I don’t know how many of you were in the NSW primary school system in the 1950s, 60s or 70s, but if you were, chances are that you’ll remember this little volume, produced for free distribution to school children by the Bank of NSW. “Endeavour and achievement: highlights in the story of Australian development” was issued in 14 editions from 1952 to 1979, and I suspect it was often one of the first things that many young school children read about the European history of Australia. Strangely enough, despite what you’d assume from the title and the cover art, James Cook doesn’t actually rate a mention until the 13th edition, after the bicentenary of his landing. And sadly, but not unexpectedly, there is no mention of the original inhabitants of this continent until that last edition, and then only barely. My copy is at home somewhere in a book box (I don’t throw anything much out, ever!), and I’ll have to dig it out and see what edition I’ve got. Either way, little did I think when I got it that 45 years later I’d be standing here talking about it.

This little book is one of many thousands of publications written about Cook, his shipmates, the ships, the voyages, the art, science, discoveries or the impact they had on indigenous cultures. I read the other day that someone had calculated that there had been 80,000 publications on Napoleon; if that’s the case, one would like to think that there must surely have been at least that many about Cook. Now I’m not about to produce a number out of the air for you, but if we look at the figures produced by Margaret Beddie in her Bibliography, she identified close to 5000 items, published and unpublished, in various formats, up to 1970. A quick check of our Catalogue for the subject “James Cook” shows around a further 400 books - some of them produced by people here today, and several, I should add, by the National Library - plus a few dozen other items such as charts, pictorial works, medallions, souvenirs etc published since 1970. Without counting journal, magazine and newspaper articles, it’s a pretty impressive output for a subject who’s been dead for over 200 years, at an average of about ten a year, but not, it seems, ever likely to overhaul Napoleon.

And the books are still coming, with one already published this year on the Transit of Venus, reviewed 2 weeks ago in the Canberra Times, and an educational book from Macmillan.
Australia due out some time soon. Probably the most successful book (or at least the most reviewed, for good or bad) published in the last couple of years is Frank McLynn’s “Captain Cook: Master of the Seas”.

What I’m going to do in the rest of the time allotted to me is to hopefully whet your appetites by highlighting a few – and it can naturally be only a few - of the books and other published items held in the collections here in the National Library; my colleague Nicki will look at some of our pictorial and manuscript material, and John Robson is going to consider Cook the mapmaker.

So, when talking about publications on Cook and in particular the first voyage, many would immediately think of the famous Hawkesworth edition of 1773. It’s true that this was the first official published account using Cook’s journals, but it’s often overlooked that the first publication about the voyage hit the booksellers’ stands in London in September 1771, barely 2 months after their return, and two years before Hawkesworth.

This was the anonymous “A Journal of a Voyage round the World in His Majesty’s Ship Endeavour…”, the so-called “Becket’s edition” (after one of the co-publishers, Thomas Becket, a prominent bookseller, publisher and stationer, who was Bookseller to the Prince of Wales for about 30 years).

The authorship has never been conclusively decided, and as Beddie states, everyone from Banks, Solander, the Captain’s clerk Richard Orton, Surgeon William Perry, to the publisher himself have been attributed, but Beaglehole comes down in favour of James Matra – as does the Captain Cook Society. I would think that attribution to Banks or Solander would be difficult to argue, since it was dedicated partly to them, and they requested the dedication be withdrawn.

Given the time it would have taken to produce even a modestly sized book such as this (about 130 pages of text) from manuscript on a letterpress, this is a pretty impressive effort. The author and the publisher may have suspected that others were in the pipeline, and whoever it was must have just about run straight from the dock to Becket’s offices, with his manuscript at the ready. You wonder whether there may actually have been an arrangement in place before the voyage set out, although I’m merely speculating here, there is no evidence! And so, the publishing phenomenon that was, and still is, James Cook began.
The Library holds several copies of this work, and the one shown here is thought to have been Alexander Dalrymple’s own copy, with manuscript notes in his hand and one of his charts inserted – this used his own unusual projection method, which allowed the middle and higher latitudes to be shown without distorting either.

According to Beddie, by the time Hawkesworth’s Account came out, the Becket edition had already been through 4 separate French editions and one in German. For those collectors in the audience, if you can’t afford an original, it was reproduced in facsimile in 1967, as part of the Bibliotheca Australiana series.

A short time later, we see the publication of Cook’s paper on the variation of the compass, in the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, which he had read to the Society in November 1771.

Then we come of course to the famed Hawkesworth edition, “An Account of the Voyages undertaken ... for making discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere...” of which the Library again is lucky enough to hold several copies in different collections. I’m sure that many of you will be quite familiar with the story surrounding its publication, and that some attributed Hawkesworth’s early death a few months after publication to the vociferous criticism he received from various quarters.

That could take up an entire seminar in itself, so I’ll simply say that the Hawkesworth edition excited the reading public’s appetite, and soon after its London publication, the Dublin printers had, as was often the case, ignored the Admiralty’s copyright and begun turning out cheaper, but still well-made editions for sale on both sides of the Atlantic. By 1774 we see the first American editions, as well as several German and French editions. The second English edition appeared not long after the first, and by 1789 it had gone into its 4th edition. And again, for those of us who can’t afford an original, here’s the 1969 facsimile.
In 1775, we see the first of many Cook books aimed at a juvenile audience: “Voyages to the southern hemisphere; or, Nature explored...”, written in a Q & A style, and mostly concentrating on the first voyage.

Another one with a Q & A approach, although not aimed specifically at children, is this one authored by Anthony Cornish in 2008.

As a reference librarian who gets asked about all sorts of obscure things, I find books like this, and John’s Cook Encyclopaedia are gems of information that might otherwise take me ages to ferret out myself. Very handy volumes indeed.

I won’t go into any depth on the second and third voyages, which again are covered comprehensively by Beddie, but suffice to say that we again have very comprehensive holdings. Instead, I’ll move on to a couple of interesting items relating to Cook’s death.

Firstly, a small book from our Nan Kivell Collection – what is said to be the first account of his death to be printed in book form.

“Nachrichten von dem Leben und den Seereisen des beruhmten Capitain Cook” was published in what is now Tallinn, Estonia, and Leipzig in 1780, and partly paraphrases Captain Clerke’s letter to the Admiralty reporting the death. As the report travelled overland through Russia and Eastern Europe, it’s probably not so surprising that someone along the way thought it worthwhile to publicise the terrible news of the by now world renowned navigator.
This work was so scarce that it did not make it into any of the earlier bibliographies pre-Beddie. It can now be found in a few European library catalogues, thanks to the internet, including the Danish Royal Library and the Estonian National Library.

The book includes an 8 line poem and a 41 line elegy in English, neither of which have apparently been sourced, but Beddie believed that the main, German language section was possibly penned by George or Johann Forster.

The Admiralty received Clerke’s report and the journals on 10 January 1780, as I have mentioned, overland through Russia. The London Gazette published a brief announcement
the following day. While the Gazette would have been read in the coffee houses, salons and business premises, these broadsides were the means for many others in society to gain their information, being posted up in public places. Consequently, as was the case with our 1796 Port Jackson playbill that some of you will be aware of, these broadsides did not have a very long life expectancy and would have been pasted over or torn down as the next news sheet replaced it, and not many have survived. This one shows obvious signs of damage with that large tear in the left bottom corner.

Anna Seward, the minor Romantic poet, was moved to pen this Elegy to Cook. It quickly went through 2 editions in 1780 (this example is the second edition), and four by 1784.

This French publication dates from 1781, and Cook was of course highly respected by the French even at the height of warfare between the two countries. After his death, French vessels were ordered not to intercept or detain the expedition’s ships, and to afford them any help that was needed. Cook is mentioned in one of the songs in this book, and it must have been quite scarce as it did not make it into Beddie’s Bibliography, although she does list a later edition. This is just one of many examples in our collections of Cook related material from all over Europe.

Which brings me quickly on to a significant sub-genre of “Cookiana” – the imaginative literature: poetry, music and drama. Cook seems to have inspired many down through the years to put pen to paper and write in rhymes, but not always well, in my humble opinion!
W.C. Wentworth penned “Australasia”, which won him second place in the Chancellor’s Medal at Cambridge in 1823. Here’s a few of his lines referring to Cook:

“Lamented Cook! thou bravest, gentlest heart,
Why didst thou fall beneath a savage dart?
Why were thy mangled reliques doom’d to grace
The midnight orgies of a barb’rous race?”

The rest of the poem takes up about half a page of tight type in the Sydney Gazette, so I won’t go on.

Jumping forward seventy years, the Reverend William Yarrington was moved to write an ode on the dedication of the Kurnell memorial, in 1899. He had penned another previously, which won the Sydney University Prize in 1872, (obviously if you wrote something about Cook you must have stood a good chance of a prize!) and it was republished a number of times, along with a “play in verse” (which I suspect might have been little more than the poem rewritten with added stage directions!).

And still the verse keeps coming – in 2002 Robert Sullivan published a book-length poem, “Captain Cook in the Underworld”, a tale of Western guilt and Polynesian absolution of that guilt told through mythical characters. And of course, being modern verse, it doesn’t need to rhyme at all!

We have a number of pieces of sheet music about Cook in our collections, including one written by George M. Cohan. I never realised that Cook had a connection with the Yankee Doodle Boy!

Moving now into the modern era, by the 1960s people were questioning the old stereotypes of Empire and finding them lacking. Humour, even mockery of iconic figures could now be attempted. And in this case, I do stress “attempted”!

This is a page from a 1970 book, “The Anstruther (Captain) Cook book, by Gilbert Anstruther” (aka Russell Clark). Now, I love reading good humour, but I’m afraid this just didn’t make me laugh, although the publishers, Murray, who specialised in books and magazines at the “popular” end of the market must have seen something in it at the time, as they had previously published other books by this author. Maybe they were dreaming of the next Bazza Mackenzie or something similar. I don’t think it did quite that well.

And talking of mistakes, I came across a little Dutch almanac recently, published in 1802. The interest here is the illustration on the inside of the back cover – I hope you can make it out well enough. Although the caption says that Cook was landing in New Holland, it doesn’t really look like the usual Botany Bay scenes that we’re all familiar with. It looks to me more like an imagined scene of his death in Hawaii, with strangely hybrid looking indigenous people, and a very boyish looking Cook!

Finally, what talk on Cook could go without a mention of J.C. Beaglehole? I think I’ve only mentioned him once in this entire talk so far. I won’t regale you with the standard Beaglehole works that most of you will know better than I, so here’s a very nice little pamphlet to finish up with that not many of you may have seen, printed on a hand press in New Zealand in 1971.
It’s the text of an address delivered by Beaglehole at the unveiling of the Cook Memorial at Mercury Bay on 9 November 1969. The Wai – te – Ata Press was founded at Victoria University in 1962 and produced some very nice examples of the art of letterpress printing.

And with that, I think I’d better end there. I hope that this has given especially those of you who might be first time visitors or not familiar with the Library’s collections a taste of what we have to offer.