



# Fundraising at the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

Greg Power (b.1974)  
*National Treasures from  
Australia's Great Libraries*  
Exhibition Gallery, National  
Library of Australia, 2006

Doreen Mellor explains the increasing explicit promotion of philanthropy to help fund the Library's goals

**A**s part of a bushwalk during a recent weekend creative workshop, I dived into a clear pool ringed by mossy rocks with light filtered through the green of a temperate rainforest. It was icy cold; so cold that I could barely gasp, and I hopped straight out again—my companions called it a teabag dip. Would incremental immersion have been a better choice? Not half so bracing, so I'm going to employ the same principle here, diving straight into the exhilarating world of fundraising, and the new vistas it has opened up for the National Library of Australia.

The Library has long had a supportive community of readers, scholars, volunteers

and Friends, and it has always benefited from the generosity of its supporters through donations and bequests of money and collection material. Recently, however, there has been increasingly explicit promotion of the benefits of such philanthropy for this national institution.

In 2003, the Library established a Development Office to focus on private and corporate benefaction. This is because of the increased cost of operating in a burgeoning digital world; the increasing requirement for national institutions to reach out to their geographically dispersed public; and the congenial but challenging responsibility for increased communication with the public through a variety of access programs.

For example, researchers no longer have to visit Canberra to access material as more and more resources are immediately discoverable and many are available online, through such innovative services as

Libraries Australia and Pictures Australia, both managed by the National Library of Australia. Soon there will be fully searchable digitised newspapers from each state, the program again managed by the National Library, in collaboration with state and territory libraries. The Library's brief to make its remarkable collections accessible to the nation is met in a number of ways—all requiring more funds than the operational activities and programs of the past. Like health, education, transport or any public service, delivery is now far more diverse and complex, and technology plays a major role. This means increased demand for new and better online access to information. The Library's ambitions in this area always outstrip what government can fund.

The Development Office has been assisted since mid-2005 by the Development Council which, like the Library itself, is finding new ways to bring an enhanced awareness to the community of the Library's diversity and breadth of operational and collection activity.

The first priority for both the Development Office and the Development Council has been to attract funding for a Treasures Gallery—an inspiring quest. The notion of the Library as a treasure trove—of memory, of precious fragments of the world's history, of family memento, of our nation's story, or of the creative arts of literature, painting and photography—has been explored over the past seven years and the connection with other libraries of the world and the nation considered and communicated. Two high impact exhibitions—*Treasures of the World's Great Libraries* and *National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries*—were instrumental in ensuring that over half a million people were moved and captivated by library treasures. The Library continues its work in unveiling collection treasures by planning a permanent Treasures Gallery where rare and precious items from the Library's collections can be displayed, revealing great Australian stories and highlighting significant moments in history.

There has been extraordinarily generous corporate and philanthropic support for these treasure-related initiatives, through AAMI's Principal Sponsorship of *National Treasures* and the Major Sponsorship of this exhibition by Qantas, *The Australian*, Hoyts, Sofitel, SBS and ABC Local Radio. ActewAGL



and the Macquarie Bank Foundation are Gold Treasured Partner contributors to the Treasures Gallery. Gold Treasured Partners also include the Thyne Reid Foundation and the Bettison Et James Family Trust as well as generous private individuals. Our Principal Treasured Partner for the Treasures Gallery is The Ian Potter Foundation with the John T. Reid Charitable Trusts our first Platinum Treasured Partner. Hundreds of individuals have also donated to the Treasures Gallery Appeal, after seeing the Library's exhibitions and putting their money into the donations box outside the gallery. Just half a million more dollar coins and our target will have been reached!

above top:  
Loui Seselja (b.1948)  
The signing of the AAMI Principal Sponsorship agreement for *National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries*, 2004

above:  
Loui Seselja (b.1948)  
Doreen Mellor (National Library of Australia) chatting with guests from Major Sponsor, Qantas, at a function for *National Treasures from Australia's Great Libraries*, 2007



Greg Power (b.1974)  
Sirens of Song performing  
at the Pearls and Cocktails  
fundraiser evening, 2004

Concurrent with planning the Treasures Gallery are preparations for upgrading the present Exhibitions Gallery and the staged redevelopment of the whole ground floor of the Library, making new public spaces and, importantly, extending the Main Reading Room.

Buildings and treasures, however, are not the only focus for support of the Library through fundraising and sponsorship. The Library has generous friends such as Gold Treasured Partner Henry Ergas who contributes to public access programs at the Library; and Pat McCann, who has funded the Norman McCann Summer Scholarships in memory of her late husband, a former



National Library of Australia Council member. These summer scholarships allow emerging scholars to spend two months with the Library's collections, researching areas of academic interest.

Alison Sanchez, daughter of Kenneth Binns, the inaugural National Librarian, has funded the Kenneth Binns Travelling Fellowship and the Kenneth Binns Lecture. John and Heather Seymour's interest in biography has led them to fund an annual Seymour Summer Scholarship, and the Friends of the National Library fund a travelling fellowship each year. These activities help to bring the collections to life, revealing and communicating the surprises to be found in the papers, maps, books and artworks stored on kilometres of shelving and safeguarded by Library custodians.

Layers of our history will be unwrapped when the first phase of the Australian Newspaper Digitisation Program is completed in 2010. For the first time, important newspapers from each state, from inception to the in-copyright year of 1954 will be online and available free of charge with fully searchable text. The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation has made it possible with a \$1 million contribution to digitise the *Sydney Morning Herald* from its first edition in 1831.

Other helpful gestures have been made recently by generous benefactors who have bequeathed parts of their estate to the Library. Over \$1 million came to the





Library from the estate of New Yorker Eva Kollsman, in memory of her great friend, Australian expatriate writer Ray Mathew. The exploration and research of the oeuvre of Hans Heysen has been facilitated by his artist daughter Nora Heysen's substantial bequest, and Western Australian Leah Cohen's bequest has been put to use in furthering the interests of Australian writing.

Meanwhile, the Library's Support a Book program is up and running, making it possible for many more people to establish longstanding and direct associations with the Library and its collections. People can support a book or other collection items of their own choice, gift this choice to others, or create an 'in memoriam' association. Collectors of rare books and other heritage material have recently found an opportunity to connect with the Library by providing financial support through the Heritage Collectors Circle.

I think I must return to the concept of treasure, to conclude. We treasure the generosity of benefactors. We treasure the interest of visitors to the Library. The research which results from accessing and working with the collection is a continuing inspiration. The demanding and creative work of staff who conserve, acquire, catalogue and interface with the public through reference services, education programs, exhibitions, events and marketing, underpins the ultimate Library treasure—the collection itself.

We will continue to focus on treasure during the next couple of years, as plans for the Treasures Gallery become firmer, and designers, planners and builders are selected. Readers will find a Treasure of the Month featured in each *National Library of Australia News* until the Treasures Gallery opens and will also see references to its progress in many other Library publications and programs. We hope you will join us in the inspiring task of bringing the Library's treasures to life, either through contributing financially to some of our programs, by donating cultural material, or by participating in events, accessing our website or visiting our exhibitions now and in the Treasures Gallery to come. We look forward to seeing you at the National Library of Australia during the exciting months and years ahead.

DOREEN MELLOR is Director of Development at the National Library

To find out how to support the Library's programs through donation, bequest or sponsorship, contact the Development Office on 02 6262 1141 or at [development@nla.gov.au](mailto:development@nla.gov.au). Alternatively, visit our website at [www.nla.gov.au/supportus/](http://www.nla.gov.au/supportus/)

above from left:  
Craig Mackenzie  
The Library's Director-General,  
Jan Fullerton, with John and Heather  
Seymour at the signing of the  
Seymour Summer Scholarship  
deed, 2007

Damian McDonald  
The Main Reading Room of  
the National Library

Greg Power (b.1974)  
Australian Newspapers Digitisation  
Program staff undertaking quality  
assurance on digital newspaper  
pages, 2007