

## Creating a bit of magic



A truck wends its way to Bagdad Café in the middle of the Mojave Desert, the setting for Percy Adlon's 1987 film.

### Contents

#### Feature

Creating a bit of magic— a look at exhibition production.

#### NSW round-up

Reports on branch and chapter activities and other NSW news, including a tribute to Glen Johns, awards, NSW cultural accord, MGNSW CEO appointment, Arts NSW review of the visual arts and museums, NLA grants, Powerhouse Museum Regional Services, and Macquarie University regional tour.

#### Austin Sloper's digest

Aboriginal arts and culture, computers at a discount, controlled vocabularies, digitisation, museum roles science in regional museums, not for profit sector, obituaries, personal social media strategies, statistics, UK, volunteers and Wikipedia,

#### Contacts

**In his book *Designing Exhibitions*, Giles Velarde begins “Exhibitions are, at best, magic and, at worst, dreary trudges around gloomy trade shows or museums.”**

Fans of the film *Bagdad Café* will recall that it was a box of cheap magic tricks that helped the enigmatic Bavarian tourist Jasmin to transform the resident misfits of a remote diner in the wind-swept Mojave Desert. Not only did she humanise the residents, she made Bagdad Café the roaring stop-over for the thirsty drivers of passing rigs. In this issue, we look at exhibitions and their role in turning museums into Bagdad cafés.

#### Accumulated expertise

Accumulated expertise is available in the books on our shelves, the recent Museums Australia national conference and other sources.

#### From the bookshelves

The latest version of the *National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries*, published in December 2010 on the Museums and Galleries Queensland

site, promotes a general principle: “Objects on display are arranged to convey significant collection areas, themes, stories, [and] ideas.”

*Museum Methods*, Museum Australia's publication for small museums and galleries (2002), is currently being reassessed with a view to a new edition. As a practical manual, it makes the point that exhibitions, as the most visible expression of a museum's ambitions, must “excite and inform.”

*Exhibitions: a Practical Guide for Small Museums*, edited by Georgia Rouette and published by the Victorian Branch in 2007, not only updates practical considerations, it includes a series of templates for exhibition briefs, policies, project management, touring and other aspects of exhibition production. Importantly, it also has a chapter that amplifies design elements as they relate to layout, displays, lighting, colour, labels and text panels, and sound.

Two general publications on museum practice are worth dipping into. *The Manual of Museum Planning*, edited by Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord, published in 1991, has a section on exhibition planning processes. *Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practices*, published 1984, draws attention to visitor psychology, communication, and evaluation, among other aspects. Giles Verlarde, in his section of the manual, says the type of museum usually drives design considerations. He distinguishes between object-oriented and narrative-oriented exhibitions. And, as if to dispel the notion that the curator is always the king pin in exhibition production, Douglas Bassett and David Prince, in their chapter, stress that “successful exhibition design is a team affair.”

Other titles offering useful advice have been relegated to the lower shelves because of the date of their publication. They include *Designing Exhibitions* by Giles Velarde, (the Design Council, 1988), *Exhibition Planning and Design: a Guide for Exhibitors Designers and Contractors* (Batsford, 1989), *The Exhibition Handbook* by Christopher

## Creating a bit of magic

Heath (MA Vic 1997), and *Travelling Exhibitions: A practical Handbook for Non-State Metropolitan Regional Galleries and Museums* by Sara Kelly (NETS Victoria, 1994).

*Imagineering: a Behind-the-Dreams Look at Making the Magic Real*, by the Imagineers at Walt Disney (1996), underscores the fact that blood, sweat and tears are involved in transforming fantasy into something that will draw an audience.

The Victorian Branch's latest publication is *Exhibition Design for Galleries and Museums: an Insider's View* (2010). Edited by Georgia

learning: they need to be thought provokers when engaging multiple communities. Alison Inglis reflects on the role of curators in balancing design and content, based on two case studies – the Salvador Dali exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria and the Sidney Nolan Ned Kelly series exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia, both presented in 2009. Tony Ellwood's chapter covers blockbusters.

Karen Quinlan gives a perspective on presenting exhibitions in regional galleries, which are subject to variable funding levels and other

On the other hand, his recipe for improved design on a shoestring involves better interpretation, selecting fewer items and giving attention to the visitor experience as part of the process of preparing exhibitions.

Advice on design in small museums, was also touched on at the recent Museums Australia national conference by Lisa Fletcher from the Museum of Samoa and Georgia Rouette. Fletcher, in her workshop DIY Design for Small Museums, urged participants to "think like a designer". Rouette, in *Pushing the Boundaries: Small Galleries and Muse-*



Rouette, it gathers up the views of twenty experts who consider design in a range museum types and situations.

### Considering the audience

Michael Ostwald encourages curators and designers to take on board education strategies as a planning prerequisite when developing an exhibition. People learn in different ways, he reminds us. Museums must become sites for informal learning, a process that relies on the use of spaces, interactivity, and technology.

Anita Kocsis, Carolyn Barnes and Stephen Huxley say that exhibitions are, above all, an experience. "A focus on experience in a complete sense could create a common purpose in exhibition development, mediating between curatorial aims, design strategies and audience needs and preferences."

### Exhibitions in art museums

A number of writers focus on design in art museums. Jane Deeth suggests a discursive approach as a way of grabbing the attention of people who visit contemporary art exhibitions. Ted Snell considers the mission of university art museums within their context as centres of

constraints, whole Georgia Cribb considers the challenges of designing touring exhibitions for regional buildings which are characterised by an "idiosyncratic mix of architectural styles."

### Exhibitions in small museums

Euan McGilvray looks at exhibition design in underfunded community museums. While the majority of them "collect historical material – in many cases vast amounts of it – they may not include a conscious effort to use design to enhance the experience of visitors." Although many local historical societies and community museums use exhibition design as an organising principle, "exhibition design in the sense that it is understood in the museum industry is seldom applied."

Given the conditions under which many community museums operate, he is cautious about attempting to shoehorn better standards and more inclined to accept the "glorious randomness" they offer. "Visitors are increasingly capable of dipping, skimming and flipping through a forest of content to glean some personal knowledge or insights, or just to have some fun."

*ums Challenging the Status Quo*, argued that small museums, without the bureaucratic, political and economic constraints that large museums encounter, have "opportunities to unleash creativity in all its potential and take risks with some astonishing outcomes."

### Other types of museums

Designing exhibitions in other types of museums are explored, in *Exhibition Design for Museums and Galleries*, by Donna Leslie (on Australian indigenous exhibitions), Padmini Sebastian (multiple narratives in immigration museums), Garrett Donnelly (multi-disciplinary collections in historic buildings), and Glenn Gregusson and Gabrelle Tydd (natural history museums).

### Dealing with issues

Carole Hammond zooms in on how to integrate environmental sustainability into museum production, while Bernice Murphy reflects on the thorny question of dealing with controversial content, based on her experiences over the Bill Henson saga in 2008, the Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective in 1995 and the seizing of Juan Davila's *Stupid as a Painter* in 1982. "Museums have a complex task in negotiating their

## Creating a bit of magic

relationships with society... On the one hand, as public institutions, museums must sign up to the protocols and obligations that shape engagements in the public sphere. On the other hand, they have a responsibility to promote understanding of the complex languages and encoded nature of cultural objects and images and their often challenging content. If museums' abilities to keep their programs diverse, challenging, informative and reflexive were jeopardised, the loss to imaginative and intellectual life would be severe.

cerned that too many exhibitions were inert: they seem to avoid any kind of controversy lest the political masters react in a hostile manner.

Gillian Savage urged us to consider real evidence about visitor experiences before we make too many assumptions. She was more concerned about the use of replicas for the real thing. "This is the problem of story-centred exhibition. Not enough authentic objects." Regan Forrest questioned whether people were all that concerned about whether objects were real, an assertion supported by

technology inspired by the 19<sup>th</sup> century static painted panorama. And Diane Lorenz anticipates the impact of the next wave of digitally-savvy museum-goers.

### New expectations

This was a topic considered by Tim Rolfe at the MA2010 national conference, when he commented on the significant shift in audience expectations. "The goal posts have changed for museum exhibition design: visitors' expectations are higher than at any other time in history. Few museum



For these qualities are essential to the flourishing of all societies."

On Museum Australia's social media site, maNexus, Des Griffin recently posed the question: are social history exhibitions in our museums still collections of trophies without reference to their past? He had been prompted by Amanda Lohrey's article "The Absent Heart" in the June 2010 issue of *The Monthly*. She had been critical of several social history exhibitions in major museums that left her with the impression that curators are more concerned about the preservation of the artefact than they are to give any account of the history that produced it." She complained that too often objects are exhibited as trophies. "Until their displays of social history are more imaginatively conceived, our museums will remain lacklustre models of fragmentation and perfunctory exposition. There is a metaphorical heart missing from this frame, a manifest passion and flair, for the telling of our history."

A number of people entered the fray. Sebastian Gurciullo was less concerned about "the fragmentariness of the exhibitions", the lack of a single narrative. He was more con-

Christine Dauber: "in the digital age, where the democratisation of knowledge is running full force, the traditional style of exhibition with objects as its focus and the professional as the 'expert' providing instructive information will not engage the majority of audiences."

For further exploration of these sentiments you might be tempted by Steven Conn's *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

### The use of technology

*Exhibition Design for Galleries and Museums* nibbles at the impact of technology on exhibitions in the digital age. Brian Looker compares the pros and cons of traditional and contemporary dioramas, mixed media displays, models and materials. "Different from traditional dioramas, the contemporary diorama is now just as popular and can be viewed as a display rather than a diorama." From his experience "a good exhibit is not always the largest or the most expensive, but rather one that has been created with great imagination, allowing scope for adaption or change over time." Georgia Rouette, in her chapter, considers convergent, immersive

collection objects have the power to stand alone in a showcase with a simple label."

### Trends

For a deeper consideration of the impact of technology on the production and presentation of exhibitions, we turned to a recent report by the Marcus Institute for Digital Education in the Arts, *2010 Horizon Report: Museum Edition* ([www.nmc.org/pdf/2010-Horizon-Report-Museum.pdf](http://www.nmc.org/pdf/2010-Horizon-Report-Museum.pdf)).

Technology, it said, is offering more choices to museums in all parts of their operations. Rich media — images, videos, audio, augmented reality, and animations — are becoming increasingly valuable assets in digital interpretation. Digitisation and cataloguing projects are calling on a significant share of museum resources. Increasingly, museum visitors and staff expect to be able to work, learn, study, and connect with their social networks in all places and at all times using whichever device they choose. The abundance of resources and relationships offered by open content repositories and social networks is challenging museums to revisit their role as educators.

From nearly 50 emerging technologies, the Horizon report selected 6 as

## Creating a bit of magic

the ones to watch and it gives specific consideration to their impact on interpretation and exhibitions, with examples of applications currently being used.

Mobile technology will take greater advantage of the devices people carry and will reduce overhead costs for services like audio tours.

Social media will continue to tap

of data entry and back-and-forth communication that occurs as a result of institution-specific collections information records.”

### Challenges

The Horizon report pinpoints significant challenges overall. Far too few museums, it said, have a comprehensive strategy to ensure that they can keep pace with even the

(collections.vam.ac.uk). Multimedia experiments are reflected in the work of the Louvre Lab (louvre.fr).

Second - and reinforcing a point of the Horizon report - much of this innovation is being spurred by an explosion in usage of mobile media, including the use of smart phones and tablets.

Third, museums are venturing beyond traditional curatorial material. Homepages are beginning to look like



into the “endlessly expressive and creative” voice of the audience.

New augmented reality applications are poised to enter the mainstream; museums - traditionally places in which visitors can rarely touch the objects - will use augmented reality to create new forms of interaction with objects.

Location-based services - geotagging and geocaching - will enable museum to “pin” information to a given object or gallery location and have it pushed to a user once he or she has reached that location.

Although the full potential of gesture-based computing is several years away, this technology will enable museums to create a better understanding of the functions and aesthetics of objects - in much the same way as the iPad application *Elements* allows users to manipulate and “touch” chemical compounds, metals and radioactive substances in an engaging way.

And, finally, the Semantic Web not only promises to help us connect to digital objects that are currently invisible to current search algorithms, it has potential to improve the workflow and process of organising collections and exhibitions. “Implementing agreed-upon standards and applications that allow content to be discoverable via its context could potentially eliminate much duplication of effort in terms

most proven technologies. Funding for technology projects is too often done outside operational budgets. Requirements for managing technology are not well understood. Demands for business cases can create a “chicken versus egg” conundrum. Museum workflows are too often ill-suited to modern content production techniques in which content is created simultaneously for multiple delivery modes. At a time when their role is more important than ever, too many museum educators lack the training, resources or support to address the technological opportunities and challenges they face.

András Szántó, in *The Arts Newspaper* 2 December 2010, picked up these threads. He urged museums to “lose control.” Although they have made great strides in adapting to the digital age, they need to go much further. “With few exceptions, museums came late to the digital party. Until quite recently, most have used their websites as extended online brochures, limited to practical information and collection highlights.” Dramatic changes that have occurred during the past 18 months point to promising trends.

First, technology is changing the relationship between objects, curators and visitors. Improved collection searching is exemplified on the Victoria and Albert Museum website

magazine sites, with channels for news and audience dialogue. Blogs, written by staff, routinely attract the most traffic on museum websites. New distribution platforms, such as ArtBabble (artbabble.org), are putting museums in the communications business.

Fourth, technology is revitalising museum education - as exemplified by the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s multimedia scavenger hunt, “Ghost of a Chance”, in which players used text messages, email and the web to find hidden objects in the museum, and MoMA’s education portal.

Fifth, social media initiatives are blending education and marketing, as exemplified by the international web event in 2010 called Ask a Curator (askacurator.com) and the Guggenheim Museum’s creative video biennial,



Jasmin discovers a box of magic tricks

## Regional museums in an online future

“YouTube Play”, a collaborative enterprise with YouTube, HP and Intel ([youtube.com/play](http://youtube.com/play)).

Last but not least, technology is transforming professional practice, as exemplified by the Museum Dashboard at Indianapolis Museum of Art at [dashboard.imamuseum.org](http://dashboard.imamuseum.org).

Museums, he said, are feeling their way toward a digital future, but technological change hasn't seeped yet all the way into museums' innermost structures and attitudes. Digital innovation doesn't just enable institutions to do old things in new ways. It forces fundamental and often painful realignments involving questions about what to sacrifice.

NSW members don't need to go far to explore some of these developments. Just got to the Powerhouse Museum. See, for example, [www.powerhousemuseum.com/imageservices/index.php/2008/11/](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/imageservices/index.php/2008/11/) which plays with a single photograph of a park and a bandstand to create a video story in much the same way as Ric Burns used a single photo to flesh out a story of a factory fire in his documentary film *New York*. Just as a painter can sometimes make a better picture with a simple triad than a full palette of colours, museums can make a great exhibition with few objects and little technology.

### A lasting impression

Exhibitions mean different things to different people. Those who present exhibitions in museums are called upon to become film producers, broadcasters, educators, entertainers and retailers.

In essence, and to borrow the words of the song at the end of *Bagdad Café*. “It's all about magic, magic at the Bagdad Café.”

When Jasmin created her bit of magic, though, it was not so much the box of tricks that did the trick. It was the emotions she tapped into.

To create a bit of magic, we need to leave a lasting impression. □

- Paul Bentley



The finale of the film: “It's all about magic—magic at the Bagdad Café!”

### Regional museums in an online future

Our previous issue featured the topic Regional Museums in an Online Future, summarising presentations at the 2010 chapter representatives' meeting.

During the meeting **Geoff Barker** touched on integration of databases and information sources, based on his work on a total asset management (TAM) project at the Powerhouse Museum. “The TAM model”, he said, “could lead to the breaking down of some of the existing walls with the institution.”

In this issue, we summarise two other presentations that dealt with the integration of museum, library and gallery databases in local government services.

#### Hurstville Library, Museum and Gallery

**Rebekah Schulz**, Manager of Hurstville City Library Museum and Gallery, outlined the challenges and impact of integrating a web presence and systems of a library and museum into one service working in three locations.

Organisational changes have led to a new structure of four units: Technology and Online Services; Collection Services, Historical & Cultural Services and Customer Service & Outreach. The Technology and Online unit consists of a coordinator, an online services facilitator, professional development facilitator, IT and Intranet facilitator, a technology trainee and system librarian.

The website has been redeveloped. This involved looking at the marketplace and the habits of online visitors to ensure the site and related services were designed to meet defined needs. What topics were searched? How long did they stay on the site? How did they navigate the site to reach their goal? Where did they come from? What were the popular services? How many people visited? Google Analytics was used to monitor and evaluate website usage.

The integrated library and museum is now promoted at [www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/lmg](http://www.hurstville.nsw.gov.au/lmg). The catalogues are a prominent feature of the site. Visits to the site are increasing. Social media tools are employed to engage the people and solicit feedback. See, for example, [/hurstvillelmg.blogspot.com](http://hurstvillelmg.blogspot.com).

The success of these changes and the new dynamic is reflected in the following comment in a student's blog at [cisforcecil.blogspot.com/2010/01/looking-back-on-good-times-and-looking.html](http://cisforcecil.blogspot.com/2010/01/looking-back-on-good-times-and-looking.html):

*"Hurstville Library, where i used to go to study alone because I couldnt concentrate at home, but it soon turned out to be the place where I got to know people whom i wouldnt have got to otherwise, nd a place where we could relax, hang out nd study with friends at the same time. And I'll always remember the library as the place that made studyin for the HSC a lot more bearable, nd as a place where everybody helped each other through the biggest thing in our lives so far and a place where we had so much fun."*

*Continued next page*

## NSW round-up

*Continued from previous page*

### Newcastle City Council

**Bill Storer**, Museums Australian National Secretary and champion of Newcastle museums, talked about the **Newcastle Cultural Collections** database, a collaboration of Newcastle Regional Library, Newcastle Region Gallery and Newcastle Museum at [collections.ncc.nsw.gov.au/keemu/pages/nrm/index.htm](http://collections.ncc.nsw.gov.au/keemu/pages/nrm/index.htm).

At the turn of the century, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Newcastle Regional Library and Newcastle Regional Museum had six different systems for managing their various collections. The Library had a local studies photo database to complement its integrated library system, plus two other systems for different collections. The Museum used RBase. The difficulties of supporting different databases within Newcastle City Council led to a proposal in 2002 for an integrated system.

Initial reluctance by some of the stakeholders eventually led to an agreement in 2004 to use KE-Emu as an integrated system for local history, gallery and museum material under the project leadership of Newcastle Regional Museum.

When the catalogue went live in 2005, the enthusiasm of the previous year gave way to concerns about copyright, the loss of income from image reproduction, and the design of the website discovery interface.

These concerns have now been resolved. Support by the library, gallery, museum and IT departments of the Newcastle City Council are strong. There is better awareness of each collection. Website interest, loans and copying have increased. Other areas of Newcastle City Council are looking at the system for a tree database. The library is leading a joint narratives project and other development. All stakeholders have a sense of ownership as they work through future development issues.

### Action by Museums Australia

Following the NSW chapter representatives' meeting, the NSW Branch prepared a proposal for a survey of ICT infrastructure and digitisation in regional and community museums and has sought funding to undertake the work.

The scope and tasks will be influenced by a number of contexts.

At a national level, the Museum Metadata Exchange Project (a joint project with the Council of Australian Museum Directors with funding from the Australian National Data Service) and decisions by the Australian Government about the future of the Collections Australia Network will have a bearing on future directions.

In NSW, the review of the visual arts and museum sectors may influence the scope of and specific details in our questionnaires.

And we are monitoring efforts by our interstate colleagues on a Victorian Collections Management system and service. □

### NSW Branch

In the final our and talk for 2010, we visited **Mary MacKillop Museum** in November. Curator **Edwina Huntley** and Museum Coordinator **Christine Richards** traced the history of the museum over the past 15 years and its future directions before leading us on a tour of the three galleries, the tomb of Saint Mary MacKillop, and Alma Cottage, where Mary MacKillop lived from 1884 until her death in 1909. The museum was set up partly to advance the beatification process and partly to draw attention to the work of the Josephite order. It is managed by 3 paid staff and a sister who is responsible for managing volunteers.

Plans are afoot for redesigning the exhibitions, introducing a temporary exhibitions program, reaching out to new audiences, and addressing challenges relating to a collection of 5700 objects, artworks, dress, documents, and personal possessions. The museum has just purchased a Vernon system to support online cataloguing. It recently received a Commemorating Eminent Australian grant from the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. For further information on the museum, visit [www.marymackillopplace.org.au](http://www.marymackillopplace.org.au).

In September, **Emma Smith**, Senior Collections Registrar at the Art Gallery of NSW, led us on a tour of the Gallery's impressive new remote storage facility.



*Top: Mary MacKillop Museum, North Sydney. Bottom: NSW members take a tour of the new off-site storage facility of the Art Gallery of NSW.*

## NSW round-up

Our efforts over the past six months have also involved contributions to MA national deliberations on publications, membership and digital strategies, representing sector interests to the NSW Government, and gearing up for 2011, which will include the NSW state symposium (see back page) and a submission to the NSW review of the visual arts and museum sectors.

### NSW chapters

**Lachlan Chapter** held another successful Working Spaces for Museum Volunteers in October 2010 and will continue its enterprising work in 2011. Other plans include a visit to Gooloogong in May and a workshop on website design in July.

#### Vale Glen Johns

Just before going to press, we sadly learnt of the passing of Lachlan chapter coordinator Glen Johns on 31 January. Tributes to Glen will be appearing in national publications and bulletins. The NSW Branch pays this short salute to Glen's efforts for Lachlan and the sector at large.

Every group within the association, and every group of museums within regional Australia, need strong catalysts. Glen certainly fulfilled that role with distinction in organising Working Spaces for volunteer workers, scheduling regular chapter meetings and producing Lachlan's monthly newsletter. His efforts in obtaining financial support and the participation of the major cultural institutions in Working Spaces serve as a model for chapters throughout the state.

His monthly newsletters carry the stories of the ingenuity of members through infrastructure grant applications, awards for multimedia displays, creation of tourist drives and a range of documentation activities. They affirm, through the regular anniversaries that are celebrated, the outstanding contribution that has been made by regional museums and historical societies to the preservation and promotion of Australian culture for more than a hundred years.

Glen leaves a big hole to fill.

The **Southern Highlands & Illawarra Chapter** held its most recent meeting in October, when reports on collection management, community documentation and exhibition activities were received from **Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Berrima District Museum, Tongarra Museum, Future World, Berry Museum, Nowra Museum, Wollondilly Heritage Centre and Kangaroo Valley Museum** and environs. The chapter will hold an AGM and other meetings in February 2011 to discuss the Watts report and consider oral history projects.

The **Far North Coast Chapter** held its AGM at Evens Head in September, when the following office-bearers were elected: **Jane Gardiner** (President), **Bernie Childs** (Vice President), **Laura O'Brien** (Treasurer), **Geoff Foley** (Secretary). **Marea Buist** continues as Chapter Coordinator. At the meeting, **Tony Duke**, CEO of Arts Northern Rivers, outlined a future role of Arts Northern Rivers as a planner and facilitator of local cultural projects and listened to concerns raised about the profile of local museums. The report by his predecessor, **Louis Randall**, Northern Rivers Regional Museums Development Project, is available at [www.artsnorthernrivers.com.au](http://www.artsnorthernrivers.com.au). The chapter plans to hold meetings at Alstonville Plateau in March (on how to get the most out of local media) and at **Richmond River Historical Society**, Lismore, in September (on making your own in-house DVDs). For updates, visit the chapter's new blog at [fncmuseums.wordpress.com](http://fncmuseums.wordpress.com).

The **Mid North Coast Chapter** is planning its next AGM at Macksville RSL Club on 29 March 2011 coinciding with a workshop on making successful grant applications.

**New England North West Chapter** is planning two workshops in 2011, one relating to the Australian Dress Register, the other on the Farm Machinery Project.

Recent **Hunter Chapter** activities have included an AGM at **Richmond Vale Railway Museum**, in June, a workshop of citric acid metal conservation in September, and to cap off the year, Powerhouse Museum workshops on photographing objects and the Australia Dress Register at Raymond Terrace December.

The **Central Tablelands Chapter** held a museum exhibition development workshop presented by **Colin Jones** at **Kandos Bicentennial Industrial Museum** in August 2010. **Orange City Council** has agreed to develop plans and funding for the integration of a regional museum with the City Library, Regional Gallery and Orange Visitors Centre. Alison Russell has also alerted us to the launch of the **Sustainable Collections Project website** at [www.centralnswmuseums.com.au](http://www.centralnswmuseums.com.au).

The **Sydney Chapter's** seminar, Stepping Ahead, held at Sydney University on Friday 23 July attracted 60 people and the chapter is currently preparing its activities in 2011.

### Awards

We were delighted to celebrate the work of our members in the 2010 **IMAGinE awards**, a joint venture of MGNSW, MANSW, MAACT and the Public and Regional Galleries Association NSW, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney on 22 October. The winners were:

*Category 1 Collection Management:* **Port Macquarie Historical Society** (volunteer section); **Art Gallery of NSW** (paid staff section).

*Category 2 Exhibitions:* **Living on the Waters Edge, Hurstville City Museum & Gallery** (6 or less staff); **The Tintyoreum, Powerhouse Museum** (7 or more staff).

*Category 3 Education/public programs:* Hand on

## NSW round-up

History, **The Oaks Historical Society**, Wollondilly (volunteer); Scattered Bones, **Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum** (6 or less staff); Radio Frequency Identification Program, **Museum of Australian Democracy** at Old Parliament House and The Shell Questacon Science Circus, **Questacon** (Joint winners, 7 or more staff).

*Category 4 Award for excellence:* **Port Macquarie Historical Society & Museum** (volunteer); **Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Port Macquarie**, and **Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Huskisson** (joint winners, 6 or less staff); **Museum of Contemporary Art** (7 or more staff).

*Category 5 Individual achievement award:* **Pat Elkin**, New England

Regional Art Museum (volunteer); **Kylie Winkworth** (paid staff).

For more details see the November 2010 issue of *Museums Australia Magazine* and the Museums and Galleries NSW website, where you will also find a full list of commendations as well as winners.

We also acknowledge NSW members who achieved success in **ABC Regional Museums Award** in 2010. **Richmond River Historical Society** had the distinction of being both the national and NSW winner. **Eskbank House (NSW)** was highly commended. **Port Macquarie Museum, Land of the Beardies History House and Research Centre, Quirindi Heritage Museum, Australian Museum of Clothing & Textiles**, and the **Age of Fishes**

**Museum** from NSW were commended.

ABC Radio National presented a broadcast from **Richmond River Historical Society** on 18 October 2010, when Bush Telegraph presenter and historian, Michael Cathcart, lifted the lid on a rare 19th century medicine chest, from the steel passenger steamship, St. George, one of the 25,000 items held by the museum. During the program, the museum's collection coordinator, **Geoff Foley**, and other guests explored the development of the region. This touched on the first bitterly fought environmental battle for rainforest in Australia, the Terania Creek blockade, that eventually led to the creation of Nightcap National Park. It also included the story of the traditional owners of country, the Bundjalung people, and their interaction with early European. Further information: [www.abc.net.au/rn/museums/](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/museums/)

Finally, we pop the corks to celebrate those recognised in the **NSW Heritage Volunteer Award** in 2010, including **Bob and Gloria Williams** from **Berrima District Museum**, **Penelope Pike** from **Eryldene House** and gardens at Gordon, volunteers at the **Queanbeyan & District Historical Society Museum** and the **Queanbeyan Printing Museum**. For further details: [www.heritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au).

### NSW Cultural Accord

The NSW Arts Minister **Virginia Judge** signed a new three-year Cultural Accord with the Local Government and Shires Associations in November. The State Government has pledged \$330,000 to help achieve the award's objectives in the period 2011-2013.

The Accord supports the State Plan and Local Government priorities to develop cities and regional centres, increase volunteering, and increase participation in the arts and cultural activity. Cultural planning is identified as an essential tool for future decisions.

Over the next three years, Arts NSW and the associations have made commitments to: (1) provide Aboriginal people with greater opportunities to participate in, share and strengthen their culture through



Imagine Awards 2010 (clockwise from top left): Sue McIntyre (Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery); Jan Noakes & Jacque Finley (The Oaks Historical Society) with Mary Darwell; Kylie Winkworth; Richard Perram (Bathurst) with Jan Cush; Michael Van Tiel (Powerhouse Museum) with Cassandra Hobbs; Bridget and Morgan Sant (Lady Denman) with Suzanne Bravery; and Gemma Beswick and Jessica Allen (Hurtville) with Judith Coombs.

## NSW round-up

arts practice, and develop careers and businesses in the arts and cultural sector; (2) encourage the incorporation of provisions for local arts and cultural development into councils' Community Strategic Plans; (3) gain a better understanding of existing arts and cultural infrastructure across NSW and approaches for meeting future needs; (4) encourage councils to explore local initiatives to provide artists studios and residency programs, develop creative enterprise hubs and support local creative industries; (5) engage with councils and other organisations to encourage the development of local capacity, and councils' facilitation of connections between local arts and cultural groups.

Arts NSW and the associations will form an implementation steering committee, which will prepare an implementation plan and report annually on progress.

### **Museums and Galleries NSW & Regional and Public Galleries NSW**

**Michael Rolfe** has taken up his appointment as the new CEO of Museums and Galleries NSW. Formerly Director of the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre in Gymea and President of Regional and Public & Galleries Association of NSW (RPGNSW). **Debbie Abraham**, Director of Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, has been elected chair of the RPGNSW board. Museums Australia looks forward to working with Michael and Debbie as our organisations work towards a new phase of developing museums and galleries in NSW.

### **Strategic plan for the visual arts and museum sectors**

Following the publication of the Watts Report on Museums and Galleries New South Wales, **Arts NSW** has embarked is developing a new strategy for the visual arts and museum sectors in NSW. The focus of the review will be on the small to medium museums and galleries.

**Professor Amanda Lawson**, dean of the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, will lead a

team of three to undertake research and consultation leading to preliminary recommendations on how the sector can best be supported. Assisting Professor Lawson will be **Ms Deborah Ely**, CEO of the Bundanon Trust, and **Professor Shirley Leitch**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Swinburne University of Technology

The terms of reference and other details are available on the Arts NSW website at [www.arts.nsw.gov.au](http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au).

The NSW Branch is currently preparing a submission to the review and will be inviting input from chapters in the near future.

### **Powerhouse Museum**

**Powerhouse Museum Regional Program and Services** organised a consultation day for over 50 regional people on 22 November. In response to recommendations from the 2009 meeting, staff from the **Powerhouse Museum**, **Australian Museum**, **Historic Houses Trust**, **State Library**, and **State Records** gave presentations on managing photographic collections from the perspective of each institution. During the afternoon, delegates participated in a video conferencing demonstration of the Connected Classroom program of the **Bathurst Museum of Fossils and Minerals** and a panel discussion featuring **Michael Rolfe** (MGNSW), **Andrew Simpson** (MANSW), **Madeleine Scully** (Wagga Wagga), **Rebecca Pinchin** (Powerhouse Museum) on issues facing the sector. For information on the 2011 program of internships, site visits, workshops and other forms of assistance, check out the Regional Services blog at [www.powerhousemuseum.com/regional](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/regional).

### **National Library grants**

In the latest round of the National Library's Community Heritage Grants, New South Wales museums and other organisations received funds to assist with a range of collection management tasks.

Grants for significance assessments dominated (**Adaminaby Snowy Scheme**, **Fort Scratchley Historical Society**, **Moruya & District**

**Historical Society**, **Scone and Upper Hunter Historical Society**, **Sturt Craft Centre Winifred West Schools**, **The Performance Space Limited**, **Trustees of the Sisters of Mercy Diocese of Lismore**, and **Willoughby City Council**.

Other NSW recipients were **1st Mosman 1908 Scout Group** (for preservation needs assessment), **Australian Country Music Foundation** (digitisation of still images), **Australian Tennis Museum** (preservation needs assessment of costume collection), **Lockhart and District Historical Society** (archival materials and preventative conservation training workshop), **Mount Kembla Mining Heritage Incorporated** (significance assessment and conservation training), **National Art School** (cleaning and rehousing of works on paper), **Parramatta & District Historical Society** (disaster preparedness plan and disaster bin), **Port Macquarie Historical Society Inc** (preservation needs assessment), **Royal Far West** (archival materials and equipment), **The Museum of Fire Inc** (archival storage shelving), **The Oaks Historical Society Inc** (digitising the Yerranderie-Burrarorang scrolls and the **Scout Association of Australia NSW Branch** (preservation needs assessment and preservation training). Further details: [www.nla.gov.au/chg/](http://www.nla.gov.au/chg/)

### **Macquarie University regional tour**

MANSW President **Andrew Simpson** and Macquarie University museum studies staff and students went on their annual trek of regional museums and galleries last September, taking in facilities at **Bathurst**, **Milthorpe**, **Canowindra**, **Orange**, **Young**, **Wagga Wagga**, **Echuca**, **Bendigo**, **Ballarat** and **Portland**. For a commentary on the trip see "The Trek Has Been Tracked" in the Museum Studies e-zine at [amusine.typepad.com/amusine\\_holidays/the-trek-has-been-tracked.html](http://amusine.typepad.com/amusine_holidays/the-trek-has-been-tracked.html).

## Austin Sloper's digest



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

### Aboriginal arts and culture

**Arts NSW** has released its *Aboriginal Arts and Culture Strategy 2010* with the objective of: increasing participation of NSW Aboriginal people in arts and cultural activity; increasing recognition and appreciation of NSW Aboriginal arts and cultural practice; using Aboriginal arts and culture to assist in Closing the Gap; and facilitating Aboriginal jobs and enterprises within the creative industries. Download from [www.arts.nsw.gov.au](http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au)

### Computers at a discount

**Centrelink** and **Work Ventures** are providing low cost computers to Centrelink concession card holders. The \$290 Seniors Pack includes quality computer hardware, fully licensed MS Windows XP Pro and Office 2007 software, a comprehensive computer and internet training pack, user guides and free phone technical support and home delivery anywhere in Australia. For more information, contact Work Ventures on 1800 112 205 or visit the Centrelink website at [www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/work\\_ventures\\_pcs.htm/](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/individuals/work_ventures_pcs.htm/)

### Controlled vocabularies

**Patricia Harpring's** *Introduction to Controlled Vocabularies, Terminology for Art, Architecture, and Other Cultural Works*, available as an online publication from the **Getty Research Institute**, defines the characteristics, scope and uses of controlled vocabularies for art and cultural materials, and explains how controlled vocabularies should be used cataloguing systems. There's a select list of vocabularies and sources of terminology at the end of the publication. To download: [www.getty.edu/research/conducting\\_research/standards/intro\\_controlled\\_vocab/](http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/standards/intro_controlled_vocab/).

### Digitisation

The Europeana Foundation has released its **Strategic Plan 2011-2015**. Europeana is a partnership of European cultural heritage associations that have joined forces with the goal of making available digitised content of Europe's galleries, libraries, museums, archives and audiovisual collections. The initiative is largely funded by the European Commission and builds on the experience of The European Library. It currently gives integrated access to 15 million books, films, paintings, museum objects and archival documents from 1500 content providers.

The **Strategic Plan** has four tracks. The first, *aggregate*, aims to source content, extend the network of aggregators and improve the quality of the metadata. The second, *facilitate*, aims to share knowledge, foster research and development of digital heritage applications, and strengthen Europeana's advocacy role. The third, *distribute*, will upgrade the Europeana portal, put content in the users' workflow and develop partnerships to deliver content in new ways. And the fourth, *engage*, aims to enhance the users' experience, extend social media programs and use of web 2.0 tools, and broker a new relationship between curators, content and users. The budget over the five years is €25.5 million.

The plan follows on the heels of the report, *The New Renaissance*, by the boastfully named Comité des Sages, which criticised past sporadic, dispersed and piecemeal efforts. It reported that the cost of digitising European cultural heritage would cost in the vicinity of a €100 billion. It made a number of recommendations including increased public funding and public-private partnerships. Europeana website: [www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)

**Kristin R Eschenfelder** and **Michelle Caswell**, in "Digital Cultural Collections in an Age of Reuse and Remixes" (*First Monday*, v15, n11, 1 November 2010) explore the circumstances under which cultural institutions should seek to control non-commercial reuse of digital cultural works. They describe the results of a 2008 survey of US archives, libraries and museums which gathered data on

motivations to control access to and use of digital collections, factors discouraging control, and levels of concern associated with different types of unauthorised reuse. They argue that cultural institutions should develop a multiplicity of access and use regulations that acknowledge the varying sensitivity of collections and the varying level of risk associated with different types of reuses. They conclude by offering a set of examples of collections employing varying levels of reuse control. To read or download: [firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3060/2640](http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3060/2640)

### Museum roles

**Dr Jennifer Barrett**, the director of museum studies at the University of Sydney, in *Museums and the Public Sphere* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010), investigates the role of museums around the world as sites of democratic public space and poses a number of questions. What are the ways in which the museum is, or is not, public? How can the museum be understood as a critical sphere of public debate? How do museums facilitate, respond to, and intersect with wider public discourse? "Reworking the idea of the museum", she says, "is critical in a world in which exhibition spaces compete with a host of other public fora – community cultural centres, public halls and the internet."

### Not for profit sector

The Federal Minister for Social Inclusion, **Tanya Plibersek**, has announced members of the newly-formed Not for Profit Sector Reform Council and its terms of reference. The Council will support the Office for the Not-for-Profit Sector, which is implementing the Government's plans to streamline regulations, reduce red tape and improve transparency and accountability of the sector. The Council will provide advice on the scope, role, feasibility and structure of a national 'one-stop shop' sector regulator and streamlining related Commonwealth Government tendering and contracting process. It will

## Austin Sloper's digest

also provide advice on the Productivity Commission's report into the not-for-profit sector among other reviews and support the implementation of the National Compact: Working Together. See [www.dpmc.gov.au/nonprofit\\_reform\\_council.cfm](http://www.dpmc.gov.au/nonprofit_reform_council.cfm)

### Obituaries

The **National Centre of Biography** is developing Obituaries Australia, built on the biographical register, which has been maintained by the Centre since 1954. The website will be launched in March 2011 and will provide published obituaries of Australians, and those who have had a strong association with the country, since white settlement. The obituaries are being indexed using the same fields as those in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and will also include fields for cause of death and links to relevant digitised resources. The Centre will be inviting people to submit scanned copies of obituaries that are out of copyright, and to do some of the indexing. People will also be encouraged to send other material, including images showing the subjects at various stages of their lives, as well as unpublished autobiographies, memoirs and eulogies which the centre will digitise. It will also be linking obituaries to significant digitised biographical material such as war service records, ASIO files and oral history interviews held by libraries, archives and museums. Further information: [ncb.anu.edu.au/](http://ncb.anu.edu.au/)

### Personal social media strategy

**Soumitra Dutta** writes, in "What's Your Personal Multimedia Strategy?" (Harvard Business Review, Nov 2010), about finding the right presence in personal, private, public and professional spaces. After listing social media must-dos, his advice: "Make sure that your online profile does not contradict your activity in the 'real world' and that your messages are authentic."

### Science in regional museums

**Museums Australia (Western Australia)**, in "On the Road Touring

Our Wetlands" (*Musings*, Winter 2010), reported on a project aiming to demonstrate that regional museums are not just about social history museums and that there are many different stories to be told about our heritage. In the Year of Biodiversity, five regional museums in Western Australia collaborated with Curtin University Cultural Heritage Unit, the Department of the Environment and WA Museum, with funding from the Biodiversity 2010 Event program, to develop the touring exhibition *Wetlands: From Bunyip to Beautiful*. The exhibition highlights stories about the science, Aboriginal stories, market gardens and farms that were important to economic survival, myths and superstitions, individuals who have worked to save places, and the growing interest and acknowledgement of the citizen scientist. Further information [mawawetlands.wordpress.com/](http://mawawetlands.wordpress.com/)

### Statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview, 2010* (Cat 4172.0) provides a comparative update on the cultural sector. Statistics on museums are derived from the 2007-08 survey, which reported 1,184 museums were operating in 1,456 locations, including 768 social history museums, 165 art museums/galleries, 425 historic properties and sites, and 83 other museums. It also estimated that there were over 30 million admissions to museums and over 60.5 million online visits (over 176.5 web pages viewed). At the end of June 2008 more than 50 million artworks and museum objects were held. More details: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

### United Kingdom

The UK Government has announced that **Arts Council England** will take over some of the key policy and funding responsibilities for museums and libraries. The new role takes on some of the functions carried out by the recently axed **Museums, Libraries and Archives Council** (MLA). Arts Council England will receive an annual budget of £46m for the purpose. It is anticipated that

MLA's work of advising government on local and regional archives will be delegated to the **National Archives**. The announcement follows a budget cut in October, of 30% to Arts Council England. Its budget will drop from £449m drop to £349m by 2014. The Arts Council has been asked to make a 50% cut in its administrative costs. National museums will take a cut of 15% but will maintain free admissions.

### Visitors

**Roy Morgan** has produced a *Profile of Arts Gallery, Museum, Antique Exhibition Visitors July 2009-June 2010*, with data on demographics, attitudes, activities, and media habits. ([www.RoyMorganOnlineStore.com](http://www.RoyMorganOnlineStore.com)).

### Volunteers

Volunteering Tasmania has published *State of Volunteering Report: Tasmania 2010*, which explores why people volunteer (and why they don't), how they find their role, organisational recruitment challenges, leading and managing volunteers, recruitment and screening processes, reimbursement, recognition, training and other issues. Among challenges are overcoming stereotypical views about volunteers through more effective promotion. The report is available from [volunteeringtas.org.au](http://volunteeringtas.org.au).

### Wikipedia

The **British Museum** has begun a collaboration with Wikipedia to help ensure that the museum's expertise and notable artefacts are reflected in Wikipedia pages. About 40 Wikipedia contributors in the London area were invited to visit the museum, talk to curators and photograph items from the collection. Museum curators were invited to review Wikipedia's treatment of the museum's collection and point out gaps and other shortcomings. Source: "Venerable British Museum Enlists in the Wikipedia Revolution" (*NY Times*, 4 June 2010).

## New Directions Symposium

You are invited to the symposium

**Place, Space & Identity:  
New Directions for NSW Museums**  
Macquarie University  
18-20 April 2010

The symposium will explore new directions and opportunities for museums and galleries in NSW. It coincides with the NSW Government's review of the visual arts and museum sectors by Arts NSW in 2011.

For more details and to register

<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/mansw>

## AGM & elections

Lend your voice to the future of museums.

The NSW Branch gives notice of its AGM at Macquarie University on 18 April 2010 at 4pm

**Nominations are also invited for the positions of  
President, Vice-President,  
Secretary, Treasurer and  
6 other committee positions.**

Deadline for nominations 11 March 2011.

For more details visit  
<http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/mansw>

## Museums Australia Inc (NSW)

**Executive Officer:** Paul Bentley. **NSW Committee:** Andrew Simpson (President), Rebecca Pinchin (Vice President), Ally Halliwell (Treasurer), Susan Sedgwick (Secretary), Bronwyn Alcorn, Geoff Barker, Suzanne Bravery, Marea Buist, Maree Clutterbuck, Gay Hendriksen

**NSW Chapter Representatives:** Far North Coast (Marea Buist), Mid North Coast (Liz Gillroy), New England North West (Robyn Rogers), Hunter (Julie Baird), Sydney (Gay Hendriksen), Central Tablelands (Samantha Friend), Golden West (Barbara Moritz), Southern Highlands & Illawarra (Tamara Hynd), Lachlan (Glen Johns), Murray Riverina (Libby Newell)

© Museums Australia Inc NSW. **Editor for this issue:** Paul Bentley. **Contributions** are welcome and should be sent to the Executive Officer, [mansw@museumsaustralia.org.au](mailto:mansw@museumsaustralia.org.au) or at the address below. *Museum Matters* is free to all NSW members of Museums Australia.

**Museums Australia Inc (NSW)**  
**PO Box 2421**  
**Bondi Junction NSW 1355**  
**Phone: 02 9387 7307**  
**Email: [mansw@museumsaustralia.org.au](mailto:mansw@museumsaustralia.org.au)**  
**[www.museumsaustralia.org.au/mansw](http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/mansw)**

## Museum Matters

If undelivered return to  
Museums Australia Inc (NSW)  
PO Box 2421  
BONDI JUNCTION NSW 1355

**PRINT  
POST**

PP255003/05253

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**