

UMMA



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Unearthing Hidden Dusty Archival Treasures

'Help! Beatles found locked away in a Scottish university' ran the headline to an item from London in *The Age* earlier this month. It reported the discovery of 500 Beatles' photos among 130,000 negatives by the Hungarian photojournalist Michael Peto. The collection was given to the Dundee University Archives following Peto's death in 1970.

The archivists previously knew that there were one or two pictures of the band, although Peto was better known for his images of ballet stars such as Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn and actors such as Burton and Taylor. The University Archivist, Pat Whatley made the discovery during a digitisation project.

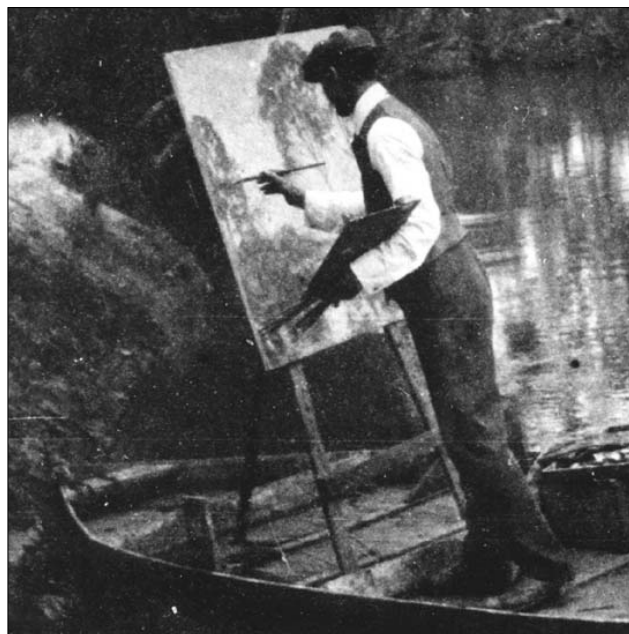
It was, in fact, one of those essentially 'good news' stories which frustrate and irritate archivists. The Reuters' London correspondent noted, several times, in breathless tones, that almost all the photos were previously unpublished! At this point we want to shout at the newspaper, 'well, of course they are. That — except for the most obscure exceptions — is one of archives' most common characteristics, even for photographic archives!' Then followed the predictable phrasing 'found locked away', 'hidden' for more than

30 years, but now 'unearthed'. The story had followed a perfect media stereotype of discovery in the archives. (Separate studies have been published of the image of the dusty archivist as represented in film and fiction).

Classically, archival documents reside mute and passive in the archives, although if we are unlucky, they will be represented as mouldering or gathering dust. They are usually described as a treasure trove or hoard of rich resources, though veins, lodes and nuggets are also popular analogies. The repository is usually dark, dank, and underground, like a mine, bank vault or cave. What creates 'news' is the scholar explorer or investigative journalist unearthing, prizing open, lifting the veil, or casting new light on the never before published hidden

riches. By inference, the custodians are ignorant, or had forgotten the documents' importance and/or existence.

Archivists and their professional image are horribly compromised in this. We are not omniscient despite expectations that we are and presumptuous that we should be ('*don't you even know what you've got in your archives?*'), so, we are inevitably making 'discoveries' every day. But we *continued page 2*



Norman MacGeorge painting on the Yarra River near his Fairy Hills home.

from page 1 know the media love discovery stories and we believe publicity can help improve funding opportunities. We also know we must encourage use, yet not stimulate expectations beyond what can be managed. We know processes such as digitisation will probably attract funding quicker than seeking to purchase thousands of acid free boxes or undertake core processes like cataloguing. Grant giving bodies argue these are bread and butter activities we should fund ourselves.

We know too, that despite measuring our collections in kilometres (i.e. in millions of items), there is an expectation that we can have individual document level descriptions of our collections, and photographic recall and understanding of their cultural, iconic and scholarly importance. Finally, we know that our application of depositors' access restrictions and reluctance to allow access to unsorted and unlisted collections would easily appear as if we lock things away.

For University of Melbourne Archives archivists, even better than the news about the Beatles was learning recently that the Macgeorge Bequest Committee had agreed to allocate \$16,300 to the UMA. Earlier this year we had sought the Committee's help to list, re-box and undertake a proper appraisal of the Macgeorge collection. The collection is in fact a number of separate accessions that document the separate lives of Norman Macgeorge (1872–1952) and his wife formerly May Hepburn (d 1970), and their long successful life together. From their marriage in 1911 onwards, this centred on their Desbrowe Annear-designed house 'Ballangeich' on the former 'Fairy Hills' estate at the junction of the Yarra River and Darebin Creek in Ivanhoe.

The Macgeorge collection comprises 111 archives boxes occupying over 17 metres of shelving. Via letters, autobiographical papers, newspaper cuttings, travel notebooks, publications

and photographs, the collection reveals Norman's life and career as one of Melbourne's best known painters, writers, lecturers and champions of modern art from the 1920s to the 1940s. The collection also provides substantial material on his very successful partnership with May and the social and cultural role of their home. This component includes letters from Norman to May during their courtship and while he was overseas, household accounts, domestic papers, plans and photographs. Another feature is important items of May's family, such as diaries and letters from her sisters and her mining engineer brother George.

A major reassessment of Norman Macgeorge's artistic and cultural output was undertaken last year by the late Dr John Pigot and the Potter Museum of Art. His exhibition and catalogue drew substantially on the archival material as well as the Potter's own collection, both of which were left to the University along with the Macgeorge's home and a substantial bequest. Writing in the April 2001 *UMA Bulletin* of the Archives' Macgeorge collection, John noted that 'reconstructing the identity and achievements of Norman Macgeorge would have been impossible without its valuable holdings'. He was too polite to add that in preparing his exhibition he had to laboriously examine, one by one, every item in the 111 boxes, because the collection lacked even a rudimentary list.

Through the generosity of the Bequest committee, the Archives will now rectify this shortcoming, and share the results via our website for all to consult.

And then, perhaps we'll issue a press release announcing the discovery of some previously hidden treasure unearthed during the unlocking process!

Michael Piggott
University Archivist

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Research Into Australian-Asian Links

Dr Pam Oliver
Research Fellow, Deakin University

The UMA collection contains many accessions, which provide evidence of the University of Melbourne's interest in developing relations with Asia. Others include official University collections such as the Registrar's correspondence and records of student societies and organisations such as the Australia Asia Association. Many notable University staff members, such as William Macmahon Ball, and students with connections to Asia are also represented.

The research is demonstrating that the University was particularly concerned to welcome students from Asia as early as 1940 and to provide for their welfare. The wider University community, including colleges such as Queens, welcomed Asian students without prejudice on their academic merit. In providing accommodation, Queens admitted Asian residents before International House became a reality.

The University's concern for the welfare of Asian students who wished to enter Australia's education system led it, through the Warden for Overseas students, Dr J. S. Rogers, to negotiate with overseas agencies, schools and governments to solve problems of recognition, for Matriculation purposes, of work done in the home country. Rogers also negotiated alterations to Australia's immigration processes so students could enter Victorian government secondary schools. The University assisted community agencies such as Rotary to provide hospitality for students in Australia.

The University was also directly involved in studying developments in Asia. The late Herbert Feith and others were responsible for the development of the University Graduate Employment Scheme in Indonesia in the 1950s. Others



Dr Pam Oliver at work on Australia-Asia related records at the University of Melbourne Archives.

visited China and India. Such visits were reciprocated.

The need for Asian language development and regional studies to improve Asia literacy was recognised by University staff in the 1940s. However, funding difficulties hampered the development of Asian studies and language teaching and meant that such courses often had a precarious existence over the decades under study. For example, Japanese in the 1940s was not recognised for credit for an Arts degree. Chinese was first taught on a voluntary basis at Queens by Dr Leonhard Adam in the late 1940s. Indonesian, Chinese and Indian languages followed much later in the 1950s and 1960s.

The University Archives provide rich resources for Australia-Asia researchers. They contain not only records relating to Australian attempts to understand more about its Asian neighbours but also document the contacts initiated by Asian countries anxious to establish relations with universities in Australia.

The University of Melbourne has a distinguished history of engagement with Asia. Dr Pam Oliver, Research Fellow at Deakin University, has been researching the UMA's collection for the last 12 months to assess the nature and extent of the University's involvement in and links to Asia from 1939 to 1972. The work is part of an ARC funded project concerning Australia's relations with its Asian neighbours whose chief investigator is Professor David Walker, recent recipient of the Ernest Scott prize for his first volume on Australia-Asia relations, *Anxious Nation, Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850-1939*, UQP, 1999.

Sisters Book Club

Jane Ellen
Archivist

Archivists at the UMA have recently processed and listed the records of the innovative feminist publishing house and book club Sisters Publishing Ltd.

Sisters Publishing began in 1979 as the 'valiant idea' of five Melbourne publishers, Hilary McPhee, Diana Gribble, Joyce Nicholson, Anne O'Donovan and Sally Milner. The seed of the enterprise took root after the first Women and Labour Conference, held in Sydney in 1978, where the five women, who all ran their own successful publishing houses, felt strongly that serious women writers were largely overlooked by mainstream publishers. They would publish quality works 'for women, by women and about women'.

Sisters had a unique solution to the obstacles posed by distribution, that enduring bane of all small publishers. They would run their own mail order business, a book club where, for a small once-only subscription, members would receive a quarterly newsletter offering Sisters' own publications and 'the best feminist books from publishers here and overseas', all at discount rates.

The company ran as a collective between the five women, acting as company directors, and a salaried coordinator. They compiled a list of 25,000 women to whom they sent out their first newsletter advertising subscriptions. The newsletter bore the imprimatur of an impressive range of prominent women, a veritable roll call of Australian feminists, such as Eva Cox, Anne Summers, Dorothy Hewett, Faith Bandler, Eve Mahlab, Drusilla Modjeska, Carmen Callil and 20 more, who had responded to the Sisters' request to serve on an editorial board. Dorothy Hewett responded to the request by writing, 'maybe if you'd existed I wouldn't still be struggling so hard at fifty-six to get it all down before it's too late'. The company ran on a shoe-string with the coordinator and the directors often working late into the night on the whole gamut of duties, from reading and editing manuscripts to processing and packing book orders.



A selection of works produced by Sisters Publishing.

The invitation to join the Sisters Book Club was enthusiastically received from women all over the country. Subscribers ranged well beyond inner city coteries of book loving feminists to women from outer suburbs and remote outback farms. That the Sisters' endeavour matched the spirit of the times is born out by the letters that often accompanied subscription notices. 'I was delighted to receive your circular and thought "at last!"' wrote one. 'This venture certainly fills a hole in many of our lives,' wrote another. These letters can be read as a fascinating record of the impact that 1970s feminism had on the lives of so many Australian women.

Following a policy of publishing quality feminist works that no-one else in Australia would publish, Sisters brought out 13 works of fiction, non-fiction and poetry. They were all in uniformly plain but elegant editions and won a design award. As well as launching several notable careers, for instance those of Beverley Farmer and Jean Bedford, Sisters had established authors such as Judith Rodriguez and Barbara Jefferis offering

them their works. The Sisters Book Club also provided their subscribers with discounted editions of books from overseas feminist publishers like the Women's Press and Virago. Thus were many Australian readers introduced to the work of both new writers and resurrected writers of previous generations in the Virago Modern Classics series, as well as such influential '70s texts as Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*, Susie Orbach's *Fat is a Feminist Issue* and Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*.

Although Sisters' publishing program was of necessity small, manuscripts poured in from all over the country. Joyce Nicholson wrote, 'it seemed as though every women who had ever written anything got it out of her bottom drawer and sent it to us'. The directors, feeling a responsibility to women's writing, attempted to respond constructively to each manuscript.

Finally the juggling act became unsustainable. The combination of the sheer workload involved in running the book club and the policy of offering discounted books meant that the company had little chance of long term viability and in 1984 Sisters

was wound up. It had been an heroic undertaking and the company could leave them secure in the knowledge that due to efforts like theirs their agenda had largely succeeded: many more books by and about women were now being taken up by mainstream publishers.

The Sisters' archive is the complete record of the company. It documents all of its activities; from the minutes of the first, and subsequent, directors' meetings and the appointment of the editorial board; the compilation of the initial list of potential subscribers; their publishing program and distribution; correspondence with subscribers and authors; the service they attempted to provide to fledgling writers, down to the dry legal and accountants' documents that signal its end.

The Sisters Publishing archive enhances the UMA's holdings of other feminist publishers' records, such as McPhee Gribble Pty Ltd and the Sugar and Snails Press, as well as the records of the International Feminist Book Fair, and our growing number of collections that document a wide spectrum of feminist activities.

It's All In The Numbers

Lesley Caelli
Senior Assistant, Special Collections

If you think the staff of the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room have been looking a little frazzled of late, you wouldn't be far wrong. Latest statistics show that since the same time last year there has been a significant increase in both the number of researchers visiting the reading room and collection usage.

In the July-September quarter for 2001, the reading room had approximately 1152 researchers walk through its doors. This year the number for the same period stands at 1390, around a 20 percent increase. On an average afternoon, it is not unusual to find every desk in the reading room occupied, while staff attend to a further three or four inquiries at the reference desk. These inquiries can range from basic questions about access to University of Melbourne theses through to more complex questions regarding archival access and copying procedures.

The Archives repository at Dawson Street, Brunswick has also seen a significant increase in the number of people visiting for specialist research purposes with 61 visiting researchers, up from 36 visitors for the same time last year.

Along with the greater number of researchers visiting the reading room is a marked increase in collection usage. July-September 2001 saw approximately 2186 Special Collections and Archival items issued into the reading room. For the same period in 2002 that figure stands at 3178 items, nearly a 45 percent increase. Of these issues, Archives saw a 19 percent increase, with Special Collections bringing in a significant 54 percent increase. In Special Collections, these continue to lead the way in collection usage, accounting for around 60 percent of Special Collections items issued into the reading room.

Reference inquiries for both Archives and Special Collections have remained steady, with most inquiries coming via email and the telephone. Many of these can be dealt with within the first ten minutes of being received, however there are always the three or four inquiries that take a significant amount of time to resolve, often involving more than a little ingenuity and sometimes the skills of a private detective.

It is very encouraging to see this increase in the number of people visiting the reading room and utilising its resources. The University Archives and the library Special Collections hold some truly wonderful and unique material in their collections. That so many people are using them as their primary source of information is very gratifying indeed.

UMA Objects Go On Display

Jason Benjamin
Archives Loans Officer

The University of Melbourne Archives has been participating in an active program of exhibitions and displays in recent times that have been helping to raise awareness of the collection amongst students, researchers and the public in general.

The latest of these programs has the collections of the UMA as a regular component of the Baillieu Library art and exhibitions program. In conjunction with guest artists, the UMA now shares the display space in the Baillieu Library foyer on a rotating bi-monthly basis. This opportunity is used to promote the holdings of the UMA through the display of many objects that are held as part of collections. Although objects are usually associated with museum rather than archival collections, they can play an important role in understanding and drawing attention to historical records.

The first of the Baillieu Library foyer displays during July and August included objects that commemorate the introduction of the eight hour working day in Victoria and the annual celebrations of this event that took place each March until the 1950s. Included were objects from the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the Operative Bakers' Union of Victoria collections, that helped highlight the UMA's collection strengths in the area of trade unions.

In addition to the Baillieu Library foyer displays, items from the collection are helping to enrich a number of exhibitions in cultural institutions throughout Australia. The UMA's collections are of national significance and the lending of items to other institutions offers a great opportunity to further share these treasures with the wider community. Exhibitions that are currently displaying items from the UMA are *Medical Melbourne* and *Windows on History* at Museum Victoria; the *Australian Identities* exhibition at the National Museum, Canberra and the *Making Melbourne* exhibition at the Gold Treasury Museum in Spring Street.

Major exhibitions which the UMA has participated in over recent times have included the *Gold and Civilization* exhibition held at both the National Museum and Museum Victoria, the Museum Victoria 2001 exhibition celebrating Federation and the National Trust exhibition, *It's a Curious Thing*, held at Como historic house.

Future participation in exhibitions will include a display of Bright family papers related to the SS Great Britain at the upcoming Royal Historical Society of Victoria's SS Great



Model for a proposed Eight Hour Day Monument 1889, by Percival Ball (1845–1900). Victorian Trades Hall Council Collection, UMA.

Britain conference. And a portrait of William Archer (first statistician of Victoria) held at the UMA will be playing a central role in the 2003 celebrations related to the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Registry of Deaths Births and Marriages.

Dear Diary

Elizabeth Agostino
Coordinator, Administration and Reference

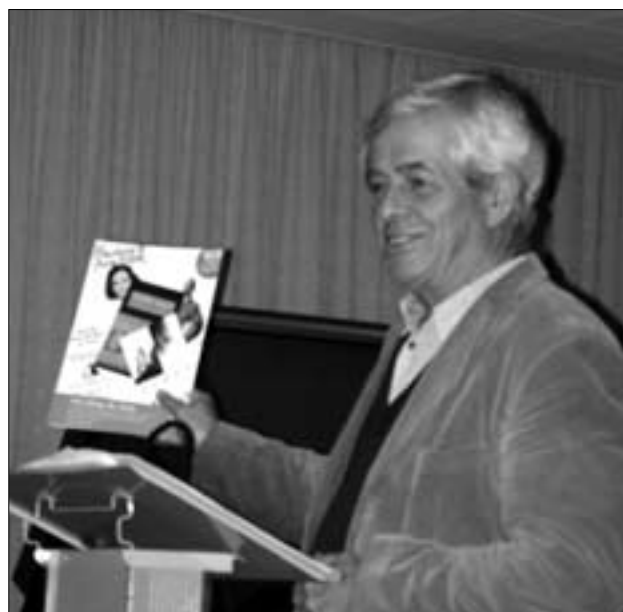
In June, *Inscribing the Daily*, an exhibition of and about diaries, opened on the first floor of the Baillieu Library. Curated by University Archivist, Michael Piggott, the exhibition was designed primarily to showcase selected diaries and related material from the University's library, archives, and Grainger Museum collections, but also drew on the wealth of material housed in other institutions.

Professor Emeritus Chris Wallace-Crabbe, a distinguished poet, critic and founding Director of the Australian Centre, officially launched the exhibition. A rich collection of Professor Emeritus Wallace-Crabbe's own diaries and journals, amongst other of his papers, are held with the Archives and several of these were incorporated into the display. Other notable diarists and journal writers represented include Sir Robert Menzies, Samuel Pepys, Captain James Cook, Percy Grainger and Sir Raymond Priestley. Mini themes such as credibility and self-consciousness in diary writing, the Internet impact, and the diary as novel were also explored.

Inscribing the Daily ran until 9 August 2002 but the impressive and informative catalogue is available in full at <http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/archives/archgen.html>

In addition, Michael Piggott's introduction to the exhibition is reproduced in part here.

Woven through the exhibition's dozen or so mini themes is the enduring question of motives and audiences. It is rare for diarists to explain — to themselves, to us — what motivates them to write. But whatever triggers them, it can become a duty. It can also be, to use Katie Holmes' phrase, 'an itch to record', and as she reveals about certain Australian women in the 1920s and 1930s, much more as well. Indeed she and others systematically analysing the phenomenon have had little difficulty in establishing clear patterns of motivation. Thomas Mallon provides one of the best known explanations, identifying seven types of diary writers: chroniclers, travellers, pilgrims, creators, apologists, confessors and prisoners. Most scholars have been more specialised, looking at a specific gender and time span, such as women diarists as noted above, or soldiers or 19th century travellers to Australia. Others have focussed on one set of motivations, for example linking diary writing to strong psychological motivations and a sense of identity, such as archivist Sue McKemmish's notion of 'evidence of me' and Anthony Giddens' 'narrative of the self'.



Professor Emeritus Chris-Wallace Crabbe opens 'Inscribing the Daily'.

Interestingly, in the past 20 years, the diary as journal of inner feelings and self-identity has also become popular with spiritual advisers and grief and trauma counsellors.

One should not overlook more practical explanations of course. The diary as 'log book' has myriad contemporary and historical illustrations, reflecting established scientific, professional, law enforcement, and military requirements or practice. And whether on land, ice or sea, the explorer was also recorder of diary and journal, a chart maker and scientific observer and forthcoming author. The diary which doubled as a note book, sketch book or 'commonplace book' also had fairly immediate uses for writers, painters and autobiographers. The diaries of the renowned war correspondent and war historian of Australia in the First World War, Dr C. E. W. Bean certainly were written for immediate self-reference. Timothy Garton Ash illustrates another variation of the diary being used for the author's own reference, enabling him to cross check his own account of life in East Germany with the voluminous dossier kept on him during the same period by the Stasi.

Whatever the reasons motivating diarists to daily toil, usually the result is intended at least in the short term exclusively for the author's reference. Hence *continued page 8*

from page 7 the care taken with storage away from prying eyes, with the writing (at times with symbols or abbreviations) and with the diary's ultimate fate via instructions to one's executors. With libraries and archives, this pattern is reversed. A single motive drives them — to collect and preserve historical evidences, with minimal or better still no access conditions, for the use of historians, biographers, journalists and others researching the past.

These are generalisations of course. In fact those who have examined diaries systematically have concluded that subconsciously all diarists are writing for an audience, if not immediately, then for an eventual posterity. 'Ever within the breasts of all diarists', wrote A. A. Milne, there is 'the hope that their diaries may some day be revealed to the world'. Here the core motive for writing the diary can identify the intended audience, with soldiers, sports stars, travellers and politicians well represented among those happy to share quite early their daily observations and thoughts.

Now, with personal websites able to broadcast the images and sounds and words of one's diary instantaneously, we have

the ultimate deliberate and unselfconscious diarist, producing real time continuous reportage of the life as lived. The phenomenon started by Jennifer Ringley of Jennicam fame recalls the words of Christopher Isherwood's 1930s Berlin diary, 'I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking'.

The subject of diaries is vast, as is the scholarship about (and based on) them. We claim no expertise, just a place in the front stalls.

Recent Acquisitions

An Exhibition of Material
in Special Collections

BAILLIEU LIBRARY

University of Melbourne

November – December 2002

The Friends of The University of Melbourne Archives

Jack Martin
Project Archivist



Trevor Hart, Senior Business Archivist and Volunteer Liaison Officer, UMA.

The Friends of the University of Melbourne Archives program is the initiative of Gil Ralph, MBE, a member of the Archives Advisory Board. Its core goal is to support the achievements of the Archives by assisting staff with many of the time consuming tasks that constitute a great part of our work but that do not need to be carried out by trained archivists.

There are two additional benefits of the program. The first is to raise awareness of the UMA, through discussion of the Archives in the Friends' networks. Secondly, as staff nominate tasks and carry out the training of volunteers, by necessity there is a critical self examination of both basic and complex procedures. The volunteers' varied backgrounds may also provide a fresh per-

spective on archival processes, collection building, preparation of subject guides and even handling specialist reference enquiries. It is hoped that by matching tasks to individual interests and subject strengths, the program will be a rewarding experience for those generous enough to share their time, skills and knowledge with the UMA.

An initial group of ten volunteers has been recruited and inducted at the Archives. This involved a briefing session and tour conducted by Trevor Hart, Senior Business Archivist and Volunteer Liaison Officer. The volunteers are now in the process of being trained by the UMA staff, which concludes the pilot phase on the Friends of the UMA program. After six months, the success of the program will be evaluated and a decision made on its continuation.