

October 2007

Canberra Series lecture: Women with a Mission

Women with a Mission is the next of our Canberra Series lectures, and will be held on Wednesday 24 October. Ruth Pearce and Denise Fisher will speak about their experiences in running diplomatic missions overseas, bringing with them a wealth of experience. Denise Fisher was High Commissioner to Zimbabwe and Consul-General to Noumea, while Ruth Pearce was High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands and Ambassador to both Russia and the Philippines. Hear them share their stories of life as a woman on these postings and how their careers have shaped them personally.

This lecture will be held on Wednesday 24 October, 12:30-1:30pm, in the 4th floor Conference Room. There is a \$5 entry fee, payable at the door, and bookings are required on (02) 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au

Further Australian support for the National Library of Cambodia

The June edition of the Friends Newsletter featured an article on the National Library of Cambodia (NLC), which miraculously survived the devastation of the terrible Khmer Rouge regime.

Australia has over many years played a pivotal role in the rebuilding of its Cambodian counterpart. Most recently, this was given tangible form through the donation of eight personal computers to the NLC by the ANZ Royal Bank, a gift in which the National Library of Australia (NLA) played a facilitating role. The Australian Ambassador to Cambodia spoke at the handover ceremony on 27 July 2007.



The main reading room of the National Library of Cambodia

The Chief Executive of the Bank, Mr Dean Cleland, announced that this gift marked the beginning of a long-term program of support from the Bank to the Library. At the same ceremony, the NLA handed over the latest instalment of its donation of books to the NLC. These included a number of reference books, including a new set of World Book Encyclopaedia and other much-needed publications.

In other related initiatives, NLA staff are also attempting to arrange the supply of preservation materials to the NLC, including boxes for newspapers and conservation tools. Another staff member is currently working at the NLC as an Australian Youth Ambassador, assisting with information technology issues and helping out in various other ways.

The Director of the NLC, Madam Vibolla, spoke warmly of the NLA's support for the NLC and that of several individual Australian librarians. She said that Australian support had been critical to the Library's restoration and functioning following the Pol Pot and subsequent Vietnamese administrations.

[Thank you to Sandra Henderson from the Library's Executive Support Branch for her assistance in the preparation of this article]

The World at Your Fingertips

The information technology revolution has given us the ability to search the world's accumulated knowledge, as encapsulated in the printed word, in ways we would never had dreamt possible only a few years ago. Now, with one search operation, it is possible to search tens of thousands of books at one time for that elusive reference.

I am a keen genealogist and have made some amazing discoveries through the Internet and the NLA's digital databases. This success can of course be replicated in all other disciplines.

An early entrant in the field of mass scanning is Google Book Search (www.google.com/books), through which at least one million books have been scanned.

I entered in the search engine the name of my great great great grandfather, Richard Rishworth. Within seconds I discovered a book that revealed that my obscure artist ancestor had written two letters to Sir Walter Scott in 1829 and 1831 respectively. I obtained copies of the letters from the National Library of Scotland, one of which included a detailed prospectus for a book of Scottish views that appears never to have been published.

Another example, I keyed in the name of another ancestor, Mrs David Vines (it pays to be creative in developing your search terms) and discovered her obituary in the *Baptist Magazine* for 1824. And I have scores of other success stories like this in relation to just my own forebears.

Many of the books and journals cited are available in full on the Google Books site, which means you can read or download the entire content of the works thus sourced.



For copyright reasons, however, only a brief extract of some of the references cited is made available on-screen. In a small number of instances I purchased the publications; in many cases, however, I was able to locate the desired volumes in the marvellous collection of the National Library.

For example, I discovered through Google Books that the *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* of 1853 contained a portrait of my ancestor the Rev William Burns Landells. With great delight I found the relevant copy of this journal in the Library's periodical collection.

The widespread scanning of books for public consumption on-line is not without its detractors. Some argue that the rights of publishers and authors have been compromised and that these digital enterprises detract from the central role of libraries as society's store of knowledge. Those in favour of mass digital scanning point to the increased sales of books that hitherto may not have come easily to the notice of readers and researchers and the increased remote access to books in the world's libraries on a scale never previously imagined.



Google Books will soon have a rival, known as the Open Content Alliance, which “represents the collaborative efforts of a group of cultural, technology, non-profit, and governmental organizations from around the world that will help build a permanent archive of multilingual digitized text and multimedia content.” Members of the Alliance include institutions such as the United Kingdom National Archives, a number of leading universities in the United States, Canada and the UK, and Yahoo and MSN.

There are many other large collections of scanned books and journals now available, far too numerous to mention here. Future editions of this newsletter will feature other resources that its readers might find useful. Collectively, these sites will make available to a wider audience than ever thought possible the collections of the great repositories of the printed word.

I, for one, am eagerly awaiting the launch next year of the National Library's project to digitise many leading Australian newspapers (see the April 2007 edition of this newsletter) that will surely prove a great boon to researchers, including mad keen family historians like me!

Gary Kent

The Characters and Politics of *The Kite Runner*

There are still several seats available at our special book club event on *The Kite Runner*. Dr Kim Huynh, lecturer in political science and international relations at the Australian National University, will lead the discussion on the book, speaking about the politics and characters of the *The Kite Runner* before participants break into small groups to discuss issues further over a glass of wine.

In the refugee politics course that he teaches at the Australian National University, Kim Huynh uses *The Kite Runner* to foster an understanding of twentieth century persecution and displacement. In this lecture he will expand upon these themes with particular emphasis on Amir's relationship with Hassan, his flight from Afghanistan and resettlement in the US with Baba. Kim will also reflect upon the quality of Khaled Hosseini's writing, the intricacies of his plot and the vividness of his characters.

The Kite Runner event will be held on Tuesday 30 October, 6-7.30pm in the Friends Lounge. An entry fee of \$10 Friends, \$15 non-members applies, which includes light refreshments. As seating is limited, please book through the Friends' office on (02) 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au.

Friends Spring Day Tour

The Friends Office was inundated with bookings after this day tour was announced in the September Friends Newsletter, and all 114 seats on the tour were completely booked out after only a week. A waiting list has been started in case of any cancellations, but this is growing steadily. The Friends committee will be organising another two day trips in 2008, one in autumn and one in spring, so watch the newsletter next year for details of these events.

Call for Nominations for the Friends Committee

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the National Library will be held at 5:30pm on Monday 10 December in the Theatre, and will be followed by the Friends Christmas Party in the foyer. Please note this date in your diaries.

All Committee positions will be declared vacant and a new Committee for 2008 will be elected at the AGM. Have you considered standing for election? Being a Committee member is a positive way of contributing your time and expertise to the Friends organisation and in this way you support the Library.

Nominations must be received by 5pm, Wednesday 20 October 2007. If you would like to know more about what being on the Friends Committee entails or would like a nomination form sent to you, please contact Sharyn O'Brien, Friends Executive Officer, on 02 6262 1551.



SPECIAL OFFERS

The Choir of Westminster Abbey - Musica Viva

Musica Viva makes history in 2007 by bringing The Choir of Westminster Abbey to Australia for the very first time. International tours by the Choir are rare due to its daily liturgical responsibilities and its central role in the ceremonial life of Britain. The Choir's program will include works by composers including Henry Purcell, George Frederic Handel, Hubert Parry, Edward Elgar, William Walton, John Tavener and Ross Edwards.

This concert will be performed at Llewellyn Hall on Thursday 25 October 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.

Coming Events

October 2007

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

<i>Canberra Series Lecture: Women with a Mission</i> Wednesday 24 October 12:30-1:30pm Conference Room, 4 th floor	Ruth Pearce and Denise Fisher will speak about their experiences running diplomatic missions overseas. Entry fee: \$5 (payable at the door) Bookings recommended: (02) 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au
<i>The Characters and Politics of The Kite Runner</i> Tuesday 30 October 6pm, Friends Lounge	Dr Kim Huynh, lecturer in political science and international relations at the Australian National University, will lead the discussion on the book, speaking about the politics and characters of the <i>The Kite Runner</i> before participants break into small groups to discuss issues further over a glass of wine. \$10 Friends of the NLA, \$15 non-members Bookings essential: (02) 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au

NLA talks and events

<i>Tracking Down Australia's Rarer and More Mysterious Parrots</i> Wednesday 10 October 12.30pm Ferguson Room	Dr Leo Joseph, Australian National Wildlife Collection, discusses survival issues of rare parrot species and the research required to assist them. Free entry. Bookings not required.
<i>History as Storytelling</i> Thursday 11 October 6pm Conference Room	Author Peter Cochrane looks at the 'dramatic narrative form' in portraying our history and discusses his latest book <i>Colonial Ambition</i> . Free event. Bookings: (02) 6262 1271
<i>Musical Chair Project</i> Friday 12 October 2-3.30pm	A high-energy workshop for young people creating music about chairs! No musical experience necessary. Entry fee: \$5



Theatre	Bookings: (02) 6262 1271
Camera Obscura Workshop Saturday 13 October, 10.30am - 4.30pm Brindabella Room	David Hodges demonstrates drawing techniques using this optical device. First invented more than one thousand years ago, Camera Obscuras were traditionally used in drawing, and were one of the developments leading to the invention of photograph. Learn to how make one of these do-it yourself inventions to use in your own tracing and recording of the real world. Cost: \$190 per person, \$170 Friends of the NLA Bookings: (02) 6257 8355
Film: Spider and Rose Thursday 25 October 6pm Theatre	Stars Ruth Cracknell. M rated. Running time: 93 minutes. Entry by gold coin donation. Bookings not required.
Australian Poetry Slam 2007 Friday 26 October 7pm, theatre	Poets, hip-hop artists and other wordsmiths engage in the ACT heat of competitive performance poetry. Free event. Enquiries: (02) 6262 1271
Horror Film Night Thursday 1 November 6pm Theatre	A double screening of horror films. 6pm - <i>Island of Lost Souls (1932, b&w)</i> - based on an HG Wells novel. 7.20pm - <i>The Black Cat (1934, b&w)</i> -inspired by an Edgar Allan Poe story. Bookings not required. Entry by gold coin donation.
Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genius Thursday 8 November 6pm Ferguson Room	Ross McMullin discusses his latest book on Will Dyson, acclaimed cartoonist and war artist. Book signing follows. Free entry. Bookings: (02) 6262 1271

NLA exhibitions

Cage of Ghosts Opens Thursday 17 September Exhibition Gallery	Jon Rhodes is one of Australia's most important documentary photographers. The exhibition, Cage of Ghosts, 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.
The System of Nature: Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) Opens Friday 19 October Visitor Centre	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.
Up, Up and Away until Saturday 19 July 2008 4th floor	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.