hollywood's Metro Goldwyn Mayer studios in the 1920s — are held in the Mitchell Library.

Eric Thompson was born on 9 June 1901 at Drummoyne, Sydney, and educated at Sydney Grammar School. His love of drawing was evident at an early age and on leaving school he found employment as a cartoonist on *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers' Advocate*, a Parramatta-based newspaper.

Intent on studying architecture, he enrolled at Sydney Technical College where he met T Eric Cooper, five years his senior. Over the next few years, the two aspiring architects formed a close association. In early 1926, they embarked on SS *Manuka* to Noumea, considered an exotic destination at the time. In June that year, watercolour and pencil drawings of buildings they encountered on the trip were included in the Institute of Architects' Annual Sydney Exhibition.

Later that year, having returned to Sydney, both artists were represented in a show at Manufacturers House on Sydney's O'Connell Street. According to a *Sydney Morning Herald* art critic:

Mr Thompson's pencil drawing of Fairholme at Parramatta is one of the outstanding exhibits: while his many pen and ink sketches of Noumean scenes are faithfully done, and testify to an excellent command of line ...

The colonial home Fairholme — once owned by National Trust founder Annie Wyatt — had ignited Eric's lifelong interest in Australia's heritage buildings.

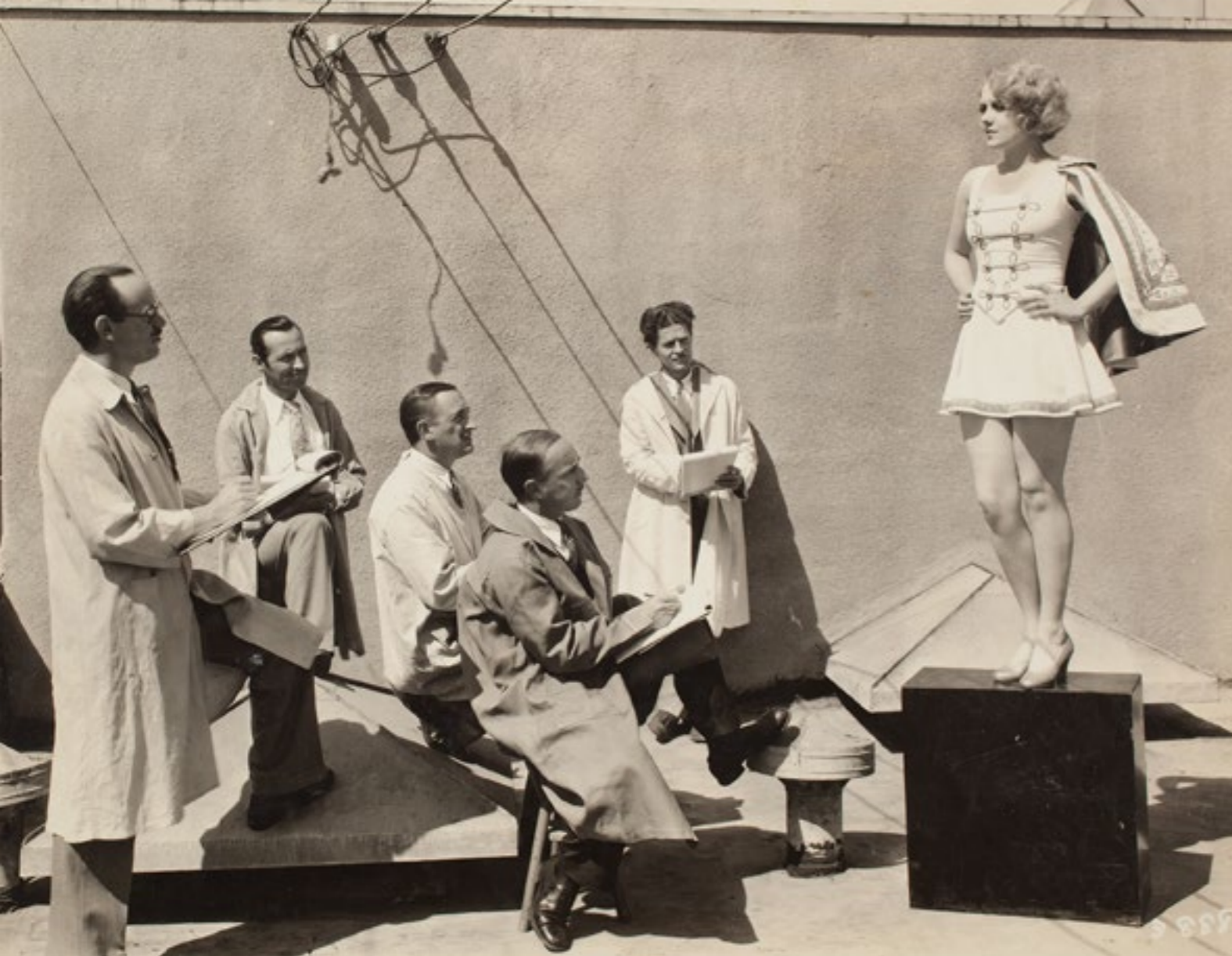
Articled to leading architectural firm Morrow and Gordon, and later to Joseland and Gilling, Eric received the Howard Joseland Prize for an outstanding young architect. Today, architectural drawings by Eric Thompson held in the Mitchell Library include the National Mutual building in Pitt Street and the Grace building in York Street.

In February 1927, the young adventurer set sail for the US, visiting New York and later Philadelphia, where he joined a firm of architects and frequented the T-Square Club, which held exhibitions of architects' work.

An exhibition of Eric's drawings brought him to the attention of MGM's Cedric Gibbons, who in 1927 invited him to take up a position as an art director at the company. As head of the art department at MGM from 1925 until 1956, Gibbons supervised a large staff, with his name appearing on more than 1500 movies as art director (his contract stipulated that his name was to appear on every release). His films had a lavish Art Deco style with his signature 'Big White Set' seen in such classics as *Dinner at Eight* (1933). A founding member of the Los Angeles Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, Cedric Gibbons is credited with designing the Oscar statue itself.

It was the Golden Age of Hollywood and the young Australian art director would have crossed paths with some of the great stars of the day such as Ginger Rogers, Joan Crawford and Greta Garbo. He worked

OPPOSITE: ERIC THOMPSON, FOURTH FROM LEFT, WITH HARRY MCAFEE, ART DIRECTOR, JULIAN HARRISON, SKETCH ARTIST, IDRIS LLOYD, HEAD OF ART DEPT, HOWARD FISHER, ART DIRECTOR, AND ANITA PAGE, FILM STAR, MGM STUDIOS, CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA, C. 1920. ERIC THOMPSON PHOTOGRAPHS PXA 1649, NO. 34



ARCHITECT *of the screen*

* WORDS Erica Aronsten

with many famous filmmakers including Irving Thalberg, Ben Hecht, and Walter Wanger.

During his 10 years at MGM, Eric worked on classics such as Ernst Lubitsch's *The Merry Widow* (an Academy Award winner), and MGM's first sound film, *The Last of Mrs Cheyney*. Reflecting on his time at MGM, he told *Film Monthly* in 1949:

I have often been asked the qualifications for an Art Director. Architectural knowledge of all periods and some engineering knowledge are essential. But to this you can add theatrical licence and lashings of imagination for you may be called upon to design anything from a hat shop to the interior of a submarine.

When Walter Wanger left MGM to begin independent production, he asked Thompson to join his crew. With Wanger, he made six films including *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, now regarded as a screen classic.

Returning to Australia in 1937, Eric Thompson joined Cinesound, then based at Bondi Junction. While working there he met and married publicist and author Nancy Gurr, a member of one of Australia's literary families (her father was novelist Thomas Stuart Gurr and her brothers Tom and Rodney had high-profile careers in journalism and film).

A trailblazer and feminist, Nancy was the sole woman in the Cinesound decision-making team. It was later acknowledged that thanks to her expertise and flair for promotion, many young actresses made the transition from obscurity to stardom (for more on Nancy's career see Andrée Wright, *Brilliant Careers: Women in Australian Cinema*, 1986).

At the time, Cinesound was entering a new era in motion picture production. Presiding over the studio was legendary producer Ken Hall. Along with Hall, Eric and Nancy made 13 movies including Australian classics *Orphan of the Wilderness*, *Lovers and Luggers*, *Dad and Dave Come to Town*, *It Isn't Done* and *Come up Smiling*. Conditions at Cinesound were primitive in comparison with Hollywood but, as art director, Thompson was able to bring his talent and knowledge to films such as the highly acclaimed *Tall Timbers*.

When Cinesound closed its doors after the war began in 1939, another opportunity arose with an invitation from Charles Chauvel to work on two films which were destined to become Australian classics, *Forty Thousand Horsemen* and *The Rats of Tobruk*.

Thompson's knowledge of construction and design led to his next career move to the secret camouflage unit in the Australian Department of Home Security as assistant to Professor William Dakin, technical director of camouflage. According to Ann Elias in her book *Camouflage Australia* (2011):

On 21 January 1942 with a worsening political situation in the Pacific, Dakin sent his 'best man' to the northern town, camoufleur and architect Eric Thompson. Before the war, Thompson was a pioneer of modern film production in Australia and spent time in the United States with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer working as a set designer. But with the outbreak of war, he was deployed to disguise aerodromes in Sydney using elaborate deceptive facades, and it was this type of camouflage that Dakin wanted applied to airforce bases in Darwin to make them look like sports grounds, racetracks, farm houses, factories – anything but aerodromes.

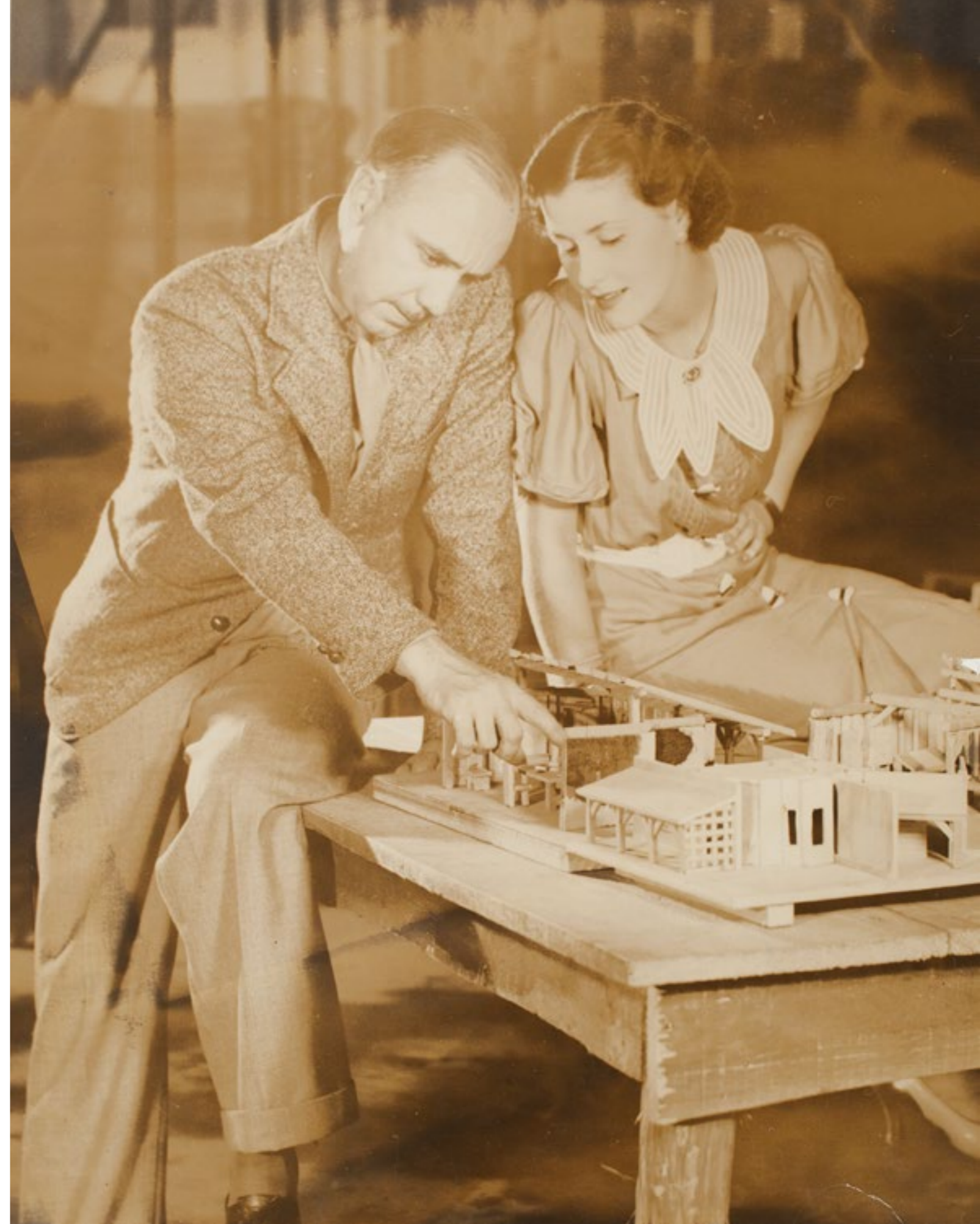
At the peak of his career, as an award-winning producer with the Commonwealth Film Unit, Eric's talents were sought by overseas producers such as Stanley Kramer for *On the Beach*, filmed in Melbourne in 1958, and numerous other productions including *Cinerama South Seas Adventure*.

In retirement, Eric returned to his passions for drawing and heritage architecture. Two volumes of his pencil drawings of Australian colonial buildings were published by Clarion Press in 1971 and 1973. Eric Thompson died on 4 January 1978. He is survived by two daughters.

A true pioneer of the Australian film industry, Eric Thompson's name lives on in some of the country's iconic early films.

Erica Aronsten is the Principal of Creative Kick Start.

The author acknowledges Dr Noni Boyd, Heritage Officer, Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter), and Zana Dare of Creative Kick Start for their assistance in the preparation of this article.





We tell the WORLD

* WORDS Michael Bogle

Sydney signwriting and decorating firm Althouse & Geiger was begun in 1875 by two American immigrants from Pennsylvania. The Library's collection offers glimpses of the company that once boasted, 'We tell the world everything it wants to know'.

Arriving in Sydney from the United States in 1875, John Althouse and FA Geiger quickly found work with painter and decorator JA Kean. Kean was a major figure in Sydney's temperance movement and became a founder of the Master Painters Association in 1889.

Within a year of beginning work with their abstemious employer, Althouse & Geiger established their partnership as signwriters, painters and decorators to the trade. Like many artisans in the city's competitive market, they were able to supply a wide range of services including the arcane science of silvering mirrors.

Althouse had worked in graining and marbling in Philadelphia, where Geiger had apprenticed. Little is known of their family backgrounds, but when Geiger came to Sydney he took classes in drawing and painting with the Sydney Art Society. Paintings signed by FA Geiger have been noted in auction records, including an oil portrait of Sir Henry Parkes dated 1916.

Advertisements for signwriting in the *Sydney Morning Herald* since the late nineteenth century reveal that practitioners worked across a number of other trades such as traditional painting, gilding on glass, wallpapering and decorative painting such as *faux* wood-graining. While Althouse & Geiger and their highly trained craftspeople supplied general house painting and the traditional trades, they possessed considerable skill in decorative and banner painting.

The firm quickly developed an enviable reputation in trade and commemoration banners, including painted textile banners for parades supporting the 1885 Irish National League march for St Patrick's Day, the 1901 Federation celebrations, the '8 Hour Day' and the Seamen's Union.

'We were privileged on Thursday evening to have a peep at the handsome new banner,' reported a March 1885 edition of the *Freeman's Journal*, 'to be carried in the procession of the Irish National League and the Hibernian Society on St Patrick's Day ... The banner in all its glory of green and gold presented a ... gorgeous appearance.'

By 1908, Althouse & Geiger were promoting themselves as sign and banner painters and exhibited regularly at the Painters and Decorators Trades Exhibition at Sydney Town Hall. The company prospered. After FA Geiger died in 1921, leaving two daughters, John Althouse's son Jack purchased Geiger's share of the business. Jack's son Fred later entered the firm but he was the last of the original families. Althouse & Geiger had kept a city building for many years, first in George Street, then shifting to Liverpool Street before settling in Sussex Street and finally to 190 Parramatta Road, Camperdown.

OPPOSITE: HOYTS PLAZA CINEMA, BUILDING SIGNAGE, GEORGE ST, SYDNEY, 17 APRIL 1930, EB STUDIO, ALTHOUSE & GEIGER ALBUM PXE 1514 / BOX 1



There are two Althouse & Geiger trade union banners in the State Library's collection, one promoting the Federated Society of Boilermakers and the other the Blacksmiths' Society of Australasia. The Boilermakers' banner appeared in the 2010 exhibition *ONE hundred*, celebrating the Mitchell Library centenary. The banner's display drew Jennifer Sims, the wife of Mr Leonard (Len) Sims, one of Althouse & Geiger's later managers, into the exhibition where she met Senior Curator (now Emeritus Curator) Paul Brunton and generously offered her family's Althouse & Geiger archive to the State Library of NSW.

The late Mr Sims joined Althouse & Geiger in 1954 when the trade was learned through technical college training and apprenticeships. The Library's collection contains several indenture agreements showing that an Althouse & Geiger apprenticeship in the 1920s required five years of on-the-job training at a beginning salary of 13 shillings a week, concluding

in year 5 with 53 shillings, 3 pence. An apprentice painter was exposed to a bewildering range of trade practices from house painting to burial vault repairs.

In 1985, Leonard Sims became the Althouse & Geiger director in the absence of interested heirs. Sims acted as the firm's unofficial historian, writing speeches and historical summaries, and collecting photographs and memorabilia. The company's work came to include such diverse items as Royal Agricultural Show prize ribbons (sold through Anthony Hordern's department store), hand-painted in-store cards (Sale! Discount! Bargain!) and stencil-printed felt banners for lifesaving clubs and schools. In the new era of the motorcar, trade vehicle designs (for panel vans, sedans and lorries) replaced processional banners, with vehicle painting awards given annually at the Sydney Motor Show. Althouse & Geiger also produced banners for carnival sideshows including 'Jimmy Sharman's Touring Stadium' and his famous boxing troupe.

Few things excited the profession and the trade journal *The Decorator and Painter* more than BIG signs. Althouse & Geiger were responsible for memorable pictorial signage painted over the walls of city buildings up to five storeys high, most now lost through demolition. They also produced large hand-painted billboards advertising motorcars (Hudson and Essex models) that once graced the Oxford Street walls of the Victoria Barracks in Paddington. The scale of this signage required first-rate talent, and Archibald Prize winners William Dobell and Henry Hanke picked up the painter's maulstick for Althouse & Geiger. The archive preserves several photographs of a large over-awning 1963 mural of a portrait of Elizabeth Taylor as Cleopatra for the Mayfair Cinema in Castlereagh Street.

Signwriters had no doubt of their creative worth. 'Sometimes I think Sydney must be the world's best sign-written city,' asserts a 1965 handwritten letter in the archive from the late signwriter Walter Tarr. 'To the public, Sydney is just one shop after another but to an observant [sign]-writer, it is an art gallery ... We tell the world everything it wants to know.'

As the twentieth century advanced, Len Sims often complained that much of Althouse & Geiger's work came from advertising agencies and design shops. Although he directed the firm through illuminated signage, automated displays and fluorescent lighting, Jennifer Sims says her late husband was not fond of change. As a highly trained artisan with decades of experience, he could not embrace computers, graphics software and the now ubiquitous signage franchises.

Following a 1999 Lawsons auction of pub signs and ephemera by Althouse & Geiger, Jennifer Sims says Len gave the business to Max Henderson, a Gladesville painter, who was an office holder in the Master Painters Australia (NSW) organisation. Mr Henderson in turn passed Althouse & Geiger on to the Klimczyk family of Baulkham Hills. Len Sims might smile to know that the historic firm lives on as althousegeiger.com.au.

Michael Bogle is a historian working in the field of design and architecture.

An album from the Althouse & Geiger collection is on display in the Amaze Gallery.

OPPOSITE: ALTHOUSE & GEIGER ILLUSTRATIONS IN ALBUM, C. 1945-59, PXA 1514 / BOX 2

RIGHT FROM TOP: OSRAM BUILDING SIGNAGE, C. 1937-50, KENT ST, PHOTO C. 1964-70; INTERIOR OF STUDIO SHOWING SIGNWRITERS AT WORK WITH BRUSHES AND MAULSTICKS, C. 1940, PHIL WARD COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHER; SIGNAGE ON PANEL VAN OUTSIDE ALTHOUSE & GEIGER BUILDING IN CAMPERDOWN, C. 1978, PXA 1514 / BOX 3





PROVENANCE

Its author was born Fergusson Wright Hume in England on 8 July 1859. Migrating with his family to New Zealand as a young child, he was educated in Dunedin on the South Island. Hume went on to study law and, shortly after being admitted to the Bar, he migrated again – this time to Melbourne, Australia. Taking up a position with a local solicitor, Hume used one of the world’s great cities to set about establishing his literary career. *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, his first book, gave that career an incredible start.

Among the fascinating aspects of this pioneering crime novel is Hume’s engagement with ideas of punishment. In a chapter titled ‘The Hands of Justice’, Dr Chinston predicts that the man responsible for the murder will commit suicide. The prisoner politely obliges, on the very next page, when he ‘hang[s] himself in his cell during the night’. Despite having trained for the legal profession, Hume preferred, in this instance at least, a far neater and quicker ending than a trial and subsequent sentencing could provide.

‘I tried to get it published,’ Hume complained after completing the novel, ‘but everyone to whom I offered it refused even to look at the manuscript on the ground that no Colonial could write anything worth reading.’ A determined and entrepreneurial Hume would set about the task of self-publishing and, in 1886, the printers Kemp and Boyce produced 5000 copies (with Hume claiming that all copies were sold within three weeks).

Nearly half a century later a short article on ‘Rare Australian Books’ that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 30 December 1935 reported that:

There is, in the Mitchell Library, a copy in good condition, of the original Melbourne edition. It has both covers intact, and two pages of advertisements at the end of the book. The title-page bears the imprint, ‘Melbourne, Kemp and Boyce, printers.’

Today, the Library holds two copies of the first edition. Of four known to have survived, these are the only complete copies.

The book’s immediate and stunning success generated a vast array of editions. By some estimates 25,000 copies were sold in the first major Australian print runs alone. Having so many versions in print prompted one auction house to note that the bibliography of the book is confused and imperfect. Contributing to this confusion is the work of Frederick Trischler who, managing The Hansom Cab

Publishing Company, went on to sell over 500,000 copies of the book. This made *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* the biggest-selling detective novel of the nineteenth century. Hume did not profit financially from such unprecedented sales figures, having sold the rights to the book for £50. Yet this novel changed the landscape of popular fiction, and readers (as well as authors) from around the world benefited from his efforts.

As Dr Lucy Sussex, an authority on Australian colonial crime fiction, explains:

The book helped define the new publishing genre of detective fiction, alerting publishers to a new, and huge popular market – although the real beneficiary, it might be argued, was not Hume but Conan Doyle, whose first Sherlock Holmes story, ‘A Study in Scarlet’, was not published until after *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*.

Hume proved himself to be a prolific author, producing almost 140 novels and short story collections. Though Hume’s efforts contributed to the growing genre of crime fiction, he was never able to replicate his initial triumph. His other novels set in Australia, *Madam Midas* (1888) and *Miss Mephistopheles* (1890), could not command the attention of the vast readership that was so ready to purchase *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* and devour the story of murder in Marvellous Melbourne. Fergus Hume died in England on 12 July 1932, just a few days after his 73rd birthday.

Many still enjoy Hume’s international bestseller, but the majority of his works have been forgotten. The Fergus Hume Society formed recently to promote engagement with the author’s life and work for enjoyment, scholarship and research. Lucy Sussex, author of *Blockbuster!: Fergus Hume and The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, will deliver the society’s inaugural lecture at the Library at 12.30 pm on Wednesday 8 July 2015.

Dr Rachel Franks is Coordinator, Education & Scholarship, at the Library and a Conjoint Fellow at the University of Newcastle.



CATCHING *a cab*

* WORDS Rachel Franks

A surprise bestseller in 1886, Fergus Hume’s *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* continues to intrigue.

Fergus Hume’s *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* is the story of an illegitimate child, a fear of family scandal and a homicide. Promoted as a startling and realistic story of Melbourne social life, the novel exemplifies the idea of a sensational mystery: a man murdered in a cab with no witnesses and no immediate motive. It offers a thrilling detective story as well as commentary on various aspects of Australia during the late 1800s.

FERGUS HUME, c.1885, ELLIOTT & FRY, PHOTOGRAPHERS, STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA, H82.266
OPPOSITE: TWO FIRST EDITIONS: FERGUS HUME’S *MYSTERY OF A HANSON CAB*, MELBOURNE: KEMP AND BOYCE, PRINTERS, 1886, DSM/C 808-1 AND C 808-2

The Australian home restoration boom of the 1960s and 70s came into view, for researcher Rose Cullen, through the Library's magazine collection.

In 1962 Winifred Miller was carefully repairing an old house in Orange. She marvelled at its ornate wooden fireplace, painted to imitate marble, the solid 14-inch walls and still intact maid's bells. She thought the house could be 100 years old and valued the craftsmanship of its original features. Although she decided to update the home's kitchen and plumbing, she was 'trying to keep it more or less as it is'.

While working on the house, Miller wrote about her project to the organisers of a NSW National Trust competition for the restoration and preservation of nineteenth-century buildings. Her house features in a collection of 'before' and 'after' photographs from the 1962 competition, which is held in the Mitchell Library. Almost two thirds of the competition's entries were private houses 'restored' by homeowners who felt their homes were not only functional and aesthetically pleasing, but also historically valuable.

This collection was the catalyst for my history PhD research into how and why some older Australian homes have been restored and conserved over the past 50 years. But it was another Mitchell Library collection, its volumes of home decorating magazines, that made it possible to trace the actions of individual homeowners.

Magazines offer unusual glimpses into Australian homes of the past. From the late 1950s onwards, their pages reveal Australians becoming very excited about old homes — taking on derelict or unloved houses and deciding not just to make them liveable, but to repair them with a reverence for their history and their original materials.

As I leafed through 30 years of *Australian House and Garden*, I found a growing number of 'restorations' to older properties from the early 1960s onwards. The increasing use of colour printing during that period brought vivid realism to photographs of featured houses. In these pages social shifts come into focus.

In 1959 Mrs Samson explained that her East Melbourne terrace had two years earlier been tenanted to 'an old pensioner', but since then she had removed the asbestos enclosing the verandah to reveal the cast iron railings, which she considered 'the most attractive feature' of the house. Such change reflected general gentrification, but also an appreciation for original nineteenth-century features, which was part of a larger revaluing of Victorian aesthetics.

Journalists wrote of the gentrification of inner Sydney and Melbourne, highlighting an emerging conservation ethic towards the inner suburbs' nineteenth-century housing. Residents in Sydney's Paddington were described in 1968 as spending thousands on 'rebuilding, renovating and replacing the original 19th Century architectural features discarded by previous itinerant tenants'. In Melbourne's Richmond, according to a 1970 article, 'Rather than destroy the character of the houses, the new owners tend to leave the exteriors untouched except perhaps for paintwork.'

In the 1960s the word 'restoring' appeared increasingly frequently in articles about repaired houses. The term 'remodelling', once used positively to mean modernising and updating, lost its prominence, and was later replaced in the popular lexicon by 'renovating'. In one article, the Leech family were commended for deciding to restore their nineteenth-century house in Brighton, Victoria, 'to its former colonial dignity rather than continue the attempt at remodelling begun by a previous owner'. Perhaps unintentionally, the article's title conveyed the irony of making the old like new, declaring: 'Melbourne restoration is modern showplace'.

REPAIRED TERRACE HOUSE
IN GLEBE FROM AUSTRALIAN
HOUSE AND GARDEN
JUNE 1978

ORIGINAL *features*

* WORDS Rose Cullen

A growing desire to preserve the original character of older homes manifested in many ways. Market researcher and city councillor Roy Morgan bought 'old hand-made bricks, paneled doors, skirtings, tall windows, iron lace, slate and paving stones' from old Toorak mansions about to be demolished to help repair his 100-year-old East Melbourne home. A lucrative trade in salvaged building materials was emerging.

Dr and Mrs Lyall, in the Adelaide suburb of Woodville, were said to 'have preserved and restored' their 90-year-old home 'as much ... as possible', even carefully repairing the old porcelain door furniture, including escutcheons. South Australian architect Stephen H Gilbert converted an 1851 mill in Victor Harbor into a holiday home, taking care to retain its weathered look and leaving visible the names carved in the building's circular walls. In 1970 art gallery owner Stuart Purves was reportedly planning 'to restore the mid-19th century character' of his pre-1841 cottage in Richmond, Melbourne, with the help of Robin Boyd, architect and author of *Australia's Home* (1952).

Although doctors, architects and other professionals appear frequently in these examples, restoring old houses was not restricted to the wealthy or well educated. But it was a mark of social distinction. It was a new way of distinguishing those who had historical knowledge and aesthetic sensibility from the rest of the population.

Snippets of social history in these magazines demonstrate that the physical remnants of the Australian past were being valued in an unprecedented way. An advertisement for *Australian Country Magazine* in 1967 announced, 'Never before have Australians been so interested in their historic reminders – particularly old homes.' The interest seemed to be gaining momentum. In 1971 one resident of Balmain in inner Sydney was full of enthusiasm for her 1888 house: 'I have always wanted to restore an old Victorian house ... I guess you could even say it has been a life's ambition.' She was trying 'to return the house faithfully to its 1888 beginnings', even hoping to install gas lighting.

Popular historical consciousness was expanding. Australian history had new social currency, exciting interest in old homes, antiques and items that evoked the past. By 1970 *Australiana* was considered an eye-catching interior decorating choice. Mrs Kilpatrick's Peakhurst home in southern Sydney demonstrated the trend with 'a pair of convict handcuffs' and a sample of Captain Bligh's signature mounted in the living room. The Australian past was stylish and also saleable. Historic building materials were reproduced, ranging from new bricks which claimed the qualities of original sandstocks, to light fitting designs described as 'purest colonial'. Throughout the 1970s an emphasis on historic qualities was often used to advertise new products for the home.

Conservation principles were being developed, promoted and enacted with the passing of the first heritage legislation and initiatives such as the Whitlam Government's Heritage Commission, Register of the National Estate and purchase and repair of over 700 houses in Glebe in the mid-1970s. Awareness and specialised skills were increasing. John Morgan, a builder working on older houses in Melbourne's Fitzroy, told *Australian House and Garden* in 1979 that he felt, after the destruction wrought by speculators in the 1960s, 'new buyers are more educated about the past'.

These magazines have been a rich starting point for my research, offering many avenues for investigations about the relatively recent past. A 1974 article about repairing The Chestnuts, an ornate Victorian house in the Queensland city of Ipswich, led me to visit the house last July and meet the owners, heritage professionals Allen and Linda Cooper. The Coopers are now conserving a complex of Georgian buildings in Tasmania. Through the enthusiasm of individuals like these, I have begun to trace an evolving conservation philosophy.

Rose Cullen is a History PhD student at the University of Sydney and works part-time as an Assistant Local Studies Librarian.



A little-known period of Spanish activity in the Pacific is recorded in 24 charts, recently acquired by the Library.

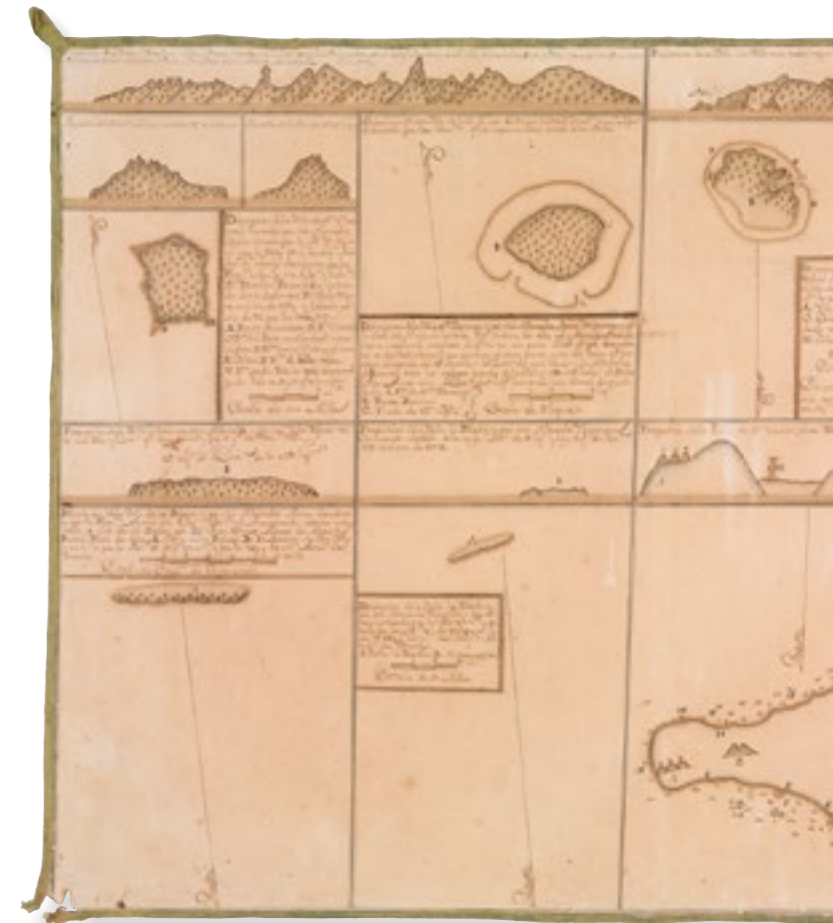
In 1494 the Papal Edict of Tordesillas granted the Pacific region, excluding the East Indies, exclusively to Spain. Regular trade was established between Manila, the Spanish base in the Philippines, and the Spanish territories along the Pacific coast of North and Central America.

It was only during the eighteenth century that other European naval powers began exploring the Pacific in search of trade opportunities and the elusive *Terra Australis*. Captain Samuel Wallis arrived in Tahiti on the *Dolphin* in 1767 and claimed the island for Britain as King George's Island. Later that year Louis Bougainville claimed the same island for France as New Cythera. When Captain Cook reached Tahiti on the *Endeavour* in 1770 he called it Otaheite.

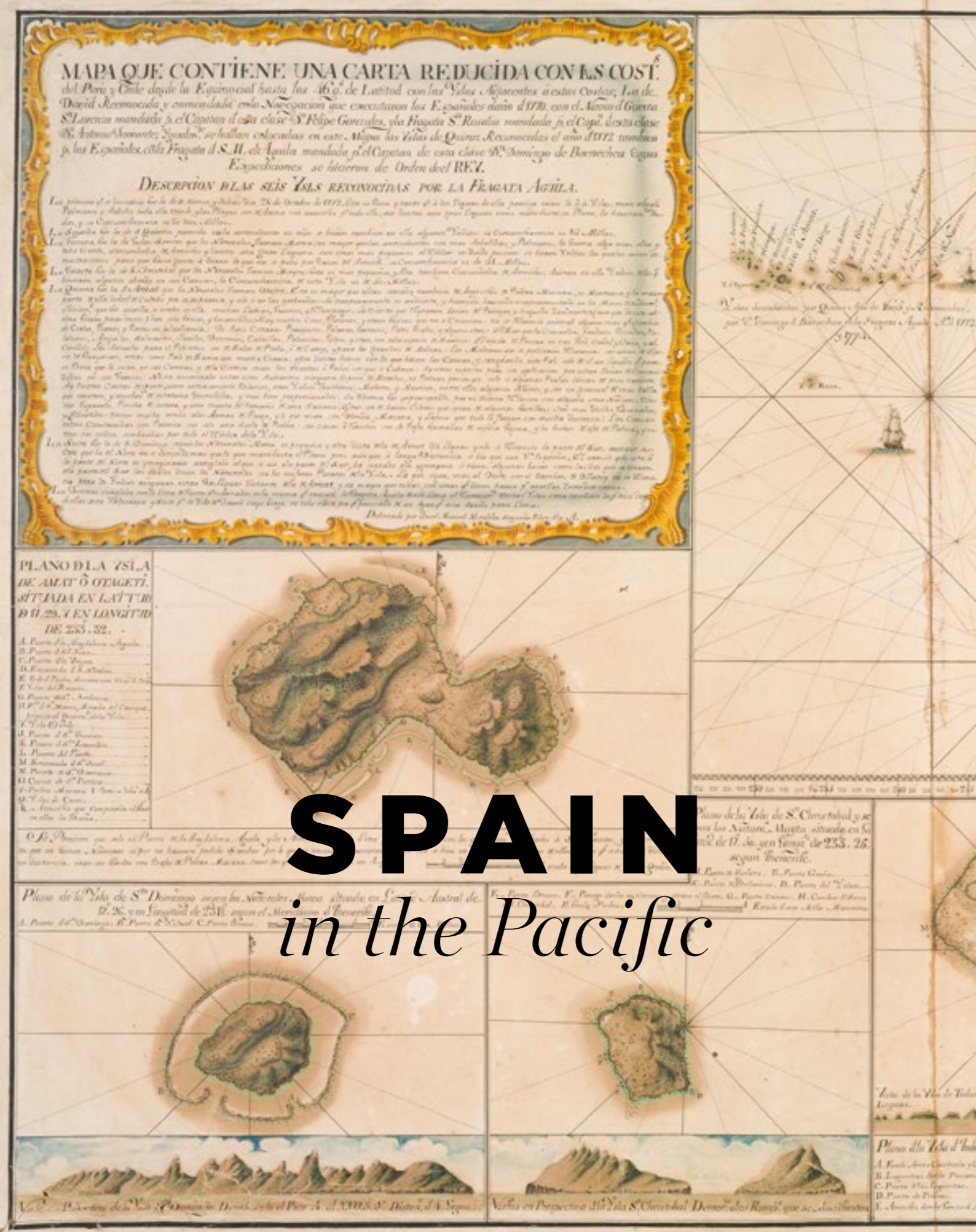
Concerned that its Pacific empire was under threat from Britain and France, the Spanish government ordered its own expeditions to map and colonise several South Pacific islands. On the first expedition in November 1770, Felipe Gonzalez claimed Easter Island for Spain. Domingo Boenechea's expedition reached Tahiti in 1772, and it was renamed Amat's Island after the Spanish Viceroy. Having surveyed the island, Boenechea reported that it was suitable for settlement. A colony was established in 1774 led by two Dominican friars; its failure within a year signalled the decline of Spanish power in the Pacific.

The charts purchased by the Library were assembled by Commodore Joseph de la Somaglia, Commander of the South Pacific Squadron of the Spanish Armada Real between 1771 and 1778. The collection includes detailed charts of Spanish expeditions to Tahiti and Easter Island, as well as a number of sea charts of the coasts of South America and various locations in Spain and Spanish America.

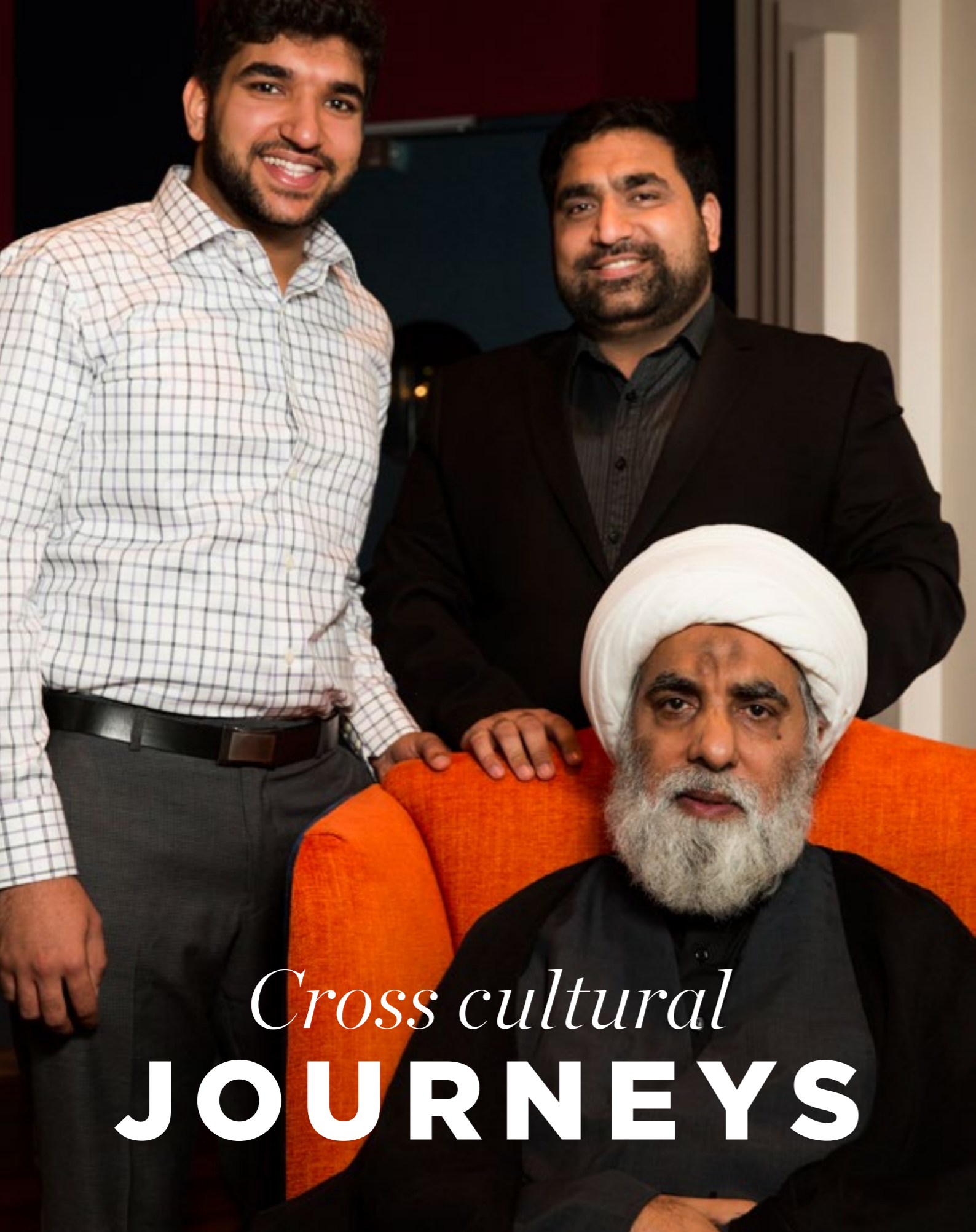
MAGGIE PATTON
 Manager, Research & Discovery
 On display in the Amaze Gallery



SOMAGLIA COLLECTION OF MANUSCRIPT SEA CHARTS OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND SOUTH AMERICA, HIGHLIGHTING THE SPANISH EXPEDITIONS TO COLONISE EASTER ISLAND AND TAHITI SAFE/MT4 910/1770/1



SPAIN in the Pacific



Cross cultural **JOURNEYS**

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Among many new oral histories in the Library's collection is an interview with His Eminence Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Al-Ansari.

As a child, Basim Al-Ansari didn't have to be forced to join in at prayer time, he simply sat with his father's arm around him and listened to his 'lovely, spiritual prayer'.

His father, Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Al-Ansari, is the spiritual guide of Shi'a Islam in Australia and New Zealand. As part of the Library's 'Muslims in Contemporary Society' oral history project, Louise Darmody recorded his inspiring story. The interview was conducted over two days in two locations – the first day in a recording studio, and the second in the book-lined study of his Bankstown home. The result is a fascinating and significant addition to the Library's 11,000 hours of oral history recordings.

The Ayatollah's narration – spoken in Arabic and translated by his son Basim – moves back and forth across different eras, nations and cultures. It encompasses themes of theology, politics and war, and peace and reconciliation. He relates dramatic and harrowing events, then shifts to stories of the simple joys of domestic life. Prominent in the whole account is the scholarly tradition of his family over many generations, going back to the time of Mohammed.

Born in 1952 in Amarah, a majority Shi'a region in south-eastern Iraq, the Ayatollah inherited his father's love of poetry. As a young man he studied engineering but soon turned to Islamic studies. He entered the Shi'a seminary at Najaf, and continued his academic teaching and research at the holy city of Qom in Iran. A brilliant scholar of theology and Islamic law, he attained the highest award in Shi'a religion, the Ijtihad.

As Saddam Hussein's rule became increasingly controlling and repressive, Ayatollah Al-Ansari and his family were forced to move to Iran. The Ayatollah had been tortured and imprisoned in Iraq, but life in Iran proved no safer. When the Iraqi secret police pursued him and attempted to assassinate him, he narrowly escaped, but recounts with great sadness

the fate of many of his colleagues, highly esteemed Shi'a leaders like himself, whose lives were lost in that brutal period.

In the late 1990s he and his family escaped to Malaysia and then, from Indonesia, sought asylum in Australia after a frightening boat journey. Curtin detention centre unfortunately presented more hardship for a family that had already endured their fair share of adversity. But, with the kind assistance of refugee support groups, they transferred to Perth, then finally to Sydney, where they have settled and become leaders in their community.

During the interview, the Ayatollah and his sons were moved to tears by the traumatic events he describes. The sons later revealed that they were hearing some of their father's stories for the first time. Especially poignant was the Ayatollah's admission that he had kept a certain emotional distance from his children because he feared for his life and believed he should protect his family from some of the pain of that potential loss.

The Ayatollah's interview is a remarkable portrayal of what it means to be strong in one's faith, courageous, compassionate, a role model and leader, and a revered family man. Partly because of his mistrust of the media, and also because of his extremely busy schedule, he deliberated before agreeing to give this interview. But being a man of books and a lover of libraries, in the end he happily gave his consent. This extraordinary recording is available in the collection.

SALLY HONE

Curator, Research & Discovery

Ayatollah Al-Ansari was recorded as part of a series of oral histories commissioned by the Library documenting the experiences of people of Islamic faith in NSW. The Ayatollah's son Dr Basim Al-Ansari was also interviewed.

AYATOLLAH AL-ANSARI
WITH HIS SONS MUSTAFA
AND MOHAMMAD BASIM

HITTING

the slopes

NEW ACQUISITIONS

A young woman's alpine adventure in the 1930s sent her headlong into romance.



PHOTOGRAPH AND POEM
FROM EMILY CHAMBERS,
PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM
OF KOSCIUSZKO,
1-11 AUGUST 1930, PXA 2108

... they say, that up at 'Kossie'
There's lots and lots of men
So who knows what the future
Holds in store for little 'EM.'

Anonymous Poem, c. 1930

Thoroughly modern Miss Emily Chambers of Burwood, NSW, was always eager to try the latest fad, whether it was wearing short sleeves to the office at the Mutual Life Company in Martin Place, marching with the Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club, dancing the Charleston on weekends, skating at Sydney's George Street Glaciarium, or skiing.

With fun, adventure (and perhaps love) on the agenda, Emily and a friend (also named Emily – the other half of the 'Two Ems') packed their ski gear, paid their £20 and joined the Public Service Ski Club on a 10-day stint at the snow. Their stay at the Hotel Kosciusko at Diggers Creek near Jindabyne, from 1 to 11 August 1930, coincided with a heavy snowfall. The mountain resort became a winter sports' paradise, ensuring the novice skiers enjoyed the best conditions for their first alpine excursion.

Emily's photo album from this trip captures all the energy and enthusiasm of a young woman experiencing a visit to the snow courtesy of the relatively new industry of commercial tourism. Thirty-six black and white snaps record skiers on the Kerry Course (named for alpine pioneer and photographer Charles Kerry, the father of Australian skiing) and the Grand Slam run, a cross-country ski race, ice skating and a picnic in the snow at Dainer's Gap with lunch carried on a horse-drawn sleigh.

Emily's search for love was equally successful. Victorian Ski Club stalwart Gordon Mailler Brown was also holidaying at Kosciuszko. The couple took to each other straight away; the champion 'ski-runner' (as skiers were then known) was soon giving the pretty learner a few tips, coaching her to first place

in the Ladies' Alarm Race on the picnic race day, before the annual snow carnival and fancy dress ball on the last evening.

Returning to Sydney, the holiday romance blossomed into a long-distance relationship. That summer Emily travelled by ship, with her sister Isabel, to meet Gordon's family; his father ET Brown was founder of the Brown-built Steel Equipment Company, Australia's first manufacturer of all-steel office furniture. In January 1931 the girls flew back to Sydney on the 'Southern Sky', part of Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith's short-lived Australian National Airway's fleet. Emily's collection also contains souvenirs of this early experience of commercial air travel, including her own photographs and ephemera (tickets, timetable, sick bag).

Gordon and Emily were engaged in May and married later in 1932. The couple had three children and spent many happy family holidays (both summer and winter) in the alpine regions of Victoria and NSW, all photographed by Emily. Ironically, however, it was Gordon's passion for alpine pursuits – inherited by son Alan who later participated in the 1947 Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition – that would eventually drive the couple apart. Gordon and Emily divorced in 1966, and Emily died in 1977.

This recent acquisition, presented to the Library by Emily and Gordon's daughter, Lynette O'Neill, includes two albums of photographs and associated ephemera. Together, these items provide a wonderful record of one Sydney woman's encounters with emerging modern lifestyle trends in Australia between the wars.

MARGOT RILEY
Curator, Research & Discovery

The author is grateful to Lynette O'Neill for providing information for this article.

On display in the Amaze Gallery

GROWING *up*



Young visitors have built a strong connection to the Library over six years of school holiday programs.

Oliver first visited the Library as a four year old to join the celebrations for the Mitchell Library centenary. Travelling from the Blue Mountains, Oliver and his mother, Elissa, have continued to take part in our kids@thelibrary holiday programs. Five years after that first visit, Elissa says Oliver's feeling of connection to the Library is the source of his ongoing commitment. 'The relationship is greatly treasured by our family,' says Elissa. '... the State Library has become a place of great significance for Oliver, and this will endure irrespective of how and when he spends time there.'

Children's cultural participation is growing. In the 12 months to April 2012, 71% of children aged five to 14 years attended a public library, visited a museum or art gallery, or attended a performing arts event outside school hours (Australian Bureau of Statistics 4901.0).

So how does the Library initiate and sustain an ongoing relationship with young visitors? While many children visit the Library on an organised school excursion, a vibrant school holiday program allows them to vote with their feet.

In 2009 we welcomed our first enthusiastic kids@thelibrary participants. Numbers have grown since then and many of the early adopters have returned again and again. While counting numbers is one way of measuring the programs' popularity, understanding the impact of ongoing participation is more complex. Conversations with families give us an insight into why they keep coming back and the nature of their connection to the Library.

Our holiday programs are based on the Library's collections, exhibitions and buildings. Over the past six years, young visitors have designed and constructed buildings like government architect Francis Greenway, painted flora and fauna like colonial artist John Lewin, and searched for Matthew Flinders' cat, Trim, by torchlight, being careful to avoid upsetting the ghost of Library benefactor David Scott Mitchell. They have photographed the magnificent



building from every conceivable angle, created films, decorated cupcakes, written short stories and met writers and artists from around Australia.

'I really like being in the Library,' says 10-year-old Gabrielle. 'It's beautiful. I like everything there — the big map on the floor, all the stairs, the writing everywhere and the reading room.'

Gabrielle's 'absolute favourite' part of the building is the Shakespeare Room: 'I love the design in the ceiling and all the detail in the wood and in the windows. The fact that I get to go to the workshops in this building and see all my favourite things just makes me feel good.'

The recent exhibition *Lynley Dodd: A Retrospective* attracted families keen to immerse themselves in the magic of Hairy Maclary, Slinky Malinki and friends. The large attendance at an exhibition Family Fun Day was testament to the popularity of this celebrated children's author, as well as a perfect way to introduce children to the Library.

We continue to find new ways to make the Library a welcoming place for young visitors. See our website for more information on kids@thelibrary school holiday programs.

Pauline Fitzgerald, Learning Services

OLIVER AT FOUR, ABOVE,
AND AT EIGHT WITH HIS
MOTHER ELISSA, OPPOSITE

building a strong Foundation

Heritage rooms renewed

To mark its 25th anniversary in 2014, the State Library of NSW Foundation established the Mitchell Campaign to support the much needed refurbishment of the Mitchell Library building and improve the experience of our scholars, students, visitors, friends and volunteers.

The campaign successfully raised donations and pledges from many passionate supporters to restore the building's heritage spaces on the ground floor, including the reading room where many sponsored study tables and chairs.

We thank all donors for supporting this wonderful project, in particular the Abbott Foundation, David Anstice, Belinda Hutchinson AM, the Nelson Meers Foundation, Geoffrey and Rachel O'Connor, Rob Thomas AM and Kim Williams AM.

The refurbished Friends Room, new Gallery Room and Volunteers Room were opened on 31 March 2015. Improvements include bespoke furniture, new soft furnishings and improved lighting. Heritage features have been preserved throughout.

The Friends Room, which was the original Mitchell Library Reading Room, is rich in history. This evocative space speaks of great collections and passionate collectors such as David Scott Mitchell (1836–1907). The room showcases some of Australia's most significant figures in art, literature and society. Works by WB McInnes, Richard Noble and Tom Roberts are among those on display.

Also in the room is the amazing Cervantes collection donated by Dr Ben Haneman, with more than 1100 editions of Miguel de Cervantes'



masterpiece *Don Quixote*. Dr Haneman spent over 30 years amassing this collection, which is believed to be the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

To complement the period style of the room, the Library commissioned three exquisite hand-knotted rugs based on art deco-inspired designs by Florence Broadhurst.

Whether you are using the Library for research, visiting one of our exhibitions or dropping in after a business meeting, we invite all Friends and supporters to come in and enjoy this wonderful space.

—
SUSAN HUNT

Director, State Library of NSW Foundation
& Executive Manager, Advancement



H I G H L I G H T S



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- 01 PSEPHOLOGIST AND ABC ELECTION COMMENTATOR ANTONY GREEN PRESENTS HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ELECTION COLLECTIONS 6 FEBRUARY 2015 PHOTO BY MERINDA CAMPBELL
- 02 PETER CHAPMAN, CENTRE, ILLUSTRATOR FOR FRANK JOHNSON PUBLICATIONS FEATURED IN *PULP CONFIDENTIAL* EXHIBITION, WITH HIS SON AND GRANDSON 10 FEBRUARY 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 03 JOHN DENNIS AND ANNE ZAHALKA, *PULP CONFIDENTIAL* EXHIBITION OPENING 10 FEBRUARY 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 04 DR STAVROS KYRIMIS, CONSUL GENERAL OF GREECE, *LEMNOS 1915: THEN & NOW* LAUNCH 25 FEBRUARY 2015 PHOTO BY MERINDA CAMPBELL

- 05 DAME MARIE BASHIR AD, CVO AND DR ALEX BYRNE, UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD INSCRIPTION FOR FIRST WORLD WAR COLLECTION 5 MARCH 2015 PHOTO BY MERINDA CAMPBELL
- 06 DURGESH SONI, LEFT, INTRODUCES BALBIR SINGH BAINS AND KRISHNA BAINS TO THE LIBRARY'S PUNJABI COLLECTION, MULTICULTURAL MARCH 10 MARCH 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 07 COLLECTION VIEWING FOR UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ART HISTORY STUDENTS 10 MARCH 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 08 LOUISE DARMODY, NELLY PIERCE, AALYSSAA MINA AND AIDA ZEIN 'COLLECTING DIVERSITY: NEW ORAL HISTORIES' EVENT, 12 MARCH 2015 PHOTO BY MERINDA CAMPBELL

- 09 BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY CELEBRATION 21 MARCH 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 10 JOHN AND YOLANDE LAI, MANDARIN TOUR FOR MULTICULTURAL MARCH, 25 MARCH 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 11 & 12 AT THE FRIENDS PROGRAM RELAUNCH 10 APRIL 2015 PHOTO BY JOY LAI
- 13 JACK AND CODY ENJOYING A BRITISH COLONISATION LEARNING PROGRAM IN THE MITCHELL LIBRARY READING ROOM, 13 APRIL 2015 PHOTO BY MERINDA CAMPBELL

recent highlights



the library shop

Open 7 days
(02) 9273 1611
library.shop@sl.nsw.gov.au
www.sl.nsw.gov.au/shop

Drop in for gifts from new release books and archival prints to accessories, cards and gift vouchers.



‘Q&A

Rachel L Frick



Rachel L Frick is Director of Business Development at the online-only Digital Public Library of America. She will visit the Library in June to speak about the possibilities for digital collections.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE DIGITAL PUBLIC LIBRARY OF AMERICA?

Our *mission* is to bring together the riches of America’s libraries, archives, and museums, and make them freely available to the world. We are striving to contain the full breadth of human expression — from the written word, to works of art and culture, to records of America’s heritage, to the efforts and data of science.

HOW DO YOU ENHANCE ACCESS TO DIGITAL COLLECTIONS?

Our website (dp.la) offers a single point of access to millions of items from over 40 state/regional digital libraries and myriad large digital libraries in the US. We bring together digitised and born-digital content from across the country, which can be searched or browsed in many ways: a timeline, map, virtual bookshelf and digital

exhibitions. We also support developers who create apps that enhance digital collections — an example from our apps library is Culture Collage, which lets you search the image archive and view the results as a streaming river of images.

WHAT IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE?

Sustainability! In only two years we’ve grown from 2.4 million items to 10 million and from a staff of four to 14. We are still primarily funded by generous federal and private grants, and our programs are based on the principle of open access.

WHICH PROJECTS EXCITE YOU AT THE MOMENT?

I’m really excited about a recently funded project nicknamed Hydra-in-a-Box, which aims to create a new community-based repository for digital resources. We’re also

involved in national discussions about coordinating access to ebooks. And I’m thrilled at how our developer community is building apps that work with social media, like the ‘DinnerPLans Twitterbot’ that tweets out food-related items from the our collections.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE BRICKS-AND-MORTAR LIBRARY?

My favorite is my local library, just up the street from me. It’s a small one, as I live in a town with a population of 3000. I serve on the board. We have an annual fundraising plant sale; they serve coffee and have a working fireplace when it’s cold. I like it because it connects me in a physical real-life way to what public libraries do and their essential role in communities.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO?

Tomorrow. Now is a great time to be working in the cultural heritage profession. It’s a time of transformation and so much possibility. The important thing is to make sure you leave room for serendipity, both personally and professionally.

Rachel L Frick will speak at the **Linked Open Data for Libraries Archives and Museums (LODLAM) Summit and the Global Digital Humanities conference, DH 2015.**





Always remembered

Elizabeth Cook's mourning ring, c. 1780, was presented to the Library by her descendants in 1965. Elizabeth lived for 56 years after her husband died in 1779 and all of their six children predeceased her. She wore this mourning ring until her own death in 1835 at the age of 94.

On display in the Dalgety Walkway with a selection of artefacts relating to Captain James Cook.