

November 2007

Canberra Series lecture: *Scattered Children of St Patrick - the Irish in Australia*

Convicts and bushrangers, ballads and floggings - that's the traditional image people in Ireland still associate with the Irish in Australia. But the real influence of Irish immigrants and their immediate offspring here is deeper, more pervasive and long-lasting than is conveyed by stories, however colourful, of outlaws and supposed victims of British injustice. From the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the Irish of all creeds and conditions have been a part of the unfolding pattern of Australian society and culture. This presentation, by Dr Richard Reid, will try to bring them to life using material from the collections of the National Library.

Dr Reid, an Irish born and educated Australian, is currently attached to the National Museum of Australia where he is working on a book on fifty Irish-Australian localities throughout Australia and a proposed exhibition with the theme of the Irish in Australia since 1788. He worked for ten years, until November this year, as Senior Historian for the Department of Veterans' Affairs in the Commemorations Division.

Every year Richard conducts tours to Gallipoli and to Australian sites along the old Western Front in France and Belgium. In 1993, he was the Australian War Memorial's Project Officer for the return of the Unknown Australian Soldier from France to the Hall of Memory at the Memorial. Richard's post-graduate work was about Irish assisted emigration to Sydney in the period 1848 to 1870 and as a Fellow of the Society of Australian Genealogists he has conducted a number of historical tours to Ireland.

This lecture will be held on Thursday 29 November, 12:30-1:30pm, in the 4th floor Conference Room. There is a \$5 entry fee, payable at the door, and bookings can be made on (02) 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au

Friends AGM & Christmas Party

The Friends Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 10 December, from 5.30pm in the LG1 Theatre. The Friends Christmas Party will follow from 6pm in the Foyer. The 2007 Friends Medal will be awarded during the party. Make sure you do not miss this opportunity to enjoy the festive season with other Friends and library staff. Refreshments will be served from Bookplate and Michael Azzopardi will entertain the gathering on piano.

The NLA Bookshop will be open during the party too, offering Friends a 20% discount on all purchases - a timely opportunity to do some Christmas shopping.

The Friends Committee has decided that, while the Friends will continue to subsidise the cost of the Christmas Party, there will be a small charge of \$10 for attendance.

This will help ensure that members continue to enjoy the benefits of membership, while enabling the Friends to maximise its contribution to the Library.

If you would like to attend the AGM and Christmas Party please complete the enclosed booking form and return it with payment to the Friends Office by Monday 3 December.

Margaret Fulton: A Celebration

Each year the Friends of the National Library celebrate the life and career of a distinguished Australian who has made a significant contribution to the book world. This year we are delighted that the subject of this year's celebration will be Margaret Fulton OAM, the much-loved doyenne of Australia's cookery writers. And, judging by the large number of bookings we have received for this event, it seems that Ms Fulton was a popular choice with our members too. The Celebration will be held on Sunday 18 November at 2pm in the theatre, followed by a book signing and afternoon tea in the foyer. Although the event itself is booked out and has been so for several months, Friends are welcome to add their names to the cancellation list by calling the Friends Office on (02) 6262 1698 or emailing friends@nla.gov.au.

For those of you who aren't able to attend the Celebration event, a complimentary copy of the National Library's publication *Margaret Fulton: A Celebration* is enclosed with this month's newsletter. And if you decide that one copy just isn't enough, or that this book would make a great Christmas present for a loved one, additional copies are available for purchase from the Library's bookshop.

Search the World's Libraries in One Step

The May 2007 edition of this newsletter featured *Libraries Australia*, a website that enables searching of the catalogues of Australia's major libraries in one operation.

Wouldn't it be marvellous if you could search for that elusive book in the collections of many of the world's libraries with similar ease? Well now you can! The website is known, perhaps not surprisingly, as "WorldCat" (www.worldcat.org) and features more than one billion individual items from over 10,000 libraries in 110 countries.



Just one example will illustrate how useful WorldCat can be. I became aware recently of the existence of a biography published in 1856 about my ancestor Henry Cooper, a civil libertarian barrister who appeared in several famous freedom of the press cases in Regency England.

Unfortunately I could not locate a copy of the book, "A Memoir of the Life of the late Henry Cooper", by Henry's brother William, anywhere in Australia through *Libraries Australia*. So I broadened my search with the aid of WorldCat and, hey presto, found copies in four university libraries, all in the United States.

Not having the resources to rush off to the US to examine this book, so essential to my research on the life of my ancestor, I approached the National Library's excellent



document supply service: www.nla.gov.au/dss/ The Library will, for a reasonable fee, seek to borrow for the reader from an overseas library a copy of a work not held in Australia.

This process was quick and painless and, by the time you read this article, the Yale University Law Library copy of Henry's memoir will hopefully be on its way from Connecticut to the National Library for my perusal.

There are obviously a number of libraries that have yet to join WorldCat. I know, for example, that copies of the book can be found in several major libraries in the United Kingdom, for example.

In May 2007 the National Library announced that Australian libraries would participate in Worldcat, following the signing of an agreement between the Library and the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC) that manages Worldcat. OCLC was founded in 1967 and is a non-profit library membership and research organisation.

Under the Agreement, all Australian libraries who subscribe to *Libraries Australia* have had, from 1 July 2007, unlimited cataloguing and search access to WorldCat. Bibliographic records between the two services will be exchanged on a regular basis, which means that holdings in Australian library collections will become available internationally through WorldCat.

Does the Book have a Future?

For years now we have heard that the printed book, as we know it, is in its death throes, and that all our information needs will be met through the wonders of electronics, without the need for putting type to paper. Is the printed volume to go the way of black and white television and the typewriter?

The answer is an emphatic 'no'! The book will be with us for a long time yet, for the simple reason that nothing man could ever invent could perform the same task nearly so well. The real question is not whether books will survive but, as the *Economist* magazine puts it, "what becomes a book in the first place".

Even before the digital revolution, much information was being consigned to non-paper format, such as microfiche and microfilm. Quite properly, the digital age has seen a further massive increase in the range of information no longer necessary to be provided in book form. Given our increasing concern with conserving the world's precious resources, including our forests, this is no bad thing.

Professor Geoffrey Nunberg, who chaired a 1994 Conference on "The Future of the Book", has expressed the view that most printed books will disappear "but only the uninteresting ones".

According to Nunberg, "most bound books are parts catalogues, telephone directories, and things of the like", which he said "have no real cultural content, whose occurrence in this form is a mere contingency, whose replacement by digitised media should be of concern to nobody".



There are so many self-evident reasons why books are unsuitable as information stores: many works are out of date as soon as the author completes the manuscript, their search capacity is far inferior to information in digital format, and they are not nearly so portable. The gradual demise of the multi-volume general encyclopaedia reflects all of these considerations.



Writing in the *New York Times* last year, Kevin Kelly presented a truly inspirational view of what is possible in a world when books are born electronically and are available in digital form following mass scanning (see 'The World at Your Fingertips' in the October 2007 edition of this Newsletter).

“So what happens when all the books in the world become a single liquid fabric of interconnected words and ideas? Four things: First, works on the margins of popularity will find a small audience larger than the near-zero audience they usually have now...digital interlinking will lift the readership of almost any title, no matter how esoteric. Second, the universal library will deepen our grasp of history, as every original document in the course of civilization is scanned and cross-linked. Third, the universal library of all books will cultivate a new sense of authority. If you can truly incorporate all texts – past and present, multilingual – on a particular subject, then you can have a clearer sense of what we as a civilization, a species, do know and don't know.”

This is heady stuff. But Kelly is quick to add that this will not hasten the end of the book. “Libraries (as well as many individuals) aren't eager to relinquish ink-on-paper editions, because the printed book is by far the most durable and reliable backup technology we have. Printed books require no mediating device to read and thus are immune to technological obsolescence. Paper is also extremely stable, compared with, say, hard drives or even CD's. In this way, the stability and fixity of a bound book is a blessing. It sits there unchanging, true to its original creation. But it sits alone.”

Much attention has been paid recently to electronic book (eBook) readers, featuring a portable readable screen and 'electronic paper' to which eBooks can be downloaded from the Internet or in books stores. If it works for music (consider the ubiquitous I-Pod), why not also for the book, so the theory goes.

However, eBook readers have not yet taken off in the ways predicted although, it must be said, the technology is getting better all the time. As commentator Simon Jones puts it, “however advanced the eBook becomes it will never offer the freedom of simply being able to grab one off the shelf and flick through it in an instant, without the worry of batteries running low or spilling your coffee over it.”

And this is the point. For people who just want to read, the book has no equal. The *Economist* put it this way: “Most stories...will never find a better medium than the paper-bound novel. That is because readers immersed in a storyline want above all not to be interrupted, and all online media teem with distractions (even a hyperlink is an interruption). People do not read fiction in order to accomplish a specific task in a limited amount of time, as they read reference and schoolbooks. Random-access dictionaries and cookbooks may be useful; random-access novels less so.....People want media suitable for unhurried reading in beds and bathtubs and on beaches.”

Melbourne academic Bill Cope, writing in 2001, asserted that, despite predictions of its imminent demise, “the book is now everywhere”. He pointed to the fact that despite the ready availability of information in electronic form, sales of the printed book are at record levels.



This is certainly true but it does seem that the rate of growth in previous years has certainly slowed. In 2003-04 an estimated 129 million books were sold in Australia in 1995/96, compared with 131 million in 2003/0. Cope also pointed out that many texts that could not have been viably published as a book, now can be due to the availability of digital printing technologies.

Finally, Cope points to the omnipresence of the book in the new electronic formats in the sense that the new media incorporates key features of the book, such as having ‘pages’ of text, headings and systems for indexing, cross-referencing. “The technology may differ, but these basic structures and functions are derived from the book, and were developed within the technology of the book over a five hundred year period.”

This final point is less persuasive in support of the proposition that the printed word is here to stay. Cope acknowledges that his definition of a book is somewhat broader than we are used to: “A book is no longer a physical thing. A book is what a book does”, which he summarises as “textual form of communicating”.

For me, however, the book is a very special thing that can never be replicated by other technology, no matter how whiz-bang. Like many of you, the mere ownership of a book, read or (I am almost ashamed to say) unread, can be an end in itself.

We take delight in the mere presence of books in our lives in ways impossible with digital media. One example, what would be a home without books? According to the authors of a delightful book on home libraries, cited below, “book-centred rooms are described as nurturing, a comfort zone, an escape hatch, a place to retreat to for tea and talk, thinking and reading, recapturing memories, regenerating spirit and ideas.” They quote author Robertson Davies who refers to the many amongst us who collect for pleasure. The book collector “loves books not only for what they have to say to him - though that is his principal reason - but for their look, their feel, yes, even their smell.”

So it seems that while the book is no longer the sole source provider of information and ideas it was once, its characteristic simplicity, accessibility, durability and sheer attractiveness to human beings, mean that it will be around for a long time to come.

Further reading: Much has been published on the book and its future but the following are some readily accessible sources held by the National Library that were used in the compilation of this article.

- *A Splendour of Letters, by Nicholas A Basbanes, New York, 2003*
- *“Scan This Book”, by Kevin Kelly, New York Times, 14 May 1986*
- *Print and electronic text convergence, edited by Bill Cope and Diana Kalantzis, Melbourne, 2001*
- *At Home with Books (1995), edited by Estelle Ellis etc, New York, 1995.*

Gary Kent

Friends Book Club

The Friends Book Club is held on the last Tuesday of each month, from 7-8.30pm in the Friends Lounge at the National Library. The November meeting will be held on Tuesday 27 November and the book for discussion will be *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon.

If you would like to participate in the November Friends Book Club, please RSVP to Sharyn in the Friends Office on (02) 6262 1551 or sobrien@nla.gov.au

NLA Book Club - Advance Notice:

December - no meeting

29 January - *The Broken Shore* by Peter Temple



SPECIAL OFFERS

2-for 1 pass to 'September'

Courtesy of Hopscotch Films, this month all Friends of the National Library will receive a 2-for-1 pass to the new Australian movie 'September'. These passes are valid at selected cinemas around the country, from 29 November to 20 December.

About the movie: Set in Western Australia, 1968, Ed, the son of a white landowner, and Paddy, the Aboriginal boy whose family works on their farm, have been best friends since both being born on the same day. Their fathers Rick and Michael managed to cross social, racial and class boundaries, and were also firm friends throughout their lives. Paddy and Ed dream of becoming professional boxers - and together they build an amateur boxing ring where they spar every day, within the wheat fields of Ed's family farm. However the winds of social change are blowing - both for Paddy and Ed, who are on the cusp of becoming men, and in society - where Indigenous rights are beginning to be asserted - with both positive and negative effects for the local communities. Paddy and Ed struggle to keep their easy friendship from disintegrating, especially upon the arrival of the new girl in town, Amelia...

A gentle coming-of-age story in the vein of 'The Year My Voice Broke' and 'Looking for Alibrandi', 'September' is life-affirming, humorous and full of heart.

Bretano String Quartet - Musica Viva

Since its inception in 1992, the Bretano String Quartet has gathered a string of international awards and now claims a place in the top echelons of international chamber music. Its success is founded on the principles of thorough scholarship, engagement with the full spectrum of Western music, flawless technique and performance dynamism. The dazzling effect of this balance is clear in the group's concerts, ranging from the Renaissance through to the world premiere of Ross Edwards' new string quartet, passing Haydn, Beethoven and Bartok along its daring dash through history.

This concert will be performed at the Canberra Theatre on Thursday 29 November at 7pm. Friends of the National Library are entitled to a 10% discount on single tickets. For bookings and further information visit www.musicaviva.com.au or call 1800 688 482.

Voyage à Paris - Art Song Canberra

Art Song Canberra presents Voyage à Paris with Karen Cummings (soprano), Didier Frédéric (baritone), and Alan Hicks (piano). Sunday 18th November at 3pm at the Wesley Music Centre, National Circuit, Forrest

Delightful 20th-century French song from Debussy to Brel, Ravel to Brassens, Poulenc to Weill. The program will include Ravel's Don Quichotte à Dulcinée and Debussy's Chansons de Bilitis.

Friends of the National Library of Australia are entitled to admission at the discounted price of \$22. This includes program and refreshments. Tickets at the door ONLY. Enquiries: Oliver Raymond, 02 6295 9613.



Coming Events

The full programme of events can be consulted in the 'What's On' section of the National Library's website at <http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/events/>

Friends Events

<p>Margaret Fulton: A Celebration Sunday, 18 November 2:00-4:00pm Theatre, foyer</p>	<p>Celebrate the life and work of Australia's best-loved cookery writer. Afternoon tea provided.</p> <p>THIS EVENT IS BOOKED OUT</p>
<p>Friends Book Club Tuesday, 27 November 7:00-8:30 pm Friends Lounge</p>	<p>The book for discussion at this month's meeting will be <i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time</i> by Mark Haddon Bookings required on (02) 6262 1551 or friends@nla.gov.au</p>
<p>Canberra Series Lecture: Scattered Children of St Patrick - the Irish in Australia Thursday 29 November 12:30-1:30pm Conference Room, 4th floor</p>	<p>Historian Dr Richard Reid will speak about the real influence of the Irish in Australia - it's not all just convicts and bushrangers, ballads and floggings.</p> <p>Entry fee: \$5 (payable at the door) Bookings recommended: (02) 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au</p>

NLA talks and events

<p>Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genius Thursday, 8 November 6:00pm Ferguson Room</p>	<p>Ross McMullin discusses his latest book on Will Dyson, acclaimed cartoonist and war artist. Book signing follows. Free event. Bookings: (02) 6262 1271</p>
<p>A Conversation with Miriam Margolyes Thursday, 22 November 12:30pm Theatre</p>	<p>Join Miriam for an intimate conversation with the Library's Curator of Dance, Lee Christofis, as she reflects on a fascinating life. Free event. Bookings essential: (02) 6262 1271</p>
<p>Folk Fellowship Concert Thursday, 29 November 6:00pm Theatre</p>	<p>Drawing on recordings from our Oral History and Folklore Collection, 2007 Folk Fellow Ian Blake performs a suite based on the sounds of children. Free event. Bookings not required.</p>
<p>Harold White Presentation - Dr Julie Stephens Thursday, 6 December 5:30pm Conference Room</p>	<p>Dr Julie Stephens will examine retrospective accounts of the women's movement in Australia and raise questions about how feminist cultural memory has been officially constituted. Free event. Bookings not required.</p>
<p>Christmas Carols in the Foyer Friday 7 December 12.30pm Foyer</p>	<p>The chamber choir <i>Igitur Nos</i> will present a program of choral favourites and special Australian music for Christmas from the National Library's collection. Free event. Bookings not required.</p>



NLA exhibitions

<p><i>Cage of Ghosts</i> Opens Thursday 17 September Exhibition Gallery</p>	<p>Jon Rhodes is one of Australia's most important documentary photographers. The exhibition, <i>Cage of Ghosts</i>, is the result of his long-term project, photographing the surviving physical evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the south east of Australia where settlement has been longest and had the greatest effect.</p>
<p>The System of Nature: Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) Opens Friday 19 October Visitor Centre</p>	<p>Carl Linnaeus is often referred to as 'the father of taxonomy', that particular branch of science concerned with the systematic classification of living organisms. He was arguably the most influential natural scientist of the 18th century and two of his 'disciples' were prominent in the early documentation of the flora and fauna of Australia - Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander who were on board the <i>Endeavour</i> with James Cook when it arrived in Botany Bay in 1770. This display will reveal a selection of the little-known treasures in the Library's collections.</p>
<p><i>Up, Up and Away</i> until Saturday 19 July 2008 4th floor</p>	<p>The latest colourful additions to the National Library's aviation collection. Taken by staff photographers, these images show many facets of airports in regional Australia.</p>