

Putting a value on museums

Paul Bentley

The Federal Minister for the Arts, Peter Garrett, has announced plans for the development of a national cultural policy. The spectre of economic uncertainty increases the need for the museums sector to make a compelling case when competing for the government dollar.

So what is a compelling case and how do you make one?

Measuring thin air businesses



Photo: Slimmer Jimmer, Flickr

Justifying public expenditure on museums is often tied up with measuring government spending on the arts and creativity. The British commentator Charles Leadbeater, once described such as activities as 'thin air businesses' in which participation, rather than consumption or production, will underscore future value. For the American public anthropologist Robert Borofsky, (*Cultural Possibilities*, 1998), defining culture is akin to 'engaging the wind'.

Engaging the wind has been the subject of numerous studies, tools and commentaries. A few of them are highlighted in this article.

A checklist published by Arts Business Ltd in 1991 offers 99 quantitative and subject measures under 12 headings to guide public policy, including formulas for measuring funding programs, financial performance, employment and training, equal opportunities, innovation, audience building, quality, organisational and strategic performance and economic impact. Some indicators could be relevant to future funding of museums – such as the ratio of centrally provided funds to locally provided funds, centrally provided subsidy per head per region, and training days per employer per annum.

An *Economic Impact Model for the Arts and Heritage*, published by the Department of Canadian Heritage in 2007, is an online tool for non-economists to calculate the economic impacts of expenditures on arts and heritage activities at national, state and local levels.

Michelle Reeves, in her 2002 report for the Arts Council of England, *Measuring the Social and Economic Impact of the Arts*, was critical of a lack of conceptual clarity and narrow conceptualisations of social and economic impact, the reliance on self-reporting with little corroborating evidence, an over reliance on official statistics which often give a partial picture, and the lack of a common framework of research principles, assessment processes and standards for evaluation. She said there were simplistic and naïve explanations for attributing positive outcomes to arts projects. In proposing a new model, she acknowledged the tendency to rely primarily on aesthetic rationales and intrinsic values. But, "while these arguments are still valid", she said, "changing policy priorities has meant that alone they are no longer strong enough to enable the arts to win more resources."

Australian academic David Throsby has wrestled with cultural policy for more than 20 years. In *Economics and Culture* (2000), he identified aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic and authentic components of cultural value. These values must be respected, he said, even though they aren't grounded in money and can't be counted and weighed. The arts can never be reduced to figures. But economics, he said, is central to the way the arts are managed. In *Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy?* he applauded Paul Keating's 1994 Creative Nation policy for its attempt to link cultural development with economic development.

Arts and heritage, Throsby says, are core components of a cultural policy. However, we should avoid emphasising economic value over cultural value, we should avoid the use of hype and we should avoid loading all responsibility on to the shoulders of governments. "We get the sort of society we make for ourselves. It is our own cultural perceptions and aspirations that shape our destiny, not those of any government."

He proposed a cultural accord rather than a "magisterial cultural statement handed down by the Prime Minister, the Cabinet or a parliamentary committee" or "a single document or a single of people of legislation." Cultural policy, he said, is not

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From the President

Andrew Simpson

In my first column as NSW President I would like to begin by paying a tribute to my predecessor, Bill Storer, who has managed the branch with such great energy over the past four years. Bill, I'm happy to report, will continue to help us with regional development while at the same time serving as National Secretary.

For NSW, the major achievement of the year was undoubtedly the work of the Hunter Chapter in organising the national conference. It was one of the best I've attended and its success was in no small measure due to the work of Bill and Janet Storer, Julie Baird and the other members of the organising committee.

Outstanding efforts by other chapters were reflected in the work by Glen Johns and the Lachlan chapter on their annual workshop for museum volunteers in Galong and by the Southern Highlands and Illawarra Chapter's workshop on social media at the Powerhouse Museum in October. These have complemented other activities in these and other chapters.

We were able to acknowledge the achievements of some of our members in this year's IMAGinE Awards.

The branch's tours and talks in Sydney concluded this year on 4 November at the University of Sydney, when we were conducted on a heritage tour of the main building, Nicholson Museum and University Art Gallery. With the help of the Powerhouse Museum's Thinkspace, the branch also held a successful workshop on social media for small museums, at a discounted rate for MA members, in September.

We continued to provide advice to members on a range of issues and, on the advocacy front, were kept busy preparing submissions to reviews of the Collections Council of Australia, Collections Australia Network, Museums and Galleries NSW, and Arts NSW's cultural grants program. And we continued to represent the interests of NSW members in the deliberations of the National Council, particularly in relation to membership programs, publications and a museum digital strategy.

As the national office finalises a new version of the association's website in the new year, with direct access to databases by designated staff and office bearers, I draw your attention to our new social networking site, maNexus (<http://manexus.ning.com>) which was launched in September. The NSW Branch in future will be using the maNexus MANSW group to communicate progress and events, so I urge you all to join maNexus, join the MANSW group, and participate in this new forum.

I pay tribute to the work of the branch committee during the year. I welcome the Powerhouse Museum's Geoff Barker to the committee. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Museum Matters* (see list of contents to the right). And, as we gear up for 2010, I wish you Merry Christmas and the compliments of the season.



Under the gaze of William Charles Wentworth, Craig Barker (centre) leads our group on a fascinating tour of Sydney University on 4 November.

Museum Matters Vol 18 no 2 December 2009

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Putting a value on museums

a single definable thing but “a pervasive mixture that not only determines the immediate and obvious ways in which we practise our culture.”

Several recent reports by the Australian Bureau of Statistics deserve special attention by the museums sector. Its *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview* is a suite of statistics, incorporating the most recent survey of museums as well as data on other topics. *Australian National Accounts: Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account, 2006/07* reports that non-profit institutions contributed close to \$43 billion (or 4%) to the Australian economy. The culture and recreation sector contributed 16%. Volunteers contributed 623 million hours to non-profit institutions. This equated to 317,200 full-time equivalent jobs. The economic value of these hours was \$14.6 billion. *Arts and Cultural Heritage: an Information Development Plan*, published in 2008, describes data gaps to inform future statistical development and research work.

Its report *Cultural Funding by Government, Australia, 2007-08*, which provides data on public funding arts and cultural activities, facilities and services across the three levels of government, is particularly important for the museums sector. Total government funding for cultural activities was \$6.3 billion, to which the Australian Government contributed 37%, state and territory governments 47%, and local governments 16%. The Australian Government allocated \$1,788 million to the arts compared with \$571 million on heritage. Most of its heritage funding went to “other museums and cultural heritage” (\$232 million or 41%). In contrast, the state and territory governments allocated most of their funds to heritage (\$2,266 million or 77%). They spent \$178 million on art museums, \$365 million on other museums and cultural heritage, and \$318 million on libraries. The majority of local government cultural funding (65%) was allocated to libraries (\$653 million).

Making the case for museums

To complement data published by the ABS, the Council of Australasian Museum Directors and Council of Australian Art Museum Directors have published statistics about the work of major museums and galleries. A survey conducted in 2007 by the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authority in partnership with Australian Society of Archivists and Archives New Zealand, provides an understanding of museum collections controlled by archives and historical societies. A recent special issue of *Museum Management and Curatorship* (volume 24, no 4, September 2009) is devoted to the value of museums. I draw attention to two of the essays.

Marsha Semmel and Mamie Bittner explore definitions of public value based on the work of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and other bodies in the United States. They describe past, current and future research that may “increase the collective knowledge of the strengths and core competences of museums, lead to new methodologies for improved museum practice and shape the arguments for the

role of museums today as valuable community assets.”

The IMLS report *Exhibiting Public Value: Government Funding for Museums in the United States* (2008) provides an interesting comparison with the ABS studies discussed earlier. It noted that there was no consistent pattern of public support across the museum sector – rather there was “patchwork of financial support.” It was difficult to track and analyse data because of differences in the way the sector codifies museum grants. There was no Federal - state partnership program with the goal of increasing the capacity to the museum sector as a whole. The lack of a definitive list of museums made it difficult to assess how deeply federal-source dollars penetrate into the sector. State cultural agencies tend to serve the arts, humanities, heritage, libraries, and archives as distinct constituencies. There was no evidence that a federal-state funding partnership would galvanise support and administrative capacities at the state level. It said more information was needed to determine whether and how a new funding model, such as a population-based state grant, could make a significant impact in addressing any identified gaps in museum services.

Carol Scott, in her essay *Exploring the Evidence Base for Museum Value*, says “the present time holds both threats and possibilities for museums. In a period of unprecedented economic crisis, monies are being diverted to fund and stabilise new recipients of the public purse. Correspondingly, some areas of the public sector, such as museums, may face static funding at best, or a decline in funding at worst. The capacity to prove value may acquire increasing importance in the uncertain years to come. Within this climate, it is incumbent on the museum sector to be able to express its worth from a position of strength and to defend that position.” The concept of value is an evolving one. Developing an evidence base is a challenging task. There needs to be more rigor. After exploring a typology of museum values, Scott considers indicators against three value dimensions in a series of tables as rep-

Value	Indicators	Measures
Use	Direct use. Indirect use. Willingness to engage. Non-use	eg Numbers of visitor attendances to museums annually, users of outreach programs. Volunteers, members, visits per visitor per year, etc
Institutional	Recognition of trusted expertise. Building relationships. Attracting investment. Capacity to attract bequests and donations	eg Numbers of public enquiries, external projects, partnerships, the significance of projects, government grants, donations, bequests, etc
Instrumental	Providing educational resources. Knowledge building. Contribution to tourism. Contribution to local economy.	eg Number of school students visiting, partnerships with education bodies, adult education programs, research publications, domestic tourists, international tourists, tourism awards, visitors by ethnicity and socio-economic status, etc

resented in the simplified consolidation above, with examples only of the list of measures she suggests.

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The winds of change

Future efforts by Museums Australia will be shaped by changing government cultural policies and changing economic circumstances. The National Cultural Policy website solicits public feedback on a discussion framework in which the role of heritage organisations is implied rather than spelt out.

Government policy on culture finds a good companion with emerging policy on “social inclusion.” The ABS surveys have been joined by the Productivity Commission’s study on the contributions of the Australian not-for-profit sector to the Australian economy and society. This sets out to remove obstacles for maximising the contributions of the sector to society.

Implications for Museums Australia

The association’s contribution to a national cultural policy on behalf of museums will revolve around a number of issues.

The right action will be driven by the right words. Throsby notes that “whether reactive or pro-active, cultural policy in Australia has almost always been interpreted as arts policy.” Chris Puplick, in *Getting Ahead* (Platform Papers no 18, October 2008), is critical of the confused and opaque rhetoric used in discussions about arts policy. “The slippery segues...the looseness of terms and definition, the inexactness of measurements and the incomprehensibility of some of the jargon becomes mind-numbing.”

The ABS report, *Arts and Cultural Heritage: An Information Development Plan*, defined cultural heritage as “the preservation of culture through the collection and management of objects and ideas that represent ways of life of particular groups of people.” This definition needs to be debated. Categorising museums, archives and libraries as ‘cultural heritage’ agents runs the risk of distorting their overall purpose and value. Although arts and cultural heritage share common ground, it is important to differentiate some of the elements because the different elements may call for different approaches.

Past lobbying for government support has often relied on broad brush strokes. The case for money calls for more than rhetoric. The Collections Council of Australia made a number of representations to the ABS on this front. In response to its request that the ABS provide ‘in principle’ support for the Collections Council to create and manage a fixed list of Australian collection organisations, the ABS responded that “the way in which any particular industry wishes to manage its own industry data is a matter for that industry to determine.”

Technological developments and the Internet have changed the nature of game for museums. But museums are still, by and large, rooted in the past as standalone facilities with feudal information management practices. Museums Australia is responding to this new challenge through a Digital Strategies Committee. After an inaugural meeting in November, the committee will flesh out the issues in the new year.

The need to work in concert with others is underscored by Chris Pu-

plick, who says the lack of single national arts advocacy body means that “sectoral interests of this vast constituency tend to focus on matters of immediate interest to themselves, often at the cost of others.” In September Museums Australia organised a meeting with kindred organisations to explore ways of advancing common ground. Museums Australia subsequently prepared a statement on the value of museums to the Minister for the Arts before his National Press Club speech in October. The Group will be meeting again early in the new year to work on future steps.

Australia already has a cobbled-together national cul-

“the way in which any particular industry wishes to manage its own industry data is a matter for that industry to determine.”

- ABS

tural policy costing \$6.3 billion. Australian governments agree that museums are a good thing: they provide about \$660 million to support museum operations.

The prospects for increased funding for museums through a new cultural policy may have arrived at the wrong moment in history.

Although there is a feeling that Australia has escaped the worst consequences of the global financial crisis, there are grounds for some pessimism. Among other funding cuts in the wind, the Cultural Ministers Council has just axed the under-funded Collections Council of Australia, the one collections sector body with responsibility for marshalling top level issues. The reasons for its closure have not been published. No alternative plan for an overarching catalyst has been flagged.

Museums Australia has a strategy for realising opportunities in the education sector, local communities, and the digital economy. At a time when sector has not yet transformed its representative bodies into a unified force, advancing the interests of the sector in federated Australia may be akin to prosecuting the war in tribal Afghanistan.

The main challenge for the association will be to devise a vision and plans that take into account the money trail across the three levels of government. One of the critical tasks will be to gather evidence to influence the way future effort and funds will be spent by museums.

This is an edited version of a longer article, which can be found on the Wolanski Foundation website <http://www.twf.org.au> (follow the link in What’s New section.

NSW round-up

The chapters

Lachlan Chapter held another successful Working Spaces conference for museum volunteers at Galong in October. The program included workshops on collection management, conservation, exhibitions, graphic design, oral history and volunteering. MA President **Darryl McIntyre** presented a keynote address on “transforming our museums into places that address what people really care about.” Lachlan has already begun plans for the next conference, to be held in October 2010. Other meetings and workshops will be held at Canowindra Historical Society (April) and Temora Museum (July). **Glen Johns** has been reappointed Chapter Coordinator for a further 2 years.

Southern Highlands & Illawarra chapter concluded a busy year with a workshop on social media at the Powerhouse Museum in October. Recent meetings were also held at Camden and Gerringong.

The Far North Coast Chapter elected new office bearers in March—**Sally Watterson** (President), **Bernie Child** (Vice President), **Marie Humphrey** (Secretary), and **Margaret Switzer** (Treasurer). **Marea Buist** continues as Chapter Coordinator. One initiative worth reporting is **Rivers, Roads and Rail**, a collaborative regional exhibition trail presenting previously untold local history stories. The project was developed by Arts Northern Rivers' Regional Museums Development Officer, **Joan Kelly**, in conjunction with volunteers from 22 local museums and historical societies. Check the details on the Arts Northern Rivers website <http://www.artsnorthernrivers.com.au>.

The Mid North Coast Chapter has discussed with **Richard Holloway**, RADO Arts Mid North Coast, options for strengthening the chapter in the region. Separate meetings are planned in the northern region (Coffs Harbour) and southern region (Port Macquarie) with the aim of holding a combined meeting at least once a year. Members around Coffs Harbour may be interested in contacting Richard at Arts Mid North Coast Inc c/- Coffs Harbour Education Campus, Hogbin Drive, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450, Phone 02 6658 9400, email: arts@midcoast.com.au.

New England North West Chapter President **Robyn Rogers**, in the chapter's June newsletter, reported on her experience at the national conference, and museum activities within the region, including **Wee Waa & District Historical Society's** *Back to Wee Waa* weekend in June and **Glen Innes & District Historical Society's** workshop on pest management in August.

After a pause, **Sydney Chapter** was reactivated at a meeting in May with the following committee: **Danielle Head** (President), **Serena Manwaring** (Vice President), **Virginia Ho** (Treasurer), **Deanne Montesin** (Secretary), **David White** (Communications officer), and committee

members **Clinton Johnston**, **Gemma Beswich** and **Jessica Allen**. The chapter is developing plans for 2010.

Hunter Chapter held meetings in July and September and is currently working on a joint brochure.

The national conference May 2009

The other feather in the cap of the **Hunter Chapter**, of course, was its great work, led by **Bill Storer** and **Julie Baird**, on the national conference. NSW Branch conference bursary recipients included **Graham Hinton** (Lady Denman Heritage Complex), **Jody White** (Eden Killer Whale Museum), **Marie Neilson** (Dungog Historical Society), **Lillian Colless** (Evans Head Living Museum & Community Technology), **Geoffrey Foley** (Richmond River Historical Society), **Debbie Sommers** (Port Macquarie Historical Society), **Deb Mastello** (Newcastle Region Maritime Museum) and **Doreen Lyon** (The Wollondilly Heritage Centre). With their help, *Museum Matters* highlights responses to some of the conference themes and topics.

Aboriginal culture and reconciliation. A really powerful element of the conference was the strong role of Aboriginal colleagues. Doreen Lyon and others were particularly moved by the story of reconciliation and the construction of a memorial to the Myall Creek Massacre, as seen through the eyes of Aunty Sue Blacklock, whose ancestors were killed by squatters, and Beulah Adams, a descendent of one of the squatters. Doreen was also inspired by Debbie Abraham and Donna Fernandez's project about the stolen generation at Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery. Deb Mastello was impressed by the presentation of Museum Africa's Ali Hlongwine on the museum-led reconciliation over the 1976 killing of Soweto students: “only by allowing ourselves to listen to other points of view will we ever begin to understand ourselves and our action.”

Convergence, as one of today's buzz words, attracted the attention of many bursary recipients. Patrick Filmer-Sankey (Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston) appealed as the agent provocateur who rejected convergence on the grounds it was sometimes driven by financial imperatives without regard for improved cultural practices. The experience of convergence at Albury Library Museum demonstrated that improved cultural practices is sometimes accompanied by the need for more money. Jacqui Hemsley underscoring the need for good leadership, good planning, and staff training. Ian Willis spoke about the partnership between Camden Council and Camden Museum, which “offers a model for small towns with a library and a museum which can successfully work together.” The advice by Kim Gowland and Jane Wilcox (Manchester City Art Gallery) – that collaboration may be more important than convergence, based on their experience of a cultural hub in the north of England – led Jody White to observe “the session demonstrated that convergence issues need to be entered into with clear direction and aims, and be mindful of each organisation's initial core business throughout the development and implementation.”

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NSW round-up

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Regional museum development. Judy was inspired by David Read's case study of strategic planning to revitalise Lockhart and District Historical Society, while Lillian Colless was drawn to the session on the Victorian Community Museums Program, which highlighted the need for "MA and our local chapter to ensure that professional support and resources are provided or maintained."

Funding. Lillian was impressed with Edith Cuffe's energy in generating new forms of income for the Abbey Museum, but, for her, "the most amazing story came from Victoria Yung-Chih Lu on how she set up an exhibition with zero funding."

Standards, systems and cataloguing Jody White was grateful for the workshop on the National Standards "as a tool for doption or adaptation in small museums" and for the Costume Workshop hosted by Powerhouse Museum staff. While Lillian Colless appreciated the workshop *Getting Started with Archives* and observed that "in many volunteer museums the demarcation between artefacts and archives has resulted in a mismatch of systems, poor collection management and inappropriate filing systems." Graham Hinton found "there was plenty of information to excite my interest in the possibilities of the Internet and its many applications, but there needs to be more discussion within the regional museums about collection management software and its implications. More guidance is needed." Doreen Lyon was grateful to Seb Chan for "de-mystifying the process of sharing collections online and encouraging us to take advantage of many new opportunities."

Digging up personal stories from the past. Doreen also drew sustenance from Rachael Vincent's presentation *Globalisation, Identity and the Community Museum* about the implications, in a Web 2.0 world, of "people becoming a movable culture in their own right." She loved "the idea of mapping a person" as an issue for further consideration, an issue that resonated in *Convict Women's Stories*, in which Gay Hendriksen pleaded "for our historical societies and museums to uncover these women and document their lives, many of which are hidden in family histories."

Space prevents us from summarising commentary on a range of other topics and experiences, including the tours and trade exhibition. But it is worth ending on a note about networking. Graham Hinton appreciated the opportunity "to connect with colleagues from a wide range of museums and disciplines across the country. Volunteers from smaller museums told me that they were impressed by the attitude of delegates from the major museums who were happy to speak with them and didn't make them feel stupid (to paraphrase one comment). On the other hand, a couple of colleagues from larger institutions commented on how they had a growing appreciation of challenges we face in smaller museums with multi-tasking and stretching budgets." If you missed out on the conference this year, we encourage you to keep an eye on details of the conference in Melbourne next year on 28 September-2 October.

IMAGInE awards 2009



MGNSW CEO Maisey Stapleton congratulates Joan Kelly on receiving her award.

Peter Berner, this year's MC made this year's awards a fun night at the Australian National Maritime Museum on 17 October.

The judges selected the best from 64 nominations. The following were called to the podium to receive the applause of their colleagues.

Organisation Awards for Excellence: **Richmond River Historical Society** (volunteer organisation); **Grenfell Art Gallery** (highly commended volunteer organisation); **The Cavalcade of History and Fashion** (highly commended volunteer organisation); **Manning Regional Art Gallery** (Less than 6 paid staff); **Campbelltown Arts Centre** and **Parramatta Heritage Centre** (joint winners, more than 6 paid staff). Organisation Awards for Collection Management: **Richmond River Historical Society** (volunteer organisation); **Albury City Cultural Services** (more than 6 paid staff). Organisation Awards for Exhibitions: **Berrima District Museum** (volunteer organisation); **Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, Community and Cultural Development** (Less than 6 paid staff); **Parramatta Heritage Centre** (more than 6 paid staff); **Australian Museum** (highly commended - more than 6 paid staff). Organisation Awards for Education and Public Engagement: **Walgett Historical Society** (volunteer organisation); **Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery** (less than 6 paid staff); **Western Plains Cultural Centre** (more than six paid staff).

Individual Awards for Excellence: Kent Mayo, McCrossin's Mill Precinct (volunteer award); **Thelma Scanes**, Old Government House, Parramatta, National Trust NSW (volunteer, award); **Joan Kelly**, Regional Arts Development Officer, Arts Northern Rivers (Professional Award).



From left to right: Gay Hendriksen, Susanne McLellah, Andrew Glassop, Richard Mutton, Karen O'Donnell, Liz Gillroy. Photographer: Fiora Sacco.

Member profile: the Australian Tennis Museum



This issue of *Museum Matters* coincides with the beginning of the Australian summer. Seasonal pulses led me to speak to two colleagues about the **Australian Tennis Museum (ATM)** in Homebush. **Bronwyn Alcorn** joined the museum as curator in 2007 before taking up the appointment as Manager of the Historic Houses Trust's Elizabeth Farm and leaving the museum in the hands **Aimee Deaves**.

The collection and services

Bronwyn says the collection has been built up over many years by a succession of dedicated volunteers. Memorable items include significant racquets and costumes worn by great players of the 50s, 60s and 70s. "My favourite collection is the archive of Harry and Nell Hopman, which gives a wonderful sense of the people and the times" although it is in need of a lot of work to properly catalogue and preserve. The photo collection of the ATM is huge, but again many records have no description, so processing them will be a huge task.

On top of their collection management responsibilities, Bronwyn and Aimee have worked on group tours, developed new exhibitions, and responded to queries from the general public, along with "all the other jobs that running a small museum can throw at you".

The challenges

The collection poses a number of challenges. After it was moved from White City, with the help of volunteers, they started moving paper records across to MOSAiC and a collection of tennis magazines was moved to acid free boxes. However, more work needs to be done to preserve the hundreds of scrapbooks and newspaper cuttings that have been donated or accumulated over many years. "Like so many small museums," Bronwyn says, "the backlog of collection work is immense and the resources limited."

Aimee says the current work program includes implementing the collection management policy, applying for grants for collection storage, conservation and preservation, providing a

research service, and promoting the museum through a more comprehensive website and other marketing strategies.

Staff and resources

With limited funding from Tennis NSW, the museum struggles to achieve the recognition and the standard it deserves. Both Bronwyn and Aimee heap praise on the devoted team of volunteer as one of its main assets. But recruitment of volunteers is a problem and some volunteers are not always comfortable with some of the new technologies.

In the way that some things unexpectedly lead to other things, Aimee arrived at the museum by accident.

"Ken Rosewall, Lew Hoad, Margaret Smith Court, Evonne Goolagong Cawley, John Newcombe and Todd Woodbridge. These were all names that I am ashamed to admit had no meaning to me before I started in March 2008. I had completed a Bachelor of Science in Palaeontology and was in the middle of my Masters in Museum Studies at Macquarie University. I needed a museum to complete my internship. So I began a project on the provenance of the costume collection and the world of tennis opened up to me like I never imagined.

"Through my project I discovered a little gem that had mistakenly been assigned the incorrect provenance. A jacket from the Jack Kramer Professional Tours in the 1950s was thought to belong to a generous donor to the museum, the late Mary Hawton. After much digging it turned out that the jacket was used by tennis great, Lew Hoad. Lew and Mary's husband, Keith, had been playing a game of squash and had wagered a bet with each other over the game. Keith defeated Lew and won the jacket! A jacket that appeared to have no significance suddenly had a story to tell, it was an extremely rewarding project!

"When I was offered the job as curator on a three-months contract in November 2008 I jumped at the opportunity, but was faced with a lot of work to complete before the major tournament in January 2009. This involved installing 3 exhibitions and building up the volunteer base. Although I had studied exhibitions, this part of the assignment involved a lot of sweat and tears. But it was incredibly rewarding to see people come into the museum and enjoy the exhibitions on display.



Aimee Deaves (left) recruits her mother Denise to assist in the museum.

At the end of this year I finish my Masters in Museum Studies and look forward to working with the museum in the future and increasing public awareness of the extensive collection

Putting a value on objects

Andrew Simpson

The Cinderella Collections Reports in the 1990s were the first sector wide surveys of museums and collections in Australia's universities. They revealed at the time a burgeoning set of collections generally unknown to a broader public and sometimes also unknown to senior university administrators.

Since this time some universities have used their museums, collections and exhibition spaces to engage broader public communities beyond their students and staff. This has been done primarily through exhibitions mostly in art gallery spaces on campus, but it also includes open days, public lectures and behind the scenes tours.

From 3-7 August 2009, Macquarie University organised its first Diversity Week. This was a week-long celebration of diverse ways of doing, being and knowing consisting of a host of free events designed to engage internal and external communities. It included a Living Books event, a Many Voices cabaret, a Shared Table event (especially for foodies) plus many others organised by various campus clubs and societies.

The University's museums and collections contributed by organising an evening event entitled *Object Lessons* focused on telling stories about a diverse selection of interesting objects from across the campus. Like many universities, Macquarie has developed collections across a broad range of academic areas. From ancient pottery, historic artefacts, rocks and minerals, herbarium specimens and iconic artworks; every object has its own unique story to tell. In a university setting these objects are the focus of research, powerful mediators for learning and teaching and part of our community engagement programs in exhibition spaces.

The event was designed to raise awareness of the collections by introducing some of the hidden treasures to a broad audience in greater detail by using the rationale that no one speaks more passionately about objects than a curator or collector. At *Object Lessons* during Diversity Week curators and collectors from Macquarie highlighted their favourite objects and shared their knowledge in an entertaining and interactive format.



Andy Muirhead from the popular ABC TV program *Collectors* hosted the evening. A "mystery object" from the Australian History Museum was shown to guests as they arrived, in a role reversal from the television show it was Andy's task to deduce the nature of the "mystery object". He did this successfully (a 1930s baby bottle before pasteurisation of milk) with help from the audience.

Object Lessons was promoted using the media strategy developed for Diversity Week. To create some interest prior to the event, the identity of the objects were not revealed before the presentations.

Instead cryptic clues as to the nature of the objects were posted on the event website. These were written as if the objects were speaking themselves.



Object 1.

I am one of only two of this type of object at Macquarie. Everyone's seen the other one but I'm a lot cuter. In fact I'm so cute you might want me as a pet, unfortunately it's a bit late for that.

Andrew Simpson, Director, Museum Studies Program, Department of Environment and Geography, gives the answer.

"Minmi paravertebra – reconstruction by Herbert Heinrich and Anne Llewellyn, Minmi is Australia's only ankylosaurid dinosaur. Ankylosaurs are small herbivorous dinosaurs with body armour covered with individual scutes for protection against predators. It is an Early Cretaceous dinosaur that is about 110 million years old. Minmi was discovered by chance near Roma (Minmi crossing) in 1964 by a young scientist named Alan Bartholomai. He went on to become the Director of the Queensland Museum. The specimen was not scientifically described, however until 1980 by a Canadian scientist, Ralph Molnar.

"This is Minmi mark 2, the first version was constructed by University of Newcastle wildlife artists Herbert Heinrich and Anne Llewellyn especially for the exhibition in the University Art Gallery, Palaeographia. This exhibition coincided with the first International Palaeontological Congress in 2002. It was designed to provide insights into Australian fossil record by combining artworks, specimens and models. Minmi was the star of the show!

Minmi mark 2 is the mascot of our Museum Studies program, she'll be seen at all sorts of university functions and we are currently setting up an email account and a Facebook page for her.

"Minmi is one of two dinosaurs on campus. The other is *Tyrannosaurus bataar* located in the foyer of the library. This is a small carnivorous dinosaur originally from Mongolia. This one is known as Jack and is named after a former DVC Professor Jack Bassett. Minmi is part of the Earth Sciences collection and Jack is part of the Biological Sciences Museum."

Putting a value on objects



Object 2. *Even though I have a wooden expression, I can teach you how to fight dirty and will throw sand in the face of my enemies.*

Rhonda Davis, Senior Curator, University Art gallery, provides the answer.

“The artist Mutitjpu Munungurr (1932-1993) is remembered as a great artist and Djapu clan leader – of the country which spans eastern Arnhem Land.

After initial research this sculpture appears quite rare within the artist’s oeuvre. Better known for his bark paintings and in particular Mutitjpu’s contribution to the Yirrkala Church Panels 1962-1963, recently hailed as amongst the greatest paintings ever produced in Australian art history, to my mind akin to Michelangelo’s monumental Sistine Chapel works. These grand panels were painted highlighting the two moieties Dhuwa and Yirritja intricate clan designs – showing the creation period and Yolngu’s ongoing relationship with the Ancestral Beings (Dreaming). The panels were placed on either side of the cross revealing for the first time the nexus between Indigenous iconography and Christian symbolism.

“Referred to as a DOLL in the provenance notes, this is no ordinary doll as it possesses special power in response to events that happened both in the Ancestral past and the recent present (The Dreaming is about relevance and making sense of events). Known as the ‘Black War’ the incident occurred in 1932 – the Djapu clan were collecting and processing trepang for the Japanese market, conflicts erupted where five Japanese were killed. Unfortunately it was referred to by the press as the massacre at Caledon Bay. Some time later the war ended with resolutions from the warrior leader Wonggu and Donald Thomson (the anthropologist referred to in the film *Ten Canoes*).

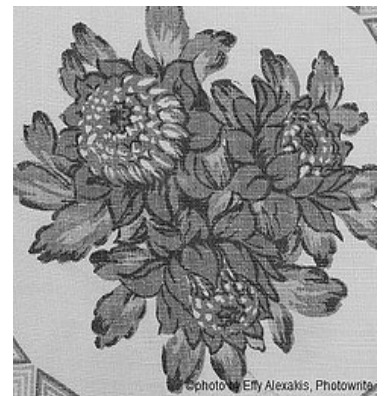
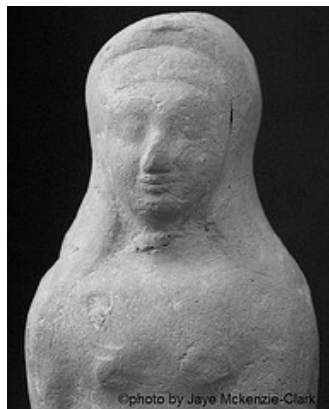
“The doll was created at Caledon Bay – he is a mythical man with trickster powers to outlaw enemies in teaching the warriors to fight unfairly. He is a Dreaming Ancestral Spirit of very bad character. Decorated with clan designs, a pointed beard and feathered strings it has a menacing presence. The fine cross-hatching across the doll’s torso and back consists of a diamond pattern in a grid-like structure. This is a Djapu clan design owned by the artist, unique to place, and forms the core of the artist’s identity.

“The cross-hatching has been produced using human hair from a brush, to achieve an affect called “shimmering” which de-

notes the spiritual power of the Ancestors. The artist has used human hair for the doll’s beard and hair on its head which has remarkably retained its curl. Also, linked to the time when the Macassan’s from Indonesia traded with Yolngu in a fair exchange for the trepang, unlike the incident of the 1930s. We can refer to his beard as having a Macassan look.

“The provenance is very good; the object was originally purchased from Dr Stuart Scougall by the artist Sheila McDonald and husband Darcy Robinson sometime in the 1960s. Scougall is recognised, along with artist Tony Tuckson, as instrumental in bringing bark paintings into the Art Gallery of NSW. This signalled a watershed moment in re-contextualising Aboriginal art from the ethnographic into the art museum context – Aboriginal art displayed as a living, evolving tradition based upon a contemporary world view. In 1971, as a tribute to his recently deceased wife, Darcy Robinson donated this entire collection of some 200 artefacts covering the Pacific realm to Macquarie University transferring the namesake of Sheila McDonald

Do you know what these objects are?



The full list of objects can be found at <http://www.mq.edu.au/diversityweek>. Images of the event are available at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/museumstudiesmacquarie/>. The stories about all objects will appear soon in the Museum Studies’ ezine *aMUSine* at <http://www.museumstudiesatmacquarie.org>.

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Aboriginal artefacts

The Museums Australia Victoria Branch has published Aboriginal Artefacts Information Sheets, developed as part of the Community Museums and Aboriginal Artefacts Seminar in 2009. Information Sheet 16 explains aspects of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and provides answers to frequently asked questions about Aboriginal objects in museums. Information Sheet 17 lists sources of information to assist Victorian museums meet their legal and ethical obligations, meet recognised museum standards, and to make Aboriginal cultural heritage and history more accessible to Aboriginal communities and the wider population. While you're there check the information sheets on conservation planning, air pollution, museum storage, displays and exhibitions, useful Australian websites, essential references for community museums, and starting or improving a museum. Website: <http://www.mavic.asn.au>

Archives

The State Records NSW website has launched the blog section, *Archives Outside*, devoted to archival collections in New South Wales that are held outside the custody of State Records. As well as promoting archival collections, the site offers information on topics and resources relating to the care and management of archives. While its focus is on the State Records Regional Repository Network, it welcomes participation from all keepers of archives, including archivists, local studies librarians, records managers, members of community groups and personal collectors (see <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/news/archives-outside-blog>). You can also follow the feed on the MANSW group at maNexus <http://manexus.ning.com>.

Australian screen online

The National Film and Sound Archive (NFAS) has launched a new version of *australianscreen* online. Created in 2007, *australianscreen* online now has clips, curators' notes and information on nearly 1400 Australian film and television titles from the last 110 years. New features include exclusive interviews with filmmakers, news, curator blogs, and an online social space for discussions, forums and groups. The titles are sourced from the NFSA, the National Archives of Australia, the ABC, SBS and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The material is freely available online for educational users and the general public. Education resources are produced by its education partner, the Curriculum Corporation, through the Learning Federation. Website: <http://www.aso.gov.au>

Cataloguing

Museums Australia (Victoria) has published a 4th edition of its popular *Small Museums Cataloguing Manual*. The new edition has been fully revised to include guidance on using cataloguing software on computers, 'how to' examples of worksheets and up-to-date lists of useful resources. The manual accords with Benchmark A2.4.2 of the National Standards for Australian

Museums & Galleries and the Victorian Community Collections Training program. The publication was sponsored by Arts Victoria and Heritage Victoria, with in-kind support from Museum Victoria. Further information and to download a free copy: <http://www.mavic.asn.au>

Collections Council of Australia

In October, the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) announced that it would cease its funding of the Collections Council of Australia (CCA). The CCA will wind up the company by 30 June 2010. The CMC is establishing a working group to consider future approaches to matters relating to the sector. In the meantime, the CCA is preparing a submission about collection sector needs to the Federal Government for the 2010-11 Budget. If you would like to contribute ideas, please contact Alexis Tindall on projects@collectionscouncil.com.au or 08 8207 7287.

Community museums

Two new books may be of interest to colleagues in community museums and those with an interest in the way museums work with communities. The first, *Community Archives: the Shaping of Memory*, edited by Jeannette A. Bastian and Ben Alexander, offers guidance to archivists, record managers and museums professionals on "constructing effective strategies and methodologies for selecting and maintaining appropriate material evidence...focussing on the ways in which records reflect community identity and collective memory" using new technologies. Further details <http://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/>

Museums and their communities, edited by Sheila Watson (Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2007) brings together 38 essays and case studies published between 1993 and 2005 questioning the new paradigm that museums need to shift their purpose from caring for and studying material culture to serving community needs and goals. The book is arranged in five sections: the changing purpose of museums and their struggles and an audience-centred mission, organisational control, the roles that museums play in community identity, the relationships between museums and memory, and further challenges to cultural organisations as they explore ways of working with their communities.

Convergence

David Bearman, in a recent interview with Selma Thomas about the International Cultural Heritage Informatics Meetings, 1991-2007, gave the following response to a question about digital convergence, especially in promoting museum-library collaboration:

"The superficial resemblance of library, archive and museum collections online has led some people these days to conclude that cultural heritage organisations are converging, but I see little reason to believe it is true or to welcome it if it were true.

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A closer examination even of the online presence of libraries, archive and museums will reveal essential differences in mission.

“Libraries are in the business of providing information, most often in the form of books, to patrons who usually consult or borrow the sources for their personal research or pleasure. Museums create social experiences, typically for groups of people, on-site or online. Archives store evidence of activities of large organisations that is needed for accountability; their function is to be able to retrieve documents so they can be the basis for factual, often legal, assertions.

“Museums and archives are very poor at providing research information to online clients, just as libraries are extremely bad at creating social experiences and exhibitions. This is not because they don't know how to do better what the other has always done well; it is because they aren't organised to serve these other purposes.”

By way of contrast, NSW Branch Executive Officer Paul Bentley reports David Bearman offering a slightly different perspective in “Gallop Horse: Connecting Museums to Information Seekers” (*Online Currents*, volume 23 no 4, August 2009). In the article exploring online aggregation of museum cataloguing data, partly prompted by papers presented at Museums Australia's national conference in May, he quotes comments by Bearman and Jennifer Trant. Museums and libraries, they said, still needed to develop methods for constructing knowledge models that “are sufficiently forgiving to permit useful aggregation of content, structured by a number of disciplines, yet sufficiently architecturally sound to enable useful computing across resource domains”.

They called for museums to pay active attention to emerging approaches for metadata declaration and utilisation. The basic principles of information engineering, they said, must be respected from the outset in the construction of cultural information utilities, not the least because cultural knowledge bases will be built up over many years or decades. The article is also available on the Wolanski Foundation site at <http://www.twf.org.au/research>.

An example of an approach for managing convergence *within* museums is provided by the new Smithsonian Collections Searching Center, a one-stop-search portal for collections of the Smithsonian, including the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Archive, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of American Indians, National Museum of Natural History, National Portrait Gallery, National Postal Museum, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Archives at the National Museum of the American Indian, Archives Center at National Museum of American History, Archives of American Art, Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, Human Studies Film Archives, National Air and Space Museum Archives Division, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian American Art Museum Photo Archives, Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution Archives, and Smithsonian Institution Libraries. (<http://collections.si.edu>)

Funds

The NSW Government site, Community Builders NSW, acts as “a clearing house for everyone involved in community-level social, economic and environmental renewal” by publicising funds available to support capacity building in regional NSW. Web: <http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/>

Museums and schools

Louise Zarmati, in “Why a National History Curriculum Needs a Museum Site Study” (*reCollections*, vol 4, no 1, April 2009) presents reasons why students should be given learning opportunities that allow them to see, touch and experience Australia's historical and archaeological heritage outside the classroom. Web: <http://recollections.nma.gov.au/>

Museum retailing

Culture Label in the UK is an online venture that unites the retail outlets of 60 British arts institutions with the aim of generating 30% extra revenue for UK museums and galleries, including an increased level of international sales. Check it out at <http://www.culturelabel.com>.

Museum theatre

The International Museum Theatre Asia Pacific (IMTAP) will hold the 5th National Forum on Performance in Cultural Institutions 22-24 April 2010. The conference will be hosted by the Australian National Maritime Museum and the Powerhouse Museum. The forum is aimed at anyone involved in the development and delivery of performance in cultural institutions. This includes education and public program staff and volunteers in museums, galleries, zoos, historic sites and parks; independent contractors who are commissioned to deliver performances in cultural institutions; practitioners in the traditional realms of performance who have always wanted to perform in a cultural institution. Presentation Focus Areas: performance practice, audience development, access and participation, and strategic development. Contact: Michael Van Tiel, Powerhouse Museum, michaelv@phm.gov.au or Scott Andrew, Australian National Maritime Museum, sandrew@anmm.gov.au

UK museums

In July, Museums Libraries Archives in the UK, published two reports, *Leading Museums*, *MLA's National Action Plan for Museums* and *Renaissance in the Regions: Realising the Vision*.

The Renaissance Report, the result of an independent review evaluating the MLA's program for regional museums recommended: continuing to fund for Renaissance program (£300m has been invested in the program 2002-2011); merging findings of the regional review with national strategies; replacing

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regional hubs with a network of 10-12 core museums; establishing a 'strategic challenge' fund; developing a museum development officer network; replacing the regional boards with a national board; re-examining the Renaissance focus on education; creating more joined-up management; and 'ring-fencing' Renaissance funding within the MLA Action Plan.

Leading Museums, MLA's National Action Plan for Museums, according to the press release "envisages a future where excellent regional and national museums develop their collections in ways that reach beyond their walls and put people first. Regional and national museums already work together, but there is more to be done to spread best practice, share collections affordably and to enable people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures to engage with and contribute to the exciting stories."

MLA's Chief Executive Roy Clare said: "The substantial investment in museums must be kept up at national and local

levels, so that excellent museums and archives can continue to reach more and more people and engage, enlighten and enthuse them all. The MLA is committed to raising its game and will bring together the best brains to help steer the actions listed in *Leading Museums*." Further details:
<http://www.mla.gov.uk/>

Volunteers

Volunteering Australia has available a number of publications in its Best Practice section. Among other titles, they included *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations*, *National Standards Workbook and Resource Kit*, *Model Code of Practice*, *Tips for Involving Volunteers*, *Police Checks and Volunteers*, *Recognising Volunteers*, *Involving Volunteers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*, *Volunteers and Tax Information*. Website:
<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org>

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