

New directions for NSW museums?



Delegates assemble for the Museums Australia (NSW) symposium, *Place, Space and Identity: New Directions for NSW Museums* at Macquarie University.

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CHANGE was in the air. The Collections Council of Australia had ceased operation in 2010. The Federal Government had flagged the disbandment of the Cultural Ministers Council. The Collections Australia Network was in limbo.

Arts NSW had begun work on a new strategic plan for the visual arts and museum sectors, one recommendation of the Watts report on Museums and Galleries NSW (M&GNSW). And the election of the O'Farrell Government in March introduced the prospect of new policy contexts for the next four years.

To explore the landscape and consider future directions, Museums Australia (NSW) organised the symposium *Place, Space and Identity: New Directions for Museums in NSW*.

With the support of Arts NSW, the Powerhouse Museum and other sponsors, the symposium attracted 160 participants to Macquarie University on 18-19 April for presentations, panel discussions, tours, demonstrations, business meetings and social events.

The branch will publish the proceedings later in the year. In this issue of *Museum Matters*, we combine the impressions of **Paul Bentley, Andrew Simpson** and **Rebecca Pinchin** with those of **Christine McMillan, Bernard Boyce, Tamara Hynd, Lyn Hall, Debbie Sommers, Denise Bell, Judy Peters, Chris Lattimore** and **Bob McKillop**, who have recorded their thoughts in bursary reports and chapter newsletters.

A plan for the future

Deborah Ely, representing **Professor Amanda Lawson** and other members of the consulting team working on a new strategy, outlined the scope and processes involved leading to a report to Arts NSW in mid July.

Looking for inspiration

To check overseas developments, we turned to two speakers.

Alec Coles, CEO of the Western Australian Museum and previously director of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums in the UK, advocated an integrated approach for providing museum services based on his experience with the Renaissance in the Regions program in England.

Before the Museums Libraries Archives Council (MLA) established the program, there was an absence of regional leadership. Structures were fragmented. Objectives were poorly articulated. Decisions were based on expediency rather than strategy. There was inefficient and ineffective use of resources. The sector did not really work together or share best practice.

As part of the Renaissance program, museum hubs were established in nine English regions. Each hub had a lead organisation with up to four other partners. The program also consisted of a museum development officer network, traineeships, accreditation support and other elements.

As a result, visits to the regional museums in England increased, out-performing their counterparts in Scotland and Wales. Regional museum development officers achieved real change. There was a noticeable impact on educational services and visitor

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MANSW. President Andrew Simpson calls on Professor Stephen Thurgate, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Science, Macquarie University to welcomes delegates.

demographics. The museums gained a better profile with Whitehall and local authorities. They were able to leverage funding more effectively. There was a lift in standards and confidence. Volunteering increased massively.

But the program was far from perfect. Sometimes there was a lack of clarity about directions. Performance measures lacked objectivity. Performance varied from region to region. There was a focus on quick wins.

A New Renaissance Program, following a review in 2009, sets out to address these shortcomings. It consists of a small number of locally-funded museums to provide core services, a challenge fund shaped by national strategies to drive improvements regionally, a nationally coordinated, locally managed network of museum development officers, partnerships with local governments, and other elements.

Sarah-Jane Rennie (M&GNSW), in her presentation *New Vibrancy in an Old World*, encouraged delegates to draw comparisons between NSW and Scotland, where museum services are shaped by the small, sea-hugging land mass, the fallout from the Global Financial Crisis, a sense that history has been shaped by conquerors and the conquered, and increased use of technology.

Regional services

The focus for the consultants' planning will be on the small-to-medium sector. The symposium drew together a number of presentations that gave an emphasis to this aspect.

Laura Miles described the approach in Victoria, where Museums Australia (Victoria), with funding from the State government, provides a range of services, including expert advice, grants, professional development, advocacy and disaster responses.

A feature of its services is the delivery of its standards program, which is not only tied to the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries, it is bound up with accreditation. Eighty percent of museums and galleries are categorised as grassroots organisations, 15% are regarded as accreditation-ready and 5% are classified as expert organisations.

Future plans of the branch involve getting more volunteer and paid staff connected online, partnerships with industry and philanthropists, and more collaboration with interstate branches and service providers.



Laura Miles considers modes of transport before travelling to Victorian museums and galleries.

The importance of standards was something that featured in a presentation by **Bill Storer**, Museums Australia National Secretary. He emphasised the undercurrent of museum purpose in his exploration of collections, collecting and

significance against the National Standards.

Tamara Hynd, Coordinator of the MANSW Southern Highlands and Illawarra Chapter and Curator of Tongarra Museum, promoted the importance of small grants, such as the M&GNSW volunteer-initiated-museum and leg-up grants, in building capacity and revitalising small museums and facilitating the work of Museums Australia's NSW chapters.

Lyn Hicks (Macquarie University) championed the concept of sustainable public policy that is driven and delivered by networks. NSW cultural policy over the last decade, she said, had been characterised by patchy support and cost shifting between governments.

She pointed to the approach of the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development, which is based on three key principles: the importance of investing in community-strengthening activities; the need to develop integrated local approaches to planning and delivery of services; the need to change the way government works, both within government and with community sectors. These principles were very much applicable in NSW, where 66% of museums and galleries are located the regions.

Andrew Simpson promoted the future generation of museum professionals as a resource for the current work of museums. Macquarie University's museum studies program, he said, gives some emphasis to understanding the challenges of working in regional areas. The University organises annual student tours of the regions. It facilitates partnerships between metropolitan and regional museums and students to undertake projects on exhibition development, audience evaluation, disaster management, collection management, oral history and conservation, and other museum activities in need of problem solving or additional resources.

Kylie Winkworth, to the disappointment of the delegates had to pull out of the event because of illness. Her presentation, *More on the Museum Diet*, exploring ten strategies for sustainable museums and collections in NSW, will be made available in the published proceedings.

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Influencing society

Future strategies will no doubt call upon museums to use their resources to influence society at large on the issues of the day.

Multiculturalism was the issue considered by Professor **Amareswar Galla**, Chairperson of the ICOM Cross Cultural Task Force and Director of the UNESCO Project, Pacific Asia Observatory for Cultural Diversity in Human Development, when he posed the question: "Are we barking up the wrong tree when we talk about multiculturalism?"

State sponsored multiculturalism, he said, doesn't work. A state-by-state analysis of policy in Australia reveals inconsistencies and tokenism.

Museums can play an important role in promoting an understanding of the issue by adopting the 10-point Cultural Diversity Charter, adopted last year by ICOM.

Past flaws in Aboriginal cultural policy were brought to our attention by **Steve Miller**, who outlined efforts by Arts NSW and M&GNSW to harness disparate energies towards a collective and networked approach using regional hubs.

Terri Janke (Terri Janke and Company) was to speak on a proposal for a National Indigenous Cultural Authority, but had to withdraw from the symposium at the last minute. Her presentation *Beyond Guarding Ground* will be published in the proceedings and, in the meantime, members may be interested in her discussion paper published by the Australia Council at <http://tiny.cc/rchbm>

Climate change as an issue is currently dynamite in the political landscape, where expediency rules over rational debate. **Scott East** is participating in the Hot Science Global Citizens Project, led by Dr. Fiona Cameron at the University of Western Sydney, which is investigating a potentially greater role by museums in the climate change debates. Further details can be found at www.hotscienceglobalcitizens.net.

Gallipoli occupies a special place in the minds of Australians. Emeritus

Professor **Duncan Waterson**, (Macquarie University) turned his attention to its influence on the minds of those in Turkey, where there has been recent rapid development of museums and memorials as a deliberate government policy to reinforce the cultural legacy of Ataturk.

Using technology

Given the primary importance of technology, the symposium gave special emphasis to necessities and options for museums to make use of evolving technological landscape.

Chris Winter, from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) Innovation

Division, in his presentation *Find and Get: Broadcasters and Museums in the Internet Age*, drew on his experience in deploying ABC content and the development of new relationships with third party content providers such as museums. He drew inspiration from the writings of Clay Shirky about collaborative opportunities, increased capacity generated by the internet and social media, and changing notions about "the expert".

The ABC is being propelled by changes in listener and viewer behaviours. Its website now attracts over 3.2 million unique Australian visits and 120 million pages views a month. Online content is being integrated with traditional programming and channels. ABC Open, for example, invites regional communities to produce and publish photos, stories, videos and sound through the ABC. A team of 45 producers around the country will run workshops and events to help people learn how to use digital technologies. A recent focus has been the Now and Then project, which captures local history and photos (open.abc.net.au/projects/now-and-then). Other sites

and productions worth mentioning as examples of changing approaches to broadcasting include *Gallipoli: The First Day*, and *Black Saturday*, a website devoted to the impact of Australia's worst bushfire.

It's an exciting world, he said, and some of the most exciting things come from unexpected places.

Alison Dellit, in her presentation, *Trove and Museums: An Opportunity to be Realised?*, gave us an update on the National Library of Australia's discovery portal, Trove (trove.nla.gov.au). After outlining some of the search features of the site and planned improvements, Alison urged delegates to



Chris Winter (ABC), Alison Dellitt (Trove), and Peta Knott (Victorian Collections Project) explore directions in the use of technology (L-R)..

open up their collections to a wider public and to make it possible to harvest their metadata and resources through Trove and other aggregators by using metadata harvesting protocols.

Peta Knott demonstrated the potential of state-wide data management services when she gave an outline of the Victorian Collections project, an initiative of Museums Australia (Victoria), Museum Victoria and the Victorian Department of Business and Innovation. The project is developing a free online cataloguing system for small metro and regional collecting organisations in Victoria. Cataloguing fields are based on *The Small Museums Cataloguing Manual*. Victorian Collections will train volunteers to contribute records. Further details are available at www.victoriancollections.net.au

Carly Todhunter promoted themes as a driver of collaborative cataloguing initiatives, based on her work with a

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pilot project, Moveable Heritage of the Dairying Industry of the Illawarra and Southern Highlands, undertaken in 2010 to document the dairy collections of eight regional museums in southern New South Wales. After discussing a number of collaborative cataloguing projects such as CAN, Trove, Culture Victoria, WA Cultural Heritage Portal, NSW Migration Heritage Centre, Port Macquarie-Hastings museums working group, Brisbane Living Heritage Network and Golden Threads at Orange, Carly described the workings of the dairy industry project, which employs the eHive portal and system (ehive.com).

Four speakers amplified another theme-based project in the form of the Australian Dress Register (www.australiandressregister.org).

Lindie Ward, from the Powerhouse Museum, highlighted interesting and revealing stories that had emerged about family and community life as a result of the project.

Michelle Maddison, describing the Museum of the Riverina's involvement, outlined how the ADR had increased access to participating collections and had activated preservation and documentation work. It had encouraged her to look at the Museum of the Riverina's collection with 'new eyes', to see that sometimes shabby, disregarded objects can have fascinating and important stories.

Kate Chidlow, from the Powerhouse Museum, took delegates through the features of the site such as searching on garment locations, period, gender, dress theme and method of construction, and other resources, such as information sheets and videos.

Rebecca Pinchin concluded the session with overview of the training delivered to regional centres to support the development of the program.

To give us a feel for the potential of technology for engaging with schools, several speakers explored the Connected Classrooms Program, a NSW Government initiative to encourage use of technology to share

share resources and data. See details at www.det.nsw.edu.au/about-us/how-we-operate/connected-classroom.

Karen Player, Coordinator of the Museum in a Box outreach program at the Australian Museum, spoke about the pros and cons of virtual classrooms, and pointed to useful websites and other resources on the topic.

Penny Packham gave us the case study of the Scattered Bones video conferencing program based at the Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum, Bathurst. The museum began the program in 2008 as a pilot series of workshops with the assistance of the Connections team. Since then, 130 sessions have been run across NSW to over 13,000 students.

Andrew Glassop spoke about his experience with video conferencing programs run by Western Plains Cultural Centre, where tours of the Cen-

tre have been broadcast along with special programs such as demonstrations by artists. Andrew outlined some of the practicalities of offering such programs, including broadcasting techniques, liaison with local councils and fees charged.

Putting on a show

In many minds, exhibitions and public programs are the proof in the museum pudding. The symposium attracted a number of speakers who explored issues deserving the attention of individual museums and sector strategists.

Gina Hammond delved into museums as learning tools in her presentation on exhibitions at Macquarie University Art Gallery. The gallery has forged links with teaching and research programs at the university to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the world in which it operates. This has added colour, vitality and freshness to the physical environment of the university. She said museums and galleries can be interpreted as public institutions where individuals can seek to satisfy their own personal learning needs.

Leonard Janiszewski and **Effy Alexakis** gave an example of how museums and galleries can exercise leadership and be more relevant. Their touring exhibition, *A Touch of Spice: Indian Australians*, set out to correct misapprehensions within the Australian community about India-Australians and engender a greater degree of social harmony. The project was developed by Macquarie University Art Gallery with the Australian History Museum as part of the Faculty of Arts' Greater India Project. The exhibition content also featured in the Microsoft Surface Touch Table demonstration throughout the conference.

Rhonda Davis sketched out ways of engaging local communities and of producing spin-offs in her presentation about Berowra's Living History Project, which set out to document unknown local stories in Berowra using interviews with a selected group of senior citizens. Initially developed under the auspices of Macquarie University's Art Gallery and Australian History Museum, several exhibitions have been produced in other venues. The strong presence of local history ignited tremendous interest and generated intergenerational connections.



Top: Gina Hammond chats with Professor Amar Galla and other delegates. Middle: Leonard Janiszewski emphasised a point at the MS Surface touch table demo. Bottom: Delegates try out the MS Surface touch table.

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The *Wild* exhibition, Melbourne Museum, one of the examples of fresh approaches to Australian exhibition design in Susan Freeman's presentation.

Susan Freeman (Freeman Ryan Design) gave us a sense of directions in exhibition design, based on recent contracts within a number of major museums, galleries and visitor centres across Australia, where design objectives have responded to increasingly tech-savvy visitors.

Aimee Deaves spoke with authority when she described the pressures of producing exhibitions and public programs in small museums with limited resources. At the Australian Tennis Museum, temporary displays, an adaptable approach in designing exhibitions and the development of relationships with the community have all played their part in an expanded exhibitions program that has contributed to an increase in visitor numbers.

Bronwen Wade-Leeuwen (Macquarie University) shone the torch on ways of fostering creativity in pre-service teachers who run educational programs for children in museums and art galleries.

Looking for evidence

Statistics and other data will influence future policies by governments and decisions by museums.

With this in mind, **Professor David Throsby** from Macquarie University explored the economic contexts of cultural heritage, a subject which is now represented by a considerable body of literature.

He drew attention to his recent report *Culture of Innovation: An Economic Analysis in Arts and Cultural Organisations*, written with Hasan Bakhshi and published in 2010 by the National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts in the UK. This has an analysis of audience development in the digital age, the impact of digital technology on art forms, value and business models.

Kreenah Yelds zoomed in on visitor monitoring practice, based on her surveys of 16 venues across NSW. Although the sector is close to a unified approach, she said, further work is needed to assist the development of sustainable museum programs and strategies throughout the state.

Stakeholder views

The next decade will call for more effective collaboration between major stakeholders. As the symposium drew to a close, we turned to representatives from three major stakeholders for their views on future directions.

Michael Rolfe (M&GNSW) said that overall the Watts Report had been positive in assessing the achievements by M&GNSW. But it had also highlighted some areas where it was felt that the organisation had lost its way. Over the past few months the Board had been developing a new three-year strategic plan, which would position M&GNSW to carry forward its leadership role and its responsibilities to support the sector, including further development of a significant Aboriginal cultural profile.

In developing plans, M&GNSW had been influenced by three imperatives. First, the importance of the diverse small-to-medium museum and gallery sector in the communities they serve. Second, the need to take a fresh look at past thinking about convergence and co-location of cultural facilities. Third, future broadband and web based opportunities will increasingly be a focus for the growth and delivery of educational services, audience development and professional support.

“We are keen to establish links across cultures and cultural boundaries,” he said, “to ensure that our work is informed by a mix of approaches and stories relevant to galleries and museums—and the communities they serve. M&GNSW wants to be your friend to ensure that museums & galleries and Aboriginal cultural centres are sufficiently skilled, resourced and charged to produce quality program and collection based activities that lead your connection to communities served.”

Kath Von Witt, spoke from the perspective of Regional and Public Galleries NSW and as someone who is in charge of the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery & Museum. There are many similar needs of a regional gallery and a regional museum, foremost being strong community support, caring for cultural collections of public property and creating a curated space. The differences rest predominantly on what is being curated and cared for – art or material culture. The needs of regional and public galleries are philosophical, political and cultural, logistical and practical, requiring specialist knowledge and grassroots involvement and, most importantly, involve art and art practice.

Paul Bentley, representing the perspective of Museums Australia (NSW), said that in developing a strategy for museums it was desirable that we look outside the sector before we look inside it. A future strategy for developing the infrastructure for community and regional museums, he believed, was setting up structures and approaches for transforming the use of technology. This is a primary consideration. Technological solutions often address a range of other issues including significance, conservation and rights as well as improved access to collections. Technology solutions need the involvement of major institutions. In an online environment, consistency in managing data—rather than the size of the organisation—is paramount. In NSW, the future

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of CAN is as important as the future of M&GNSW.

Future strategies will also depend on clarifying and coordinating the roles of governments, major institutions, M&GNSW, regional museums and galleries, regional museum development officers and bodies such as Museums Australia and the Royal Australian Historical Society. In NSW, there needs to be a more effective embrace of stakeholders. Roles will be determined by the level of authority and resources held by each stakeholder to deliver results.

Solutions for determining the level of funding for regional and community museums and galleries, the type of funding, and the justification for funds may be found in the approach for subsidising local government libraries in NSW and indicators about cultural heritage value, social and economic impact.

Advocacy



Panellists Andrew Simpson, Katharine Brisbane, Liz Gillroy and Gay Hendriksen field questions in the final session on advocacy

The final session of the symposium was devoted to advocacy. Under the chairmanship of newly elected MANSW vice-president **Vicki Northey**, panellists **Katharine Brisbane** (Currency House), **Andrew Simpson**, **Gay Hendriksen** (Parramatta Female Convict Factory Action Group) and **Liz Gillroy** (The Glasshouse, Port Macquarie) discussed ways of advancing the interests of museums and galleries.

After the symposium

After the symposium, the branch participated in the Arts NSW forum at M&GNSW on 20 June, at which **Professor Amanda Lawson** and her colleagues presented initial findings from their online survey and sought further advice on issues of importance. The branch's two-part submission to Professor Lawson is available on the publications page of the MANSW website.

After the strategy is released, MANSW will consider updating its 2010 proposal for a survey of information and communications technology and digitisation in regional and community museums, taking into account recommendations in the NSW strategy, pathways highlighted at the symposium and other recent developments.

On the advocacy front, we will continue our endeavours to represent the sector and individual museums as outlined in our Advocacy Plan, available on the MANSW website.



Relationships found new depth as the conversations continued during the social events and symposium dinner.

NSW round-up



The MANSW tours and talks series kicked off in 2011 with a tour of the Powerhouse Museum conservation lab and workshop areas, led by Cosia Dudek with the assistance of James Elwing, Rebecca Main, Nitsa Yioupros, Kate Chidlow, Frances Fitzpatrick and Sue Gatenby

NSW Branch

In addition to our work on the state symposium, the submission to Arts NSW and other advocacy efforts, we continue to run the program of tours and talks in Sydney (see above and next page). In August, we will be holding a teleconference for chapter representatives to progress issues raised at the April symposium and to assist chapters to take advantage of improvements to the Museums Australia website described by **Lee Scott**, including direct management of chapter pages, management of events and member details, and a new spreadsheet aimed at streamlining management of accounts and audits.

NSW chapters

The **Sydney Chapter** kicked off its 2011 activities with a Peer2Peer event in March, when it took in the Edwardian Summer exhibition of the Historic House Trust at the Museum of Sydney, followed by drinks in the Opera Bar. Personnel changes are reflected in the new list of committee members: **Karen O'Donnell** (President), **Jessica Allan** (Vice President), **Helen Jones** (Treasurer), **Clare Power** and **Sam Sannayah** (Marketing and Promotions Officers), **Serena Manwaring** (Membership Officer), **Geoff Barker**, **Virginia Ho**, with **Gay Hendriksen** serving as Chapter Coordinator. As it develops plans for more events, check out its pages on MaNexus and Facebook.

In the **Hunter Chapter**, the re-opening of the Newcastle Museum in its new building later in the year looms as a milestone in the region.

In the **Lachlan Chapter**, **Betti Punnett** (Cootamundra) has stepped into the large shoes of the late **Glen Johns** as chapter coordinator, supported by **Lisa Eastaway** (Grenfell), **Bill Pigram** (Yass) and **Bill Spiers** (Temora). With financial support from Museums & Galleries NSW, the chapter will again hold its 5th *Working Spaces for Museum Volunteers* Conference on 14-16 October 2011. Workshops are offered on a range of topics, including significance assessment, digitisation, metal conservation, graphic design and displays, using social media, applying for grants and linking up with the school curriculum. For more information or to receive a registration form contact Bill Pigram (02 6226 4894) or email apigram@ozemail.com.au. For a bursary application form contact Phoebe Arthur, M&GNSW Sector Development Coordinator, (02 9339 9913) or phoebea@mgnsw.org.au.

The **Far North Chapter** held its first meeting of the year in March at Alstonville Museum. **Kaley Morrissey** gave a presentation on Arts Northern Rivers, **Dr Rob Smith** spoke about the value of the National Film and Sound Archive to local activities. And **Debrah Novak** gave a run-down on PR and media techniques for chapter members. A cause for celebration was the opening of refurbished facilities at **Crawford House Museum**, after receiving funds from the Jobs Fund grants. The new facilities have produced an additional small income stream from rentals to other groups.



Crawford House Museum, Alston Plateau Historical Society, recipient of funds for renovations from a Government stimulus

The **Mid North Coast Chapter** held its AGM on 29 March at Macksville, when a workshop on successful grant applications was held.

The **New England North West** chapter, at its meeting at the Land of the Beardies Museum in Glen Innes in March, endorsed **Robyn Rogers** as President and Coordinator and elected **Erica Barwell** as Secretary/Treasurer. The chapter paid tribute to the efforts of **Michelle Arens** in the latter position over the past few years. The meeting concluded with a workshop on the Australian Dress Register, presented by staff from the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney.

The **Central Tablelands Chapter** held its annual meeting at Mudgee in May, when the following office bearers were elected: **Trevor Pascoe** (President), **John Broadley** (Secretary) **Phil Stevenson** (Treasurer), and

NSW round-up

Kristy Kearney (Chapter Delegate). Attracting great attention in the region are plans for the development of an integrated cultural facility in Orange, including the library, art gallery and museum.

The Southern Highlands and Illawarra Chapter held its most recent meeting at Glenalvon Museum, Campbelltown, in June. A presentation by **Rebecca Evans** from the Powerhouse Museum, on *Secrets of a Stitch Detective. How to Read our Garments, Tell Their Stories and Store Them Properly*, was followed by a tour of Glenalvon Museum.



Servants quarters at the Glenalvon Museum

Awards

We remind members and others in the sector that nominations are invited for this year's **IMAGinE Awards**, a partnership of M&GNSW, MANSW, MAACT and RPGNSW. The awards will be presented at the Australian Museum on Friday 30 September 2011. Nominations close on 22 August. For further information and guidelines: http://mgnsw.org.au/news/imagine_awards_2011

Museums Australia has also introduced the inaugural **Museums & Galleries National Awards (MAGNA)** this year. Entries are due 31 July. The awards will be presented at the Museums Australia national conference in Perth. More details: www.museumsaustralia.org.au/site/magna

Nominations in the **Museums Australia Multimedia & Publication Design Awards (MAPDA)** are also open until 15 August 2011. Winners will be announced during the National Conference in Perth, and presented in

a subsequent issue of the *Museums Australia Magazine* and on the *Museums Australia* website. Further details: <http://museumsaustralia.org.au/site/mapda2011.php>

The **Centre for Volunteering** has initiated the **NSW Volunteer of the Year Award**, recognising the outstanding efforts of the 2.4 million volunteers in NSW. Further information 02 9261 3600 or email info@volunteering.com.au. Nominations close 30 August 2011. Info: www.nswvolunteerawards.com

MANSW tour and talks 2011

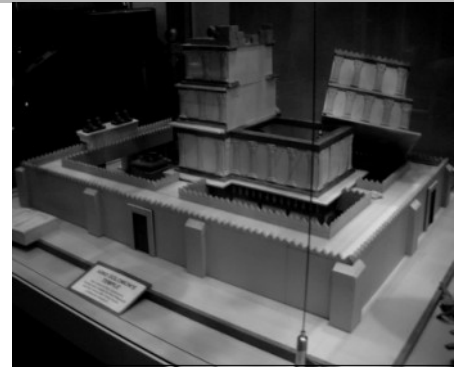
The branch's tours and talks are a great way of learning how other museums work. The series this year began in March at the **Powerhouse Museum** conservation laboratories (see photos page 7).

In May, we went to the **Museum of Freemasonry**, where museum director **Chris Craven** walked us through the museum, archives, library lodge room and other facilities.



Chris Craven, Director of the Museum of Freemasonry, Sydney

Freemasonry is a fraternal organisation originating in the late 16th to early 17th century. It uses metaphors drawn from stonemasons' tools and the allegorical backdrop of the building of King Solomon's Temple to underscore its principles and to support charity and community services.



Model of King Solomon's Temple, created by Rick Maynard, on display at the Museum of Freemasonry

The Sydney Masonic Memorial Centre has done a remarkable job in preserving the documents, artworks, artefacts and other resources reflecting the history of the organisation in Australia and its impact on society, a practice museum associations themselves could well emulate. For further details: www.mof.org.au.

In July, **Courtney Eckler**, Manager/Curator of **May Gibbs' Nutcote Museum** and her colleagues, opened the windows on a home and grounds celebrating the work of the Australian children's author and artist.

The preservation of Nutcote, May Gibbs' home, is a great story of how citizens marshalled against the interests of developers with support from local government.

May Gibbs is famous as the author and illustrator of *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, among other works for children. Born in 1877, she migrated to Australia with her family in 1881.

She returned to England twice for study and work before returning to Australia in 1913 to earn a living as an illustrator. She published *Gumnut Babies* in 1916, signalling the beginning of a steady stream of children's books, newspaper cartoons and other works, particularly during the 1920s.

Her last book, *Prince Dande Lion*, was published in 1954. Her *Bib and Bub* comic strip, however, which began in 1924, continued to be produced until 1967. She died in 1969.

The Nutcote museum was established after relatives and friends, concerned about its future, formed the

The trade



May Gibbs' Nutcote Museum building, gardens and views of Sydney harbour.

May Gibbs Foundation and galvanised support to “Save Nutcote for the Nation”. North Sydney Municipal Council purchased Nutcote for \$2.86m in 1990. The house and gardens opened to the public in 1994.

Nutcote is now jointly owned by the Mayor and General Manager of North Sydney Council through the Nutcote Trust.

It is managed by a volunteer board, consisting of members of the public and appointees from North Sydney Council.

Courtney Eckler and an assistant manager look after the day-to-day running of the museum and garden. It is open to the public 11am-3pm Wednesday-Sunday. The facilities can be booked for functions.

Merchandise, one of its main sources of revenue can be purchased online at www.maygibbs.com.au

Thank you for your support

In addition to the great support we received for the symposium from Arts NSW, the Powerhouse Museum and Macquarie University, a number of suppliers and other supporters helped turn the symposium into a success. We would like to acknowledge them in this issues of *Museum Matters*.

Museum Appreciation Society

Alison Leeson and her team supplied the grub for lunch on the first day, looked after the registration desk, and provided other forms of support.

They also organised the inaugural Sydney Museums Marathon on the day after the symposium. This tour took in major cultural institutions across Sydney.

The Society donated funds raised from the tour to Blue Shield Australia. We encourage you to check the society's site on Facebook.

Bosco Storage Solutions

Designer and manufacturer of a diverse range of commercial storage, office storage and industrial storage products, including tambour door cabinets, bookcases, steel storage cupboards, lineal filing cabinets, mobile pedestal, office pedestal, library shelving and mobile shelving systems, high density drawer storage cabinets for tool storage and parts, workbenches, industrial storage cupboards, the Heuer Vice, mobile tool trolleys and line feed trolleys. Web: www.boscostorage.com.au or contact glen.huggett@advancemetal.com.au

Designcraft

Specialises in furniture, joinery and showcases, as well as wall systems, environmental monitoring equipment and museum and gallery furniture. Further information: www.designcraft.net.au.

Mental Media

Specialises in design and production of multimedia for museums, visitor centres and exhibitions, from single person audio productions to im-mersive experiences. Museums

and experiences that have drawn on the Mental Media expertise include Banbury Mine, Denniston (NZ), Albert Kersten Minerals Museum (Broken Hill), Australian War Memorial, John O'Brien Centre (Narrandera), National Sports Museum (Melbourne), the Shearer's Hall of Fame, Mary MacKillop Centre (Melbourne), and Albury City Library and Museum. Further details: www.mentalmedia.com.au or contact Bruce Brown bruce@mentalmedia.com.au

Preservation Australia

Provides conservation services and products, including workshops and seminars on box making, paper, textile and costume conservation, care of collections and photographs, disaster preparedness and recovery, and family history. Further information, including details of workshops and seminars 2011: www.preservationaustralia.com.au

Object Consulting and Red & Robin

Our major trade sponsors of the opening reception. Object Consulting and Red & Robin also offered, over the two days, a demonstration of the Microsoft Surface Touch Table for group learning and other applications in museums, galleries and learning environments.

If you missed the symposium and want to experience the demo, go to www.touchingthesurface.com.au for case studies and a video based on material from Macquarie University's *Touch of Spice* exhibition.



Microsoft Surface touch table demo

Austin Sloper's digest



This digest draws attention to articles, books, reports, news, websites and other sources on **museums and...**

Advocacy

OCLC's Lorcan Dempsey gnawed on the challenge of advocacy in his blog "Advocacy: Public Library as Amenity and Necessity", 29 April 2011. Although he had libraries in mind, it may be applicable to museums. Two writers had influenced his train of thought. Christopher Caldwell, in a *Financial Times* piece had asserted that "like the military sector, the library sector confounds every attempt to make it more efficient." Eleanor Jo Rodger, who had argued there is currently a "fuzzy mix of language about importance, equity and use" to support of public library funding. In her view, it was important to distinguish between the words *necessities* and *amenities*. As a matter of politics, she said, "defending amenities may work better than defending necessities". This, Lorcan writes, is in contrast to the transformative arguments advanced by others who defend the library as necessity.

He concludes his piece by underscoring the need to understand the motivations of those who make funding decisions and the need to mobilise different groups to harness the values that are important to them. Web: <http://tiny.cc/0xicq>

Australia

The online web publication, *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*, is a new essential bookmark. Edited by **Des Griffin** and **Leon Paroissien**, and published by the National Museum of Australia, it throws the spotlight on issues relating to museology and types of museums. At a time when changes in government policies and structures often trigger attempts to reinvent the wheel, this publication provides a useful context for considering policies affecting the future of Australian museums. Check it out at <http://tiny.cc/xo6rw>

Collaboration and convergence

Morten Hansen and **Herminia Ibarra**, in "Getting Collaboration Right" (Harvard Business Review blog, 16 May 2011), say two things can go wrong with collaboration.

There can be under-collaboration, in which companies that operate as a collection of silos commit the cardinal sin of underperforming relative to the resources they have invested.

There can be over-collaboration, where people collaborate on the wrong things or when collaboration efforts get bogged down in endless discussions and consensus decision-making in which no one is clearly accountable.

Their recipe for effectiveness is "disciplined collaboration", characterised by a rigorous assessment of the business case for any collaborative effort, incentives aligned with the strategy, and accountability. Leaders play a crucial role in getting this right. They not only need to orchestrate the conditions for employees to collaborate on the right things, but they also need to show a strong hand in guiding collaboration efforts. Web: <http://tiny.cc/fthgf>

The Dictionary of Sydney has employed social media to help build the value of the site. A blog, *Looking Up*, and associated Facebook and Twitter accounts have been activated. Volunteer contributors and readers are invited to add comments. The dictionary is a collaborative project coordinated by a trust and supported by the City of Sydney, University of Sydney, University of Technology, Sydney, Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, State Records of NSW, Historic Houses Trust and Powerhouse Museum. Web: www.dictionaryofsydney.org

Lorcan Dempsey in a blog "Laminating Libraries ... Redux" (14 April 2011) calls for more cross-sectoral understanding as we move into the digital environment. Library work can increasingly understand and benefit from archival and museum perspectives and professional practice. As libraries digitise primary materials, or as they begin to curate research data or learning materials, an archival perspective becomes more important. Issues like provenance, tracking changes to resources over time, appraisal prac-

tices, and the value of resources as evidence become more relevant.

Thinking explicitly about structured learning support is a topic for further investigation. The notion of exhibition comes into play, a central museum activity, alongside education. If libraries can learn from archives and museums, what could museums learn from archives and libraries? Web: <http://tiny.cc/cdyz5>

Digitisation and digital tools

In January, the Powerhouse Museum made available a **WordPress API** to facilitate embedding of customised collection objects in WordPress blogs. Further details: <http://tiny.cc/244xa>

Ricky Erway, in her OCLC report, *Rapid Capture: Faster Throughput in Digitization of Special Collections*, looks at digitisation programs in American libraries, archives and museums and says that digitisation speed is not everything. Different materials require different approaches. But, "while not all special collections are amenable to capture at scale, many are... [and] some semblance of scale is possible." In this process, she reports, the "issue of metadata is proving difficult due in large part to their Library-Archive-Museum environment, which requires them to meet archival needs as well as those of museum registrars.

She concludes "We can increase the throughput rate—and as digitization of special collections becomes more commonplace, the costs of equipment and services will continue to decrease even as technological improvements speed up hardware and software operations. But speeding up the capture process is only one part of the picture. These significant advances on the capture side will increase pressure to make changes in other parts of the process." Web: <http://tiny.cc/2vw5r>

Exhibitions

The website museumplanner.org, run by Mark Walhimer Exhibition Design, despite its American orientation, may be of interest to those wanting to explore the subject. It includes lists of resources on project management and

Austin Sloper's digest

exhibition design, including the page How Much Does an Exhibition Cost? Web: museumplanner.org/how-much-do-exhibits-cost.

Information management

MLA and Renaissance London undertook an Information and Records Management Project 2007-2011 with the aim of raised awareness of, and increased capacity for, information and records management in London's regional museums. The project findings and a series of toolkits, e-learning tools and fact sheets on managing emails, files and folders, versions, information audits and policies are available from www.museuminfo-records.org.uk/

Lighting & air conditioning

Museum and Gallery Services Queensland (M&GSQ) is partnering with the **Regional and Public Galleries Association of NSW (RPG NSW)** to produce Gallery and Museum Lighting and Air Conditioning to report on the implications for the Australian public museum and gallery sector of the Federal Government's phase-out of inefficient incandescent lamps, and current air conditioning and climate control needs and standards. Preliminary findings of the report are anticipated at the M&GSQ 2011 State Conference in August. The final report will be presented at RPG NSW State Conference in late October at Port Macquarie.

Social media

If you've been drawn to Twitter as an essential service for tracking news, commentary, blogs and conversations, **Mike Elgan's** article "Why Twitter is Obsolete" (*Computerworld*, 23 July 2011, <http://tiny.cc/hrsig>) may be of interest. He argues that Twitter will soon be a ghost town as soon as Google+ takes hold. The ubiquitous Twitter currently boasts 200 million users and 350 billion tweets a day. The Google+ social site, he says, will sink Twitter because it consolidates a number of social media attributes, including Twitter-like feeds. Moreover, Twitter's apparent success, he

asserts, is a mirage. Millions of people have signed up for the service but have never used it. After five years, only 21 million people or accounts can be categorised as active, which is about the same number that Google+ gained in three weeks. Twitter is currently a better megaphone than Google+. It's better for quick news. It's easier to skim, unlike Google+, which is wordy and time-consuming. It allows anonymity. But Elgin predicts most of these advantages will be erased by improvements to Google+, the addition of third-party add-ons and apps, and the participation of businesses, publications and a lot more people.

Catherine Grenfell, in "Deploying Microblogging in Organisations" (Step Two Designs, 29 July 2011, <http://tiny.cc/m4t8s>) describes how microblogging works within organisations, gives examples of organisations using microblogging (such as the NSW Department of Education and Communities), describes typical behaviours, considers strategic and operational issues, lists some technological options (such as Yammer, Socialcast and Hashwork) and provides links to useful sources.

Tips and resources

The Renaissance South East Team in the UK have produced *Tips and Resources for Museums*. The publication has sections on collection tips (caring for collections, digitisation, joint storage projects), community engagement tips (touring exhibitions, reminiscence, interpretation, working with young people), marketing and data collection tips (social media, data collections), income generation and fundraising tips and organizational development tips (governance, project management, volunteer management and in-house training). The resources section includes links to online UK sites and material. Web: <http://tiny.cc/ljrv9>

Tourism

John Watson, in "Tourism in a Collecting Organisation Audit" (*Insite* May-June 2011), reports on the results of a study of an audit regional muse-

ums in the Community Museums Program of the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development. Issues to be addressed in future training programs include the need for improved customer relations between tourists and staff and making the most of cross promotional opportunities

United Kingdom

As we reflect on recent changes to the Australian scene, the decision by the Cameron Government to close Museums Libraries Archives (MLA) in the UK and transfer its responsibilities prompts us to look more closely at how the deck chairs are being rearranged in England.

MLA will transfer its museum and library responsibilities to Arts Council England in October. An announcement about the future location of the MLA's archive responsibilities will be made by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in due course.

As preparations are made for the change and, with reports of up to 25% staff cuts in local council authorities, MLA has recently published statistics on the achievements of the Renaissance-funded Hub museums. In 2009-10, they experienced an increase of 16.9% overall compared with 2006-07, and increases in various forms of activity such as visits from social groups, children, tourists and adults participating in informal learning activity.

As strategists and policy makers juggle with new options, the Museums Association in the UK, has called for "something radically different that better meets the needs of audiences and of the whole sector" in funding non-national museums in England. The association does not support the concept of a small number of core museums, as described in the MLA's New Renaissance proposal. It prefers a single, simple funding stream that every museum can apply for (see <http://tiny.cc/9htok>).

Maybe our UK counterparts have not yet thought through questions of sustainability in developing their views on strategies?

For your diary

Museums Australia (NSW) Tours & Talks

State Library of NSW 7 September 2011
State Library's digitisation facilities and strategies

Royal Botanic Gardens 2 November 2011

MANSW Lachlan Chapter

Working Space 5 for Museum Volunteers
14-16 October 2011

For more information or to receive a registration form contact Bill Pigram (02 6226 4894) or email apigram@ozemail.com.au. For a bursary application form contact Phoebe Arthur, M&GNSW Sector Development Coordinator, (02 9339 9913) or phoebea@mgnsw.org.au.

Museums Australia National Conference At the Frontier: Exploring Possibilities

The Museums Australia National Conference this year will be held in partnership with Interpretation Australia in Perth
14-18 November 2011

Further details.
www.iceaustralia.com/atf2011

Museums Australia (NSW) will be offering four bursaries totalling \$2000 towards the cost of attending the conference. Details will be promoted via a Museums Australia bulletin.

Museums Australia Inc (NSW)

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