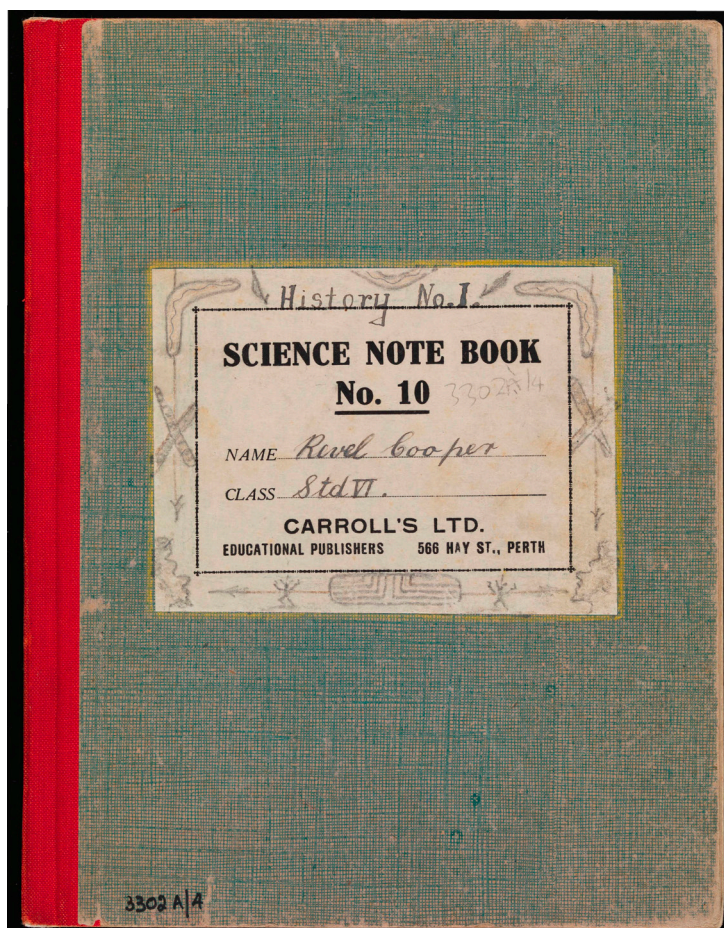


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# SELECTING MEMORIES: HISTORIES OF THE ABORIGINAL COLLECTIONS AT THE STATE LIBRARY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA: 1890-2000S

TIFFANY SHELLAM, DENISE COOK AND ANDREA WITCOMB

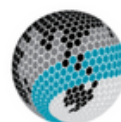
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**Selecting Memories: Histories of the Aboriginal Collections  
at the State Library of Western Australia: 1890-2000s**

© Tiffany Shellam, Denise Cook and Andrea Witcomb

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**Cover image:** Front page of Revel Cooper, History No.1, Standard 6. Mary Durack Miller Collection (State Library of Western Australia, ACC 3302A).

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# Collecting the West: Reimagining Western Australia from its collections

This report on the history of Aboriginal collections at the State Library of Western Australia was funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage project, Collecting the West: Reimagining Western Australia from its collections (LP160100078). This project, led by Professor Alistair Paterson (University of Western Australia) and Professor Andrea Witcomb (Deakin University) asks the following key questions: What new understanding of Western Australia emerges from a critical study of collecting? What does a new understanding of the history of collecting suggest for current and future collecting and interpretation strategies for Partner Organisations? The State Library of Western Australia is a Partner Organisation on this grant. Other Partner Organisations include the Western Australian Museum, Art Gallery of Western Australia, and the British Museum.

We acknowledge the Whadjuk Nyungar people as custodians of the Country on which the State Library of Western Australia sits, and acknowledge their ancient and continuing connections to this Country and its waterways.

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## Executive Summary and Recommendations

This report provides a history of the Aboriginal collections at the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), from the library's origins in the 1890s to the early 2000s. In it, we discuss the history of how material relating to Aboriginal people in Western Australia was collected, why and the uses to which it has been put. We track changes over time and we identify key themes and issues that inform how we might understand the legacy of past collecting activities, understand the needs of the present, and inform future collecting practices. The scope of this report includes some collections which are now housed in the State Records Office of Western Australia, due to the early combined histories of these two institutions.

### Our key findings are that:

1. There is a close relationship between the contents of the collection and the historiography of Western Australia.
2. The result of this relationship is that, until the 1970s, with a few exceptions, most records pertaining to Aboriginal people were embedded in public records, private papers, publications and photographic collections that were collected to document the colony and its progress. While collections of Aboriginal related material was mostly 'incidental' given this larger objective to record the history of early colonists, many of these records nevertheless contain a vast body of material concerning Aboriginal people in Western Australia. They range from records pertaining to the colonial administration governing the lives of Aboriginal people to records concerning their daily lives, records of encounter between settlers and Aboriginal people as well as records of Aboriginal language and cultural practices.
3. Given the colonial gaze informing both collecting practices and the interpretation of the material, and the inaccessible nature of such institutions for Aboriginal people, the significance of this material for Aboriginal people themselves was not recognised until the 1960s and 1970s. It is only relatively recently that attempts have been made to make the collection publicly available and known to Aboriginal communities.

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4. Likewise, it is only since the late 1970s and early 1980s that these collections have been used to begin to understand the nature and impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people
  5. There are instances where the interests of the establishment have prevented material that should be in the State Collection from being collected as well as instances where 'difficult histories' have been managed by prohibiting the material from being made available to researchers, indicating an active will to stop the public airing of some of the worst excesses of the colonisation process. Such practices have compounded the trauma of colonisation for Aboriginal people. We do acknowledge the recent efforts to address this, such as Storylines.
  6. For a significant part of the State Library's existence, decisions about whether or not specific material should be available for public viewing has not involved consultation with relevant source communities.
  7. In the 1990s, a number of reports which identified Aboriginal collections and Library users as important stakeholders were produced. The Library responded with its own plan for the provision of services to Aboriginal people as well as a plan to have and support Aboriginal staff. This is very much a work in progress still. It was only in 2001 that Aboriginal people were explicitly mentioned as part of the focus for collecting in the collection policy for the Battye Library. The result was an expanded effort at collecting Aboriginal material, and particularly material produced by Aboriginal people themselves and representing their perspectives. There was also an increase in consultation practices and the digital repatriation of some materials.
  8. These changes have clearly improved access for Aboriginal people using the Library as well as the quantity and range of material coming in.

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There is still, however, much work to do to ensure Aboriginal perspectives on future collecting practices as well as on the existing collection. There are still issues in locating Aboriginal material in the collections due to problems with metadata, ethical issues concerning who has access to collections, and lack of sufficient Aboriginal staff and expertise amongst Library staff. It should be noted, however that the SLWA has recently appointed a Manager of Aboriginal Engagement.

## **Recommendations:**

1. As the authors of this report are non-Indigenous historians, our first recommendation is the establishment of an Aboriginal reference group for SLWA. The responsibilities of such a reference group should include decision making around access to secret/sacred and historically derogatory material.
2. Develop a policy on management of Aboriginal collections to clarify the role of descendants in ongoing curation and control of access.
3. Enable oral history projects with Aboriginal people (loan of equipment, training) with deposits of recordings in the collection.
4. Make the history of collecting visible by documenting provenance – the history of the collection, the date and reason for acquisition – and integrate that into the catalogue record, making it publicly available.
5. A renewed emphasis on staffing that includes a program to develop front of house Aboriginal staff, genealogy specialists, and a team of Aboriginal librarians. These recommendations were made in *Bringing them Home, Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. Commonwealth of Australia, 1997. <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/the-report/bringing-them-home-report>

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6. Relating to the above, we recommend the SLWA revisit their plan, developed in 1997, and improve upon its implementation, especially around collection management and public access: *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia from The JS Battye Library of Western Australia and The State Reference Library*.
  7. Provide an additional SLWA Fellowship, specifically for Indigenous researchers working with Aboriginal communities/people to document collections.
  8. As *Katitjin: A Guide to the Aboriginal Records of the Battye Library* used a now outdated format of 'subject guide' to index the collections, rather than updating this guide, we recommend a shift towards enabling opportunities for Aboriginal people telling their own stories and histories, beginning with Elders, subject to any advice from the Aboriginal Reference Group.
  9. Consider publishing on the Library's website, some short histories of specific items discussed in this report, including the history of their collection and uses to which they have been put. This will highlight key items in the collection and make them better known.

There are additional recommendations for the items discussed in Appendix A, laid out at the end of each case study.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report, *Selecting Memories*, is a history of the Aboriginal collections at the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), from the Library's origins in the 1890s to the early 2000s. The scope of this report includes collections now held in the State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA) because of the interconnected histories of SLWA and SROWA. We highlight the forces which have shaped the collections over time, and the way those collections have influenced the histories that have been written. As Antoinette Burton writes, we must challenge the apparent objectivity of an archive by 'telling stories about its provenance, its histories, its effect on its users, and above all, its power to shape all the narratives which are to be "found" there'.<sup>1</sup>

What we might think of as an Aboriginal collection has changed over time. Aboriginal collections have been defined by key state and national collecting institutions in the following ways: The National Library of Australia defines an Aboriginal collection today as a document or collection which 'records or preserves Aboriginal history'.<sup>2</sup> The State Library of New South Wales defines an Aboriginal collection to 'encompass materials reflecting the earliest interpretation of the history, language, art and culture of Aboriginal people, though often written from a non-Aboriginal perspective'.<sup>3</sup> While the SLWA asserts that: 'The records of early anthropologists and explorers represent some of the earliest archives and help to depict traditional life of the Aboriginal people of the time', they also list pioneering families, mission stations, government records and photographic collections as part of their 'Aboriginal collections'.<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this report, an Aboriginal collection is defined as archival texts (oral and written texts, including photographs and illustrations) and published material 'which observes, and records Indigenous activities, and or people'.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Antoinette Burton, "Introduction: Archive Fever, Archive Stories," in Antoinette Burton (ed) *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2005, p.6.

2 <https://www.nla.gov.au/collections/what-we-collect/indigenous>

3 <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about-library/services/indigenous-engagement/aboriginal-historical-collections>

4 <https://slwa.wa.gov.au/collections/aboriginal-collections>

5 Lynette Russell, 'Indigenous Knowledge and Archives: Accessing Hidden History and Understandings', *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, 36 (2), 2005, p.162 doi: 10.1080/00048623.2005.10721256

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Most of these records were created and preserved by non-Aboriginal people, by explorers, colonists, government agents, missionaries and police. Writing about the collections at the State Library of New South Wales, Worimi librarian, Kirsten Thorpe and Alex Byrne have written, 'The perspectives of the [Indigenous] peoples themselves was seldom recorded and seldom included in the collections of the State Library of NSW and other libraries and archives. Occasional and usually fragmentary records, existing in correspondence with those in authority, describe the current situation of Indigenous individuals, families and peoples' but few observers described Aboriginal cultures from Aboriginal perspectives.<sup>6</sup> In recent years the SLWA has increasingly collected records produced by Aboriginal people as well.

Today, First Nations people have a complex relationship to archives and libraries due to the colonial origins of such institutions and legacies that persist today.<sup>7</sup> The SLWA accumulated its collection within specific political and historiographical moments across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, within contexts of beliefs in Social Darwinism, racist assimilation policies, and later human rights frameworks and more recently within a decolonising paradigm. As a result, what might constitute an 'Aboriginal collection,' attitudes towards the importance of Aboriginal collections within the Library, the motivation behind acquisitions, and their use by the public, have varied widely.

From a focus on the progress of 'pioneers'(a frequently used term in reference to early colonists, with romantic and outdated notions of heroic survival and progress in a harsh land), early Aboriginal language books, oral histories, mission records and later photographs and other archives created by Aboriginal people, the collections have both shaped the historiography that has been produced from them, and the historiography and political culture has in turn shaped collecting practices. For example, the Library has consistently collected Aboriginal language lists, but the reasons behind

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6 Kirsten Thorpe and Alex Byrne, 'Indigenous voices in the State Library of New South Wales', *The Australian Library Journal*, 2016, vol. 65, no.1, p.22.

7 See Anna Haebich's biography of the archive of the administration of Aboriginal affairs, established under the regime of A.O. Neville, 'Fever in the archive', Thesis 11, vol.135, issue 1, 2016, pp.82-98; Tandanya declaration: <https://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/Tandanya-Adelaide-Declaration.pdf>

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the collecting and the ways in which they have been valued and used, has changed over time. Aboriginal languages were actively collected from the very beginnings of the Library being a particular focus of James Sykes Battye. Initially they were valued for the story they told about the colonial compilers of such lists in the nineteenth century, but the focus changed to preserving the language of a 'dying race' in the early-mid twentieth century. This was also part of a growing nationalistic desire by 'native born' white Australians to claim Aboriginal words in their own lexicons. Later in the twentieth century, Aboriginal writers and artists created their own language lists for cultural revival projects. The Library collected these too. More recently, archived Aboriginal songs have been returned and workshopped by source communities.<sup>8</sup>

Following the work of Ann Laura Stoler, we have approached the archive and the personnel who worked there with a biographical lens, in order to understand the power and histories behind collecting practices.<sup>9</sup> In researching this report we have kept in mind absences as well as presences. As archival scholar, Terry Cook, has written, archives are 'constructed memories':

about the past, about history, heritage, and culture, about personal roots and familial connections, and about who we are as human beings; as such, they offer glimpses into our common humanity. Yet memory is notoriously selective—in individuals, in societies, and, yes, in archives. With memory comes forgetting. With memory comes the inevitable privileging of certain records and records creators, certain functions, activities, and groups in society, and the marginalizing or silencing of others.<sup>10</sup>

While this report is not exhaustive, our research has identified several key collecting moments across the history of the Library: **1) Colonial Foundations 1890-1900s; 2) Collecting Colonial Progress: Building the foundations of the pioneer narrative; 3) Persistent histories and emergence of Aboriginal rights; 4) National Human Rights: 1990s Reports and changing**

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8 See Clint Bracknell, 'Reanimating 1830s Nyungar songs of Miago', in Amanda Harris, Linda Barwick and Jakelyn Troy (eds), *Music, dance and the archive*, Sydney, University of Sydney Press, pp.93-116

9 Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance', *Archival Science* 2, 2002, pp. 87-109.

10 Terry Cook, 'Evidence, Memory, Identity and Community', *Archival Science*, vol. 13, 2013, p.101.

**Library policy.** Major collecting drives occurred around different anniversaries of colonisation: 1904, 1929, 1979 and 1988. Drawing on this research, and four case studies, the report makes recommendations for future practice at the State Library.

## 1.1 Colonial Foundations: 1890-1900s



Figure 1: Alfred Hawe, Swan River Mechanics Institute, 1861, (State Library of Western Australia, 6923B/175)

A reading public at Swan River was conceived by early colonists and religious authorities even before the arrival of the first colonists on Nyungar country. In March 1829 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge met in London and agreed on a grant of £60 for the purchase of books 'for the use of persons about to proceed to the new settlement at Swan River'.<sup>11</sup> The books were to be 'placed at the disposal of the Archdeacon of New South Wales', Thomas Hobbes Scott. Serendipitously, Archdeacon Scott was stranded at Swan River from November 1829-August

<sup>11</sup> 'Supply of Books to Swan River Colony', 5th March 1829, General Meeting of Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, Minutebooks, pp.503-504, Records of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (as filmed by the AJCP) [microform] : [M2091-M2111], 1786-1966./Series II/File Vol. 39/Item ff. 121-24

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1830, when HMS Success was wrecked on Carnac Reef, en route to Portsmouth. It is not known if Scott brought books with him, but he certainly brought a passion for Parochial Lending Libraries, attached to a parish.<sup>12</sup> Being stranded at Swan River, Scott's enthusiasm for religion and Christian education had a renewed focus. With the help of the 63rd Regiment he instigated the construction of a church, built in just eight days and constructed from reeds, rushes and wood, 'erected after the style of a black-fellow's wurley'<sup>13</sup> and, despite being formally named St James's, it was more commonly referred to as the 'Rush Church'. It was located on the corner of Irwin and Howick (now Hay st) street, and was completed just in time for a Christmas Day service in 1829, at which Scott officiated. While it was a Church on Sundays, it served various purposes during the week. Just three weeks after its construction, on the 14th January 1830, Scott had established a 'District Committee of the Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge, which included a Parochial Lending Library for the working classes'.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time that the Parochial Lending Library was established, a Literary Institution had also 'been commenced' by at least 25th January 1830, and it was recorded that the subscribers already amount 'to 46; there are 12 more candidates; the annual funds amount to 100l. About 200 volumes of very good and useful books have been collected; more have been ordered, and also some of the periodical Papers and Reviews'.<sup>15</sup> It was also noted that there were intentions to 'form a Museum and a Botanical Garden connected with the Institution'.<sup>16</sup>

The Literary Institution was in need of a Library in 1831 when the 'Committee of the Western Australian Institution' wrote to Governor James Stirling requesting the establishment of a 'Library, a Reading Room, a museum for curiosities connected with the natural history of Western Australia',

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12 'The Archdeacon's charge', *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*, 3rd March 1826

13 Alfred Burton, *Church Beginnings in the west*, Perth, John Muhling, 1941, p. 12

14 'Swan River', *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 15th April 1830

15 'Western Australia, 25th January 1830, in 'Swan River Settlement', *Morning Post*, 23rd July 1830

16 'Western Australia, 25th January 1830, in 'Swan River Settlement', *Morning Post*, 23rd July 1830

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a 'Botanical and pleasure garden', and any 'other objects connected with the advancement of the arts and sciences as occasion may require or opportunity permit'.<sup>17</sup> On 16th January 1832, George Fletcher Moore annotated a sketch map of the river bank at Perth, identifying a building as the Institution (library and newsroom).<sup>18</sup> Early newspaper reports mention a Literary Institution of some kind until at least 1839, but the records are scant in detail. It was not until the establishment of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute (SRMI), founded in 1851, when a permanent collecting institution was developed in the colony. Its focus was a members' library and reading room, which collected 'interesting and instructive works' from both local gentry donors and books purchased from England.<sup>19</sup> It also provided English and colonial newspapers for members to read. In the second half of the nineteenth century, it was the most important library in the colony. The SRMI also established the Perth Museum, which opened in 1857.<sup>20</sup> In the same year, the Committee and members of the SRMI were 'highly gratified' to receive '6 vols of the Perth Gazette containing the history of the Colony between January 1833 and December 1838', indicating an interest in Western Australian historical sources.<sup>21</sup> It is possible that the early volumes of the *Perth Gazette* that are in the SLWA collections today are the ones that were acquired by the SRMI.<sup>22</sup> In January 1852, Advocate General George Fletcher Moore's personal library was auctioned, and it was noted that he had already donated 'several volumes to our Mechanics Institute'.<sup>23</sup> In 1887, the colonial government allocated £3,000 to establish a library to celebrate Queen Victoria's golden jubilee, and in 1889

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17 Letter from the Committee of the Western Australian Institution to Governor James Stirling, 28th May 1831, Collections held by the Royal Irish Academy relating to Australia (as filmed by the AJCP) [microform] : [M945-M946] 1828-[ca. 1877]./Fonds MS 24/Series N1/Papers relating to Western Australia, Section 1 [<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2518373364>]

18 J.M.R. Cameron, (ed), *The Millendon Memoirs*, Victoria Park, Hesperian Press, 2006, pp.82-3

19 "Anniversary Meeting of the Swan River Mechanics' Institute," *Inquirer*, 1 February 1854, p.2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article65742174>.

20 *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 29 January 1858, pp.2-3. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2930540>.

21 "Local and Domestic Intelligence," *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 9 September 1857, p.2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article66005235>. This was donated by the head of the Civil and Criminal Courts in the colony, WH Mackie Esq. In 1898, two early newspapers from the Swan River Mechanics' Institute collection were passed to the library, namely Perth Gazette 5 April 1850 and WA Inquirer 5 August 1840. Letter JS Batty, Librarian to Curator, The Museum, 29 October 1898, in "Donations General: 1871-1911," WA Museum Archives A231/75/1.

22 The State Library does have early *Perth Gazette* newspapers and an investigation of the originals may provide some evidence about their history.

23 'Mr Moore's Library', *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 16th January 1852, p. 4

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the Victoria Public Library (VPL) was established, marking the beginning of what would become the SLWA.<sup>24</sup> It was the first free library for the general public in Western Australia and opened in temporary premises in St Georges Terrace on 26 January 1889. Almost 2000 books on literature, history, science, travel, agriculture, geology and art were on the shelves.<sup>25</sup> The VPL also started collecting Western Australian historical material, including publications containing information about Aboriginal people.<sup>26</sup>

In 1892, the colonial government established the Perth Museum by amalgamating the Perth Museum collection from the SRMI, the Geological Museum, and a collection of Aboriginal weapons and implements gathered by the police.<sup>27</sup> The Perth Museum incorporated an art gallery in 1895 and the VPL moved from the leased premises on St Georges Terrace to a larger home in the Jubilee Building in 1897, moving again in 1903 to an adjoining purpose-built library. As a result of overcrowding in the 1903 building, the VPL expanded again with the opening of Hackett Hall in 1913.<sup>28</sup> In 1911, the institutions were amalgamated to form the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia (PLMAGWA).<sup>29</sup> James Sykes Battye became the General Secretary of PLMAGWA from 1912 until his death in 1954 and was Chief Librarian.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the local motives to preserve the history of the early colony, an initial national push for historical record collecting came from the Australian librarian and historian, F.M. Bladen, who, in

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24 Hansard, 16 June 1887, pp. 1-2; "Victoria Public Library. History of the Institution," *Western Mail* 25 June 1897, 29. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article33141051>.

25 "The Victoria Public Library," *Western Mail* 2 February 1889, p.5. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32716507>.

26 "The Victoria Public Library," *Western Mail* 2 February 1889, p.5. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32716507>; Victoria Public Library Management Committee minutes, 27 December 1888. SROWA Cons 658, Item 1; "The Crystal Palace Mining Exhibition," letter to the editor *Western Mail* 22 March 1890, p.18. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32733731>.

27 *Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery*, Perth 1900, pp. 1-2

28 Peter Biskup, "The Public Library of Western Australia: 1886-1955," *Australian Library Journal* 9 (1960), p.6.

29 "Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery. The Annual Reports," *West Australian* 6 September 1912, p.8. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article26520561>.

30 "The Public Library. Art Gallery and Museum. The Annual Reports. Effect of Reduced Grants," *West Australian* 16 October 1915, p.8. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article26959717>.

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1902, was commissioned to visit archives in the United Kingdom and Europe to investigate archival practices. His report to the Commonwealth of Australia was printed in 1903. He reported that in each country he visited:

A most marked amount of attention has been ... paid to the preservation and publication of the *original State papers and records*. They are now universally regarded as being the only material on which a historian having any claim to accurate and scientific methods will allow himself to rely, in fact, the only pure sources of history.<sup>31</sup>

Bladen's report was circulated to the Australian state premiers, which prompted WA premier Walter James to write, in 1903, to the Colonial Secretary: 'The attached paper is of interest. Where are our old records and what effort is made to take care of them?'<sup>32</sup> The request was passed to the Record Keeper in the Colonial Secretary's Office, A.O. Neville, who is known for his later work as Chief Protector of Aborigines. In response, Neville wrote that until WA achieved Responsible Government in 1890, all documents were distributed through the Colonial Secretary's Office, so it contained the main records for the colony. In all, there were thousands of 'valuable and interesting documents amongst these old records', which dated back to 1829, and which were stored in the record room and in unlocked cupboards in passages.<sup>33</sup> Some were misfiled, and others had been lost to silverfish and mice. Additionally, the index books to the letters used three or four different methods of recording which made it difficult to find particular papers.<sup>34</sup> After gathering information about the varied practices of record sorting and storage in NSW, Premier James directed Neville as the Record Keeper, Octavius Burt, the Under Secretary of the Colonial Secretary's Office, and Battye, to recommend the best method for preserving old records.<sup>35</sup>

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31 WA, CSO, 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, report, p.5." SROWA WAS 675, Cons 752. My emphasis,

32 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, memorandum, Walter James to Colonial Secretary, 11 September 1903, p.2. SROWA, Cons 752.

33 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, letter, AO Neville to The Under Secretary [W.K. – Walter Kingsmith?], nd but enclosed with cover note dated 15/9/1903 from Under Secretary [F.C.? North] to Colonial Secretary; 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, 3. SROWA, Cons 752.

34 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, letter, AO Neville to The Under Secretary [W.K. – Walter Kingsmith?], nd but enclosed with cover note dated 15/9/1903 from Under Secretary [F.C.? North] to Colonial Secretary; 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, p.3. SROWA, Cons 752.

35 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, file note, W.H.J. [Premier?] 27/11/1903, p.17. SROWA, Cons 752.

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In December 1903 the group recommended that Battye be given authority to look through the old records and identify those of 'value to the future historian of Western Australia', which should be arranged, indexed and preserved.<sup>36</sup> Another recommendation vested power in Battye to 'go through the records in Government House, C.S.O., Lands Department and in any other place under government control which he might deem likely to possess anything of value'.<sup>37</sup> In his preservation of archives report to the Colonial Secretary in 1904, Battye suggested that items of particular importance, such as the original proclamation of Sir James Stirling occupying the territory of Western Australia as a dependency of the British Crown on 18 June 1829, should be kept safely in the Public Library.<sup>38</sup> This 'foundational document' which made a declaration of British sovereignty over Aboriginal people and their country was singled out as of particular importance, and is revealing of Battye's focus as an archivist and the power vested in him in choosing what to preserve and what to discard. He later reflected at the inaugural meeting of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society in 1926 on his discovery of this document, stating that, 'Some years ago he had been asked to look over a heap of so-called rubbish which was about to be consigned to the incinerator. Many interesting relics were salvaged from the "heap of rubbish". One of them proved to be the original proclamation which James Stirling had held in his hand when he proclaimed the colony in 1829'.<sup>39</sup> What was discarded in the 'heap of rubbish', however, is unknown. The review of records was completed and approved in March 1904, with binding and indexing to be undertaken by the Library.<sup>40</sup> In June 1904 the Premier and Colonial Secretary agreed that the bound records could be stored in the Library to protect them from dampness and rats.<sup>41</sup>

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36 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, report, JS Battye, O Burt and AO Neville to the Colonial Secretary, 8 December 1903, pp.19-20. SROWA, Cons 752.

37 quoted in Michael Nind, 'Towards a state archive of Western Australia, 1903-1945', *Early Days*, vol.11, issue 3, 1997, p.366.

38 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, report, JS Battye to the Colonial Secretary, 11 March 1904, pp.27-9. SROWA, Cons 752.

39 'Historical Society, inaugural meeting, saving old records', *Western Mail*, 16th September 1926, p.25

40 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, file notes, WHJ 19 March 1904, WK 21 March 1904, p.30. SROWA, Cons 752.

41 1921/2532, Archives – Preservation of, letter, Chief Librarian to the Premier, 14 June 1904; file notes WHJ and WK 15 June 1904, p.32. SROWA, Cons 752.

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1904 was the 75th anniversary of the colony, and this occasion prompted J. G. Hay, manager of the Official Inquiry and Information Bureau in Perth to attempt to research the history of early settlement in the colony with a view to publishing a short history.<sup>42</sup> However, he had great difficulty finding enough information. After contacting the Agent General in London, H.B. Lefroy, requesting assistance, he wrote the following in a letter to the Editor of the *West Australian*:

Some persons think the time has come for a history to be written of Western Australia; I do not share that opinion, simply because we have not the material ... We require first a collection of reliable matter taken from the original reports, and then in capable hands a history might be attempted ... My own views are that we should ... obtain copies from elsewhere, of the correspondence, despatches, etc., as well as the journals of previous explorations, to that of the British.<sup>43</sup>

This work was begun, prompting the copying project in the United Kingdom undertaken in 1904-07 which became known as the Swan River Papers.<sup>44</sup> Alice Mayes, who had assisted James Bonwick in his research for New South Wales records, was employed by H.B. Lefroy, Agent General for WA, to find and copy documents such as the 'Instructions sent to Captain Fremantle to take possession of the West Coast of New Holland' and 'Any other documents (or copies) of value bearing on the early history of Western Australia as may come to light during search for the above information'.<sup>45</sup> While Mayes had a clear directive of what to copy from Lefroy, Walter James, who replaced Lefroy as Agent General in 1905, revealed in a letter to the Colonial Treasurer in Perth that not everything was important to keep:

Some old records connected with the Australind settlement and Western Australian company were handed to this office some time back ... As they may have some historical value, it has been thought better not to have them thrown away, so I am

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42 JG Hay, Manager, The Official Inquiry and Information Bureau, letter to HB Lefroy, Agent General for WA, London, 20 June 1904. Agent General, "Early Records and Settlement of Western Australia," AU WA S2838, Cons 1150, 0563.

43 JG Hay, letter to the Editor, *West Australian* 29 June 1904, 10. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article25091988>

44 Nind, "Towards a State Archive", pp.366-7.

45 HBL, file note, 19 September 1904, and HB Lefroy, letter to AJ Mays, 21 September 1904. Both in Agent General, "Early Records and Settlement of Western Australia," AU WA S2838, Cons 1150, 0563.

having them sent out by the R.M.S. "Orotava" packed in two cases, so that they may be examined at your end and what is valueless then destroyed.<sup>46</sup>

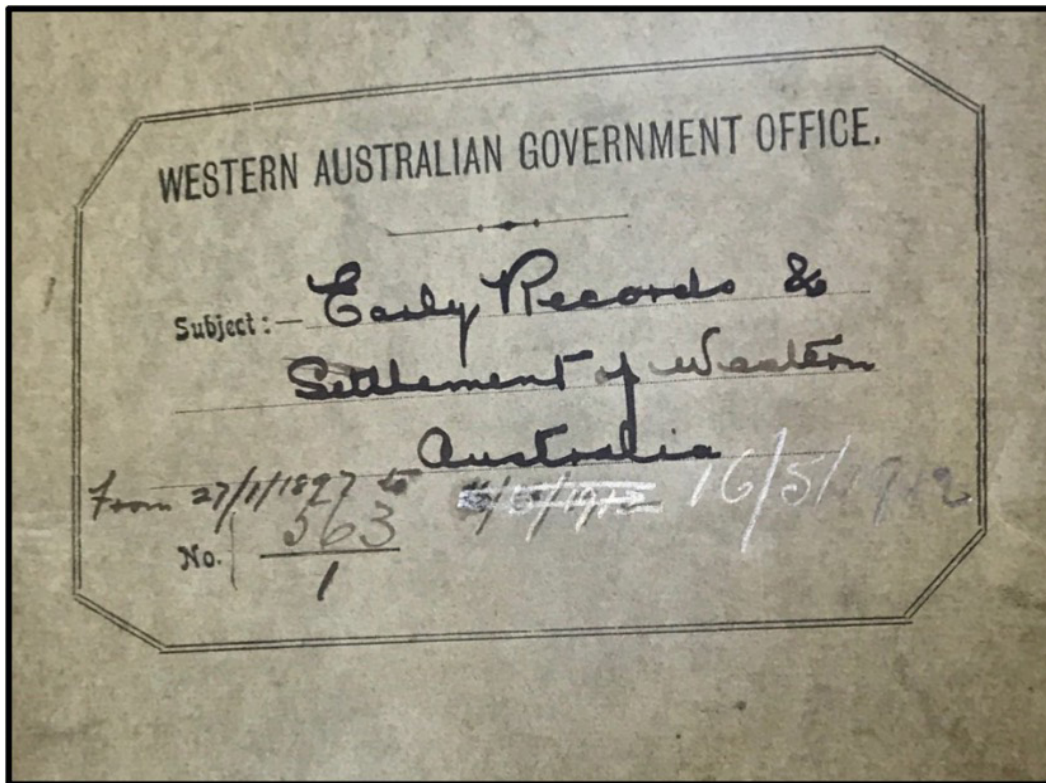


Figure 2 : Agent General, 'Early Records and Settlement of Western Australia', (State Records Office of Western Australia, AU WA S2838, CONS 1150, 0563).

Hidden in Mayes' Swan River Papers collection, buried in a 15-page letter from John Morgan, colonial storekeeper at Swan River, to Colonial Under Secretary, Robert Hay in London, is a pen and ink sketch by Menang Noongar man, Gyalliput, of his 'encampment'. At the end of the letter, Morgan wrote that Gyalliput was with him at the table and 'has been with me the greater part of the time I have been writing this letter ... after amusing himself with a pen, at my table, which he now holds tolerably well, - he has just now drawn for me, a sketch of his native encampment'. Morgan understood the value in this sketch, as he thought it was 'the first ... certainly drawn by

46 Walter James to Colonial Treasurer, Perth, 10 March 1905. Agent General, "Early Records and Settlement of Western Australia," AU WA S2838, Cons 1150, 0563.

any Aborigine of this country'.<sup>47</sup> He slipped it into the back of his letter to Hay. As Tiffany Shellam has written, Gyalliput had travelled from his Menang Country in Albany to Perth in 1833, with Albany's Resident Magistrate, Alexander Collie, when he met Morgan. This sketch, produced at Morgan's table on 28 January 1833, copied from the original in the UK archives between 1904-7, is the first Aboriginal-produced collection in the Library, and possibly the first ever sketch with ink on paper by an Aboriginal person in Western Australia.<sup>48</sup>

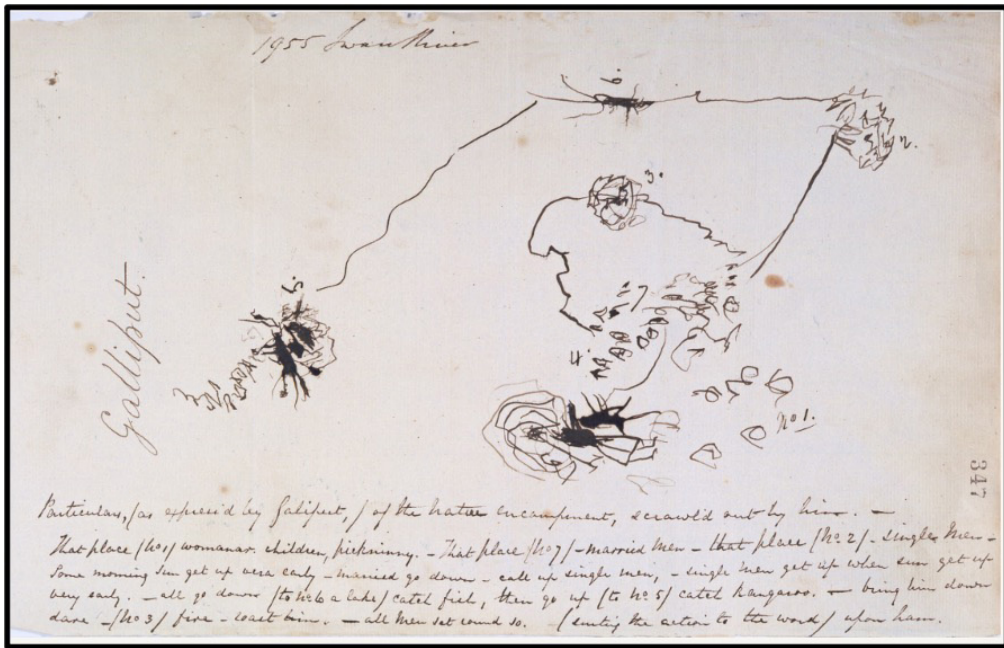


Figure 3: Gyalliput's sketch of Native Encampment, in a letter from John Morgan to Robert Hay, 1833, (State Records Office of Western Australia, Swan River Papers, Vol. 15, pp. 50- 65)

It's significance (and perhaps even its existence in the Library) would not be discovered until it was reproduced in 1984 in Lois Tilbrook, *Nyungar Tradition: glimpses of Aborigines of South-Western Australia 1829*.<sup>49</sup> It is now in SROWA, following the separation of the Library and the

47 John Morgan, Letter from John Morgan to Colonial Secretary Hay, 28 January and 3 February 1833', Swan River Papers, vol.15, pp.50-65, SROWA.

48 For detailed history of this artwork and the encounter during which it was produced, see Tiffany Shellam, *Shaking Hands on the Fringe: Negotiating the Aboriginal world at King George's Sound*, Crawley, UWAP, 2009; Tiffany Shellam, 'Nyungar Domains: Reading Gyalliput's geography and mobility in the colonial archive', in B. Silverstein (ed), *Conflict, Adaptation, Transformation: Richard Broome and the practice of Aboriginal history*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 2018, pp.80-96; Andrew Sayers and Carol Cooper, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1994.

49 Lois Tilbrook, *Nyungar Tradition: glimpses of Aborigines of South-Western Australia 1829*, Crawley, UWA Publishing, 1983, p.11.

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State Records Office in 1999.<sup>50</sup>

As Michael Nind argues, Battye and government statistician Malcolm Fraser identified documents for Mayes' search, but Battye did not pursue further records for the Library, or use the ones he had acquired to establish even a small archive.<sup>51</sup> As Nind stated, 'at this time the Public Library was intended to serve as a safekeeping rather than as a reference access point'.<sup>52</sup> Battye did identify a small number of books on a list that was sent to him by Walter James from the bookseller, Mr Thomas Thorpe in Reading. One book he desired to purchase was Mrs E. Millet, *An Australian Parsonage: or the settler and the savage in Western Australia*, with a frontispiece, (1872). However, by the time Battye replied to the Agent General, Thorpe had sold the book elsewhere. This book is in the Library collection today, probably purchased in 1906, and narrates a story of firsthand Aboriginal-European encounters in the 1860s from the perspective of an English immigrant woman, with claims of racial superiority.<sup>53</sup> The Agent General replied to the bookseller in February 1905 requesting that he 'please keep a watch on the rarer volumes on Dutch and Portuguese exploration'.<sup>54</sup>

What is clear from the above account of the origins of the Library and its desire to collect historical records is that the focus was, from the very beginning, to collect material with which to tell the

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50 In 1988 the State Archives became a separate directorate within the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) and in 1990 a Records Management Branch, (now called Recordkeeping Services), was established to enable more active engagement in records management matters at both state and local government levels. In 1995 the State Archives was renamed the Public Records Office and the responsibility for private archives was transferred to the Battye Library in 1996. In April 1999 the SRO moved to its current home on the ground floor of the Alexander Library Building and was officially christened with its current name. In November 2000 the State Records Act was passed, the State Records Commission was established and the State Records Office became independent. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State\\_Records\\_Office\\_of\\_Western\\_Australia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Records_Office_of_Western_Australia)

51 Nind, 'Towards a State Archive', pp.366-7.

52 Ibid, p.367

53 Millet, E. *An Australian Parsonage: or the settler and the savage in Western Australia*, England, E. Stanford, 1872, BL rare books 000909. The book is stamped '64 9 06', suggesting it was acquired in 1906, and it was first borrowed in July 1957, thanks to Peter Edwards for this information, pers comm, 22/12/2022.

54 R. C. Hare to Thomas Thorpe, Reading, 4 February 1905, Agent General, "Early Records and Settlement of Western Australia," AU WA S2838, Cons 1150, 0563.

story of the explorers and colonists. That objective permeates the early collecting history, which focused on 'foundational documents', and had an impact on the collecting of records relevant to Aboriginal people, their history and the history of colonisation itself. Gyalliput's sketch was only copied and kept because it was in John Morgan's letter. The history of this image in the Library and state archives, points to the need to check all archival records for any Aboriginal content and provide an updated index to them. Indexing such material should be an ongoing process.

## 1.2 Collecting colonial progress: Building the foundations of the pioneer narrative



Figure 4: Governor Broome laying the foundation stone of the Victoria Public Library, 1887, (State Library Western Australia, 000617D)

From the 1890s to the 1900s, the Library collected Western Australian heritage material with a focus on colonial records which highlighted the achievements of pioneers, evidenced in such documents as the statistical reports of the colony and Aboriginal language books, which portrayed

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the European recorder as an ethnographic authority. Encounters with and relationships between Aboriginal people and colonisers are central in many of these records, some of which contain rich ethnographic observations about Aboriginal people, their cultural knowledge and language. However, the collections that were made in this era, were largely acquired with the intention of preserving the memory and achievements of the European pioneers and their progress in creating the Swan River Colony, rather than as a record of Aboriginal culture and people contained within them. Aboriginal language lists were made by early colonists partly out of an interest in philology, as a way of understanding humanity's migration patterns, a competitive drive to be seen as *the* authority on Aboriginal language and customs, and to help facilitate the tasks of administrators and missionaries in 'dealing with Aboriginal people in colonial situations'.<sup>55</sup>

Other factors that may have contributed to the collecting context include strong criticism from humanitarian observers about the harsh treatment of Aboriginal people by colonists, police and government agents in the Kimberley and at Rottneest Island Aboriginal Prison.<sup>56</sup> This framework for collecting took place within the context of the passing of the *Aborigines Protection Act of 1886*, the establishment and abolition of the Aborigines Protection Board (1887-98), Western Australia's new status of Responsible Government, obtained in 1890 and the *1905 Aborigines Act*. A more practical factor which dictated some of the early acquisitions of the Library was the *Copyright Act of 1895* which required a copy of every book published in Western Australia, together with any maps, prints or engravings which were included with the book, to be lodged at the VPL within two months of publication.<sup>57</sup> A separate column in the Stock Books indicates which publications came into the Library under this legislation.

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55 Phillip Jones, 'Words to Objects: origins of ethnography in colonial South Australia', *Records of the South Australian Museum*, 2000, 33 (1), p.38.

56 See *Studies in Western Australian History*, vol. 30, 2016, in particular, Jane Lydon, 'Introduction: Section 70 of the Western Australian Constitution Act 1889, or "Throwing Dust in the Eyes of the people"', pp.1-7.

57 Western Australia, An Act to Regulate the Law of Copyright, and for Other Purposes [The Copyright Act], 1895, Section 7. [https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law\\_a3223.html](https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/law_a3223.html).

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## Building the colonial archive

The colonial archive collections were built via a combination of legal requirement, donations by key colonial figures and purchases of second-hand books about the Swan River colony from Angus and Robertson booksellers. In 1890, just one year after it opened, the VPL accepted a donation from Spanish Benedictine missionary, Rosendo Salvado, of his 1851 memoir in Italian, *Memorie Storiche dell’Australia*, (translated into English in 1977 as *The Salvado Memoirs*).<sup>58</sup> The book was written by Salvado partly as propaganda to raise money for New Norcia Aboriginal Mission, which he established on Yued Nyungar country in 1847. It narrates a story of pioneer progress and missionary success, with Salvado as the humble protagonist, a man of ethnographic authority and a harbinger of Christianity and Civilisation.

While Salvado started this book as a submission in response to religious disputes in the Swan River Colony, he then expanded it for publication in 1851. Funds raised also went back to the colony.<sup>59</sup> While it includes extensive cultural information about Yued people and Aboriginal residents of New Norcia and has a list of Yued and Ballardong words spoken at New Norcia it would be used by early twentieth century historians as an influential record for the gentry tradition in Western Australian historical writing, developed and encouraged by Battye. In the inscription on the title page of Salvado’s *Memorie Storiche*, Salvado wrote that he was giving this copy to the VPL on his 77th birthday, 1 March 1890. The VPL now has four copies of this book in Italian: three of the original 1851 publication and one from 1852.<sup>60</sup> There are also later copies in English, French and Spanish.<sup>61</sup>

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58 Rudesindo Salvado, *Memorie Storiche dell’Australia, Particolarmente della Missione Benedettina di Nuova Norcia e degli use e Costumi degli Australiani*. (Rome: S. Congreg. De Propaganda Fide, 1851); Minutes of the Victoria Public Library Management Committee, 31 March 1890. SROWA AU WA S4423, Cons 658, Item 1.

59 E.J. Stormon, 'Introduction', *The Salvado Memoirs: Historical Memoirs of Australia and Particularly of the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia and of the Habits and Customs of the Australian Natives*, edited and trans by EJ Stormon, Nedlands, UWA Press, 1977, pp.xiii-xiv.

60 The 1851 publications are 000242, 000245 and 001855 in the Rare Materials collection. [https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb1643371](https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C_Rb1643371). The 1852 publication is 000244 in the Rare Materials collection. [https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb1220355](https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C_Rb1220355).

61 Reference numbers 266.2 SAL.

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Salvado's book is a key example of the ways in which the material collected by the Library in the first 50 or so years of its existence sought to document the lives of the 'pioneers' while also furnishing the the raw materials from which historians crafted what historian Tom Stannage referred to as a tale of pioneer progress, which, as he argued, 'helped to ... validate and serve the British Empire', while promoting Social Darwinism.<sup>62</sup> Salvado's *Memorie* is also the first of several books in which local Aboriginal languages were recorded and which represent the colonist's interests in Aboriginal people. In 1895 the VPL purchased a large selection of second-hand books from Angus and Robertson which included George Grey's *A Vocabulary of the Dialects of South Western Australia* (London, 1840), and Rev. J Brady, *A Descriptive Vocabulary of the Native Language of Western Australia* (Rome, 1845).<sup>63</sup> Other early second-hand purchases were books about Aboriginal people in other Australian colonies, such as in 1897 Daniel Bunce's *Language of the Aborigines of Victoria* (Melbourne, 1851)<sup>64</sup> and Richard Sadleir's *Aborigines of Australia* (Sydney, 1883).<sup>65</sup> In 1899 the Library also acquired *Aborigines of North West Australia*, which is described as a vocabulary, mostly from the north west Pilbara region. It was published in 1899, under the pen name 'Yabaroo', but the author has been identified as Alexander Steward Cameron.<sup>66</sup> In 1904, the 75th anniversary of the colony, the VPL also received George Fletcher Moore's *A Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language in Common Use Amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia* (London, 1842), which was presented by Guildford colonist J. Morrison Esq.<sup>67</sup>

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62 Tom Stannage, 'New Norcia in History: changing the frame', in David Hutchison (ed), *A Town Like No Other: The Living Tradition of New Norcia*, Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995, p.99.

63 George Grey: Stock Book, Cons 2650 01, ACC2279. Purchased from Angus and Robertson for £0.5.3 as part of a large collection of secondhand books on 10 December 1895. This may be rare book 000051; Rev Brady: Stock Book, Cons 2650 01, Acc. 2288. Printed at the press of S. C. de Propaganda Fide in 1845, like Salvado's *Memorie Storiche dell'Australia* six years later in 1851. Purchased from Angus and Robertson for £0.3.9 as part of a large collection of second-hand books on 10 December 1895. This may be Rare Book 000165 or 003793. There are also two copies in the library at 499.15 BRA, and a copy in Italian at Rare Book 003794.

64 Stock Book, Cons 2650 02, Acc.5801, now 499.15BUN. Purchased for £0.7.6 from Angus and Robertson on 22/11/1897.

65 Stock Book, Cons 2650, Acc. 5824, now Q00372 or Q994.004SAD. Purchased for £0.7.6 from Angus and Robertson on 22/11/1897.

66 Yabaroo, *Aborigines of North West Australia*, Perth, J.W. Barnard, 1899, ACC000347

67 Presented by J Morrison Esq, Guildford. Stock Book, Cons 1915A, 4, Acc. 23008. Now 499.15 MOO. Morrison also presented Moore's 1834 *Extracts from the Letters and Journals of George Fletcher Moore*. Acc 23009, now ASLIB48220744B.

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While vocabularies were produced in the 1830s and 40s to understand Aboriginal people and facilitate their governance through communication, the collection of them by the Library in the 1890s and early 1900s were due to an overwhelming yet erroneous belief that Aboriginal people were doomed to 'die out'. This idea drove the collection of Aboriginal languages as a way of preserving languages believed to be on the cusp of extinction. In 1904 the Registrar General, Malcom Fraser, began to actively acquire Aboriginal language lists for a 'short historical record' he was writing on the 'habits, customs, and language of the various tribes of aboriginal native inhabitants of Western Australia'. Newspaper editors across the state were sent a letter from Fraser, with an accompanying booklet in which to compile a vocabulary.<sup>68</sup> Fraser's focus was on recording the language of this 'gradually disappearing race' due to the 'increase and spread of settlement', to preserve the language for 'this and future generations'. Fraser directed the information being collected, sending out 'short instructions as to what information is required and the correct method of furnishing it'.<sup>69</sup>

Newspaper editors across the state printed Fraser's request. *The Malcolm Chronicle* and *Leonora Advertiser* described Fraser's directive:

accompanying Mr Fraser's letter is a booklet giving a general vocabulary with spaces left after each word in which to fill in the native equivalent, and a number of questions are set down for answers. It is intended that the work shall be illustrated, and to this end Mr Fraser will gladly receive any photographs depicting the natives and their customs in their wild state.<sup>70</sup>

Fraser also requested old manuscripts and books depicting Aboriginal life and customs be made available to him for copying. It is not clear if the vocabularies (and photographs) that were

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68 This kind of circular directing colonists to record ethnographic information about Aboriginal people had previously been undertaken by Governor Hutt in 1839 and by Daisy Bates. See also James Urry, "Notes and Queries on Anthropology" and the development of field methods in *British Anthropology, 1870-1920*, *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1972, No. 1972 (1972), pp. 45-57

69 'Native Vocabulary', M.A.C. Fraser, to the Editor, *Narrogin Advocate and Southern Districts Courier*, 14 September 1904, p.4.

70 'The Aboriginal Tribes', *Malcolm Chronicle and Leonora Advertiser*, 9 September 1904, p.2.

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collected by Fraser were ever lodged in the Library, or whether they were part of the deposit of the Registrar General's records into the SROWA in the 1960s. Nevertheless this active collecting of Aboriginal languages is revealing of another government agent, working alongside Battye, and their acquisition focus.<sup>71</sup>

In the large purchase of books from Angus and Robertson in 1897 were several books on Aboriginal people from Victoria and Tasmania, their culture and 'capabilities'; such observations were part of the early debates about Aboriginal futures and the risk of civilisation, written by colonists. These purchases included: William Westgarth's, *A report on the condition, capabilities and prospects of the Australian Aborigines* (1846); J.E. Calder, *The native tribes of Tasmania* (1875); Nirseon (?), *Aborigines of Tasmania* (no date); Great Britain, papers by command, 'Aborigines 1837-39'.

Pioneer historical collecting is also evidenced in the absences of collections as well as the presence of them. Amongst the books acquired by Angus and Robertson was Rev J. Gribble's *Black, but comely, or glimpses of Aboriginal life in Australia* (London, 1884).<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to note the purchase of this book, but not Gribble's 1886 publication *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land, or Blacks and Whites in North-west Australia*, in which Gribble revealed the slave-like conditions under which Aboriginal people were living in Western Australia's north. *Dark Deeds*, a pamphlet-book first published in serial form in the *West Australian* and *Inquirer* newspapers, enraged the gentry establishment in Perth as it criticised the brutal conditions inflicted upon Aboriginal people by north-west pastoralists. As this book was published in Perth in 1886 legally it should have been acquired as part of the *Copyright Act* but was not acquired by the Library in the period 1894-1906. There is a copy in the Library today but it has been given a new cover and there is no acquisition date recorded. While Gribble's earlier book *Black, but Comely* also told of the mistreatment of

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71 Thanks to Damien Hassan at SROWA for assistance with this information.

72 Rev. J. Gribble, *Black, but comely, or glimpses of Aboriginal life in Australia*, Morgan and Scott, London, 1884, 306.0899915 GRI

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Aboriginal Australians, it focused on NSW and did not implicate Western Australian pioneers, nor rouse such strong defence in the Perth society.<sup>73</sup>

The VPL also purchased or received as donations historical works about Western Australia.<sup>74</sup> For example, in 1898 the Library purchased a further collection of second-hand and recent books from Angus and Robertson in Sydney. These included WH Knight's *Western Australia, Its Advantages as a Field for Emigration* published in Perth in 1870.<sup>75</sup> In April 1900 the Library purchased from London-based second-hand bookseller Francis Edwardson, Rev. F.G. Powell's *Narrative of a Voyage to the Swan River (1831)*<sup>76</sup>, and Frederick Chidley Irwin's *State and Position of Western Australia (1835)*.<sup>77</sup> These London-based publications that were purchased are a reminder that the first impressions of the early colony, the Aboriginal people, and the colony's 'progress' were written for an imperial audience in England, where they received their greatest readership.

Many of the earliest acquisitions were archival in nature, and like some of the earliest rare books, they were often donated by close family members. A collection of old volumes of the *Inquirer* newspaper were donated by Mrs Lochée in 1894, whose husband Francis Lochée had recently died, and who had been proprietor and editor of the *Inquirer* newspaper in Perth from 1840 to

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73 Thanks to John Hughes at SLWA for this information. See also Su-Jane Hunt, 'The Gribble affair: a study in colonial politics', in Bob Reece and Tom Stannage (eds), 'European-Aboriginal relations in Western Australian history', *Studies in Western Australian History*, UWA Publishing, 1984.

74 One of the first of these was William Dampier's 1697 *A New Voyage Around the World* which may touch on his time near King Sound in early 1688. Stock Book, Cons 2650 01, Acc. 11.

75 Stock Book, Cons 2650 02, Acc. 6842, purchased from Angus and Robertson on 29/4/1898 for £0.2.1. Current library number is 000722 or 994.1KNI. [https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb1313924](https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C_Rb1313924).

76 Stock Book, Cons 2650 02, Acc. 12045, purchased from F Edwards, 12/4/1900 for £0.6.9. Now 000721 or 994.1KEL. [https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb1525313](https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C_Rb1525313).

77 Stock Book, Cons 2650 02, Acc. 12044, purchased from F Edwards, 12/4/1900 for £0.6.9. Now 001098 or 994.1IRW.

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1846.<sup>78</sup> The committee considered they were 'of so much interest, that they intend[ed] to have them re-bound'.<sup>79</sup> While they were collected for their broad insight into the early years of the colony, they contained many references to Aboriginal people and their encounters with colonists. In 1903 another donation from a colonist, F. C. Broadhurst, included a significant overseas publication relating to early Dutch exploration of the west coast: F Pelsaert's *Ongeluckige Voyagie, van't Schip Batavia, nae de Oost-Indien* (published 1647).<sup>80</sup> Broadhurst operated a guano mine on the Abrolhos islands, and while working on Gun Island developed a deep interest in Dutch exploration, finding many relics of the Dutch ship *Zeewijk*. This aligned with the Library's focus on European exploration and 'discovery' and is now considered one the SLWA's 'treasures'.<sup>81</sup>

In 1904, the 75th anniversary of colonisation, and following Bladen's above-mentioned report, the state government directed the Library to collect Western Australian historical government records as part of the commemoration of colonisation. Large numbers of publications donated by the Colonial Secretary's Office come from this 1904 push.<sup>82</sup> Publications relating to Aboriginal people were solely about their governance by colonial authorities, and include the 1897 published correspondence regarding the proposed abolition of the 'Aborigines Protection Board'.<sup>83</sup> The VPL also acquired the 1905 *Report from the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives* by anthropologist Walter Edmund Roth which led to Western Australia's draconian *Aborigines Act* in

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78 Copies of the *Inquirer* are held in SLWA at 994.11/PER. They have not been checked to ascertain if they are the copies donated by Mrs Lochée but it seems possible that she would be the only person with a complete run of the newspaper from that time; Merab Harris Tauman, 'Loché, Francis (1811–1893)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lochee-francis-2365/text3101>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 17 May 2019.

79 Meeting 2 February 1894, Minutes of the Victoria Public Library Management Committee, 1888 to 1911, SROWA, Cons 658, Item 1, p.83. Francis Lochée died in 1893.

80 Stock Book, Cons 2650 04, Acc.20782, now 004982. This was valued at £5.5.0 when it was presented on 21/7/1903.

81 Leigh, Hays, Worth Telling, *Worth Keeping: A guide to the collections of the J.S. Battye Library of Western Australian history*, Library Board of Western Australia, 2002, p.17.

82 JS Battye to the Colonial Secretary, 11 March 1904, in AU WA S675, Cons 752, 1921/2532, "Archives – Preservation of", fol. 33-35. See also Stock Book, Cons 2650 04, Acc. 23246-23260; Nind, 'Towards a state archive in Western Australia: 1904-1945', *Early Days*, vol.11,3,1997, p366.

83 Stock Book, Cons 2650 04, Acc. 23258, presented by the Colonial Secretary, Perth on 1 March 1904.

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1905.<sup>84</sup> The value of these papers, according to the archival preservation group (Neville, Burt and Battye) reflected the contemporary emphasis on written records for historians. The report for 1904 advised that:

During the year the Government decided to take steps to ensure the preservation of the old records of the State. The work of arranging, indexing, and binding the documents was placed under the control of the Chief Librarian, and the volumes, when bound, are to be stored in the Public Library. The committee need hardly point out the value of these records, upon which the future historian of this State must almost wholly depend for his information.<sup>85</sup>

In 1905, the government gave the Library the documents relating to the Aboriginal prison on Rottnest Island 'for preservation among the other old records of the State'.<sup>86</sup> By the end of 1905, there were three hundred volumes of historical records in the Library.<sup>87</sup>

While Battye, Neville and Burt shaped much of the collecting in this period, the group's Annual Reports were printed in the *West Australian*, alerting the public to preservation interests of early colonial records. Therefore, donations by leading Western Australian colonial figures also defined some of the early Aboriginal collections, such as Salvado's *Memorie*, and, in 1906, a collection gifted by WA Senator, Alexander Matheson. Matheson's donations included texts relating to the history of early encounters between Aboriginal people and explorers and colonists, such as Thomas Braidwood Wilson's *Narrative of a Voyage Around the World* (1835) which recorded encounters with Nyungar people around Swan River, and his intimate conversations with

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84 Stock Book, Cons 1915A, 4, Acc. 26327, now Q00062.

85 "The Public Library. Report of the Committee", *West Australian* 17 September 1904, p.11. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article25362613>

86 "The Public Library. Committee's Annual Report", *West Australian* 2 December 1905, p.5. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article25529689>

87 *ibid.*

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Menang man, Mokare, at King George Sound, including a Menang vocabulary list.<sup>88</sup> This book has an Appendix on ‘the manners and customs of aboriginal tribes’. While Wilson’s ethnographic observations of Noongar language and culture were recorded in an earlier era of enlightenment science and curiosity, Matheson’s gift of this book in 1906 might be better understood within that era’s framework of settler belief in Aboriginal depopulation, in which early ethnographies were collected in the misguided belief that Aboriginal people were dying out, and therefore were partly motivated by a ‘salvage anthropology’, which positioned Aboriginal people as part of a past but not a future. Matheson, as Brian De Garis has noted,

Like most members of the first Parliament ... favoured a White Australia and this came through strongly in his speech on the Address-in-Reply on 22 May 1901. In addition to opposing coloured migration and the use of Kanaka labour, he disparaged Senator Walker who had acknowledged the prior occupation of Australia by the Aborigines. Matheson stated: “He fails to recognise that we have taken this country from the blacks, and made it a white man’s country, and intend to keep it a white man’s country, so that there is no earthly use in the honorable gentleman saying that 100 years ago this was a black man’s country”. When Walker responded that there were still 100 000 Aborigines, Matheson replied: “We are aware of that fact, and it is very regrettable, and the only consolation we have is that they are gradually dying out”.<sup>89</sup>

## Using the collection

The Library’s history of its Aboriginal collections cannot be separated from the tangled power relations between collecting and writing. The acquisition drive for Aboriginal collections and their use by historians – the dialogue between collecting and writing – was inextricably linked, enriching each practice, and driven by the strength of the gentry or pioneer tradition in the first three-

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88 T. B. Wilson, *Narrative of a voyage round the world : comprehending an account of the wreck of the ship Governor Ready in Torres Straits, a description of the British settlements on the coasts of New Holland, more particularly Raffles Bay, Melville Island, Swan River, and King George’s Sound : also, the manners and customs of the aboriginal tribes : with an appendix containing remarks on transportation, the treatment of convicts during the voyage, and advice to persons intending to emigrate to the Australian colonies*, Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1835. Matheson’s donations are noted in Accession Register on 6th April 1906, accession no.28/173.

89 Brian de Garis, Matheson, Sir Alexander Perceval (1861-1929), Senator for Western Australia, 1901-06 (Free Trade), in *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, online, <https://biography.senate.gov.au/alexander-perceval-matheson/> [accessed 9/02/22] Other books that Matheson gifted include R. Dawson’s *The Present state of Australia* (1831) and Mrs R. Lee’s antipodean novel for women, *Adventures in Australia* (1851).

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quarters of the twentieth century. This relationship was symbiotic and is as old as the Library itself. In 1982, Politician and journalist, Paul Hasluck, reflected on this link when he wrote that ‘the general question of preserving archives, both official and private, was obscured by a narrow view that documents were only worth keeping as material useful for the writing of history’.<sup>90</sup>

While it began with the collecting of history books about Western Australia, the development of a historical records section within the Library and the development of a local historiography occurred at the same time. Partly due to the end of the gold boom in the 1880s, several pamphlets, handbooks and statistical accounts of the colony were written and published locally and acquired by the Library. Some of these included short histories of the colony drawn from records which were either already held by the Library or which would be acquired soon after as a result of publication, for example, Rev Charles Grenfell Nicolay’s *The Handbook of Western Australia* (1880, 2nd edition, 1881). *The Handbook* gave a historical and contemporary overview of the colony, from Dutch ‘discovery’ and colonial exploration to a statement on the extent of settled boundaries and British sovereignty. Nicolay also wrote a 15- page section on ‘The Aborigines’, based on explorer’s accounts, reports that were printed for the government, such as reports by Protectors of Aborigines, ‘native institutions and missions’, and Reports of Commissions of Inquiry.<sup>91</sup> As Nicolay stated, ‘Any account of the Colony would be very incomplete without some notice of the aboriginal inhabitants’.<sup>92</sup> Nicolay’s *Handbook*, though published in 1880, was not donated to the Library until 1898.<sup>93</sup> At this time, Premier John Forrest commissioned the American writer, W.B. Kimberly, to write a history of Western Australia’s goldrush, and in 1897 Kimberly’s *History of West Australia: A narrative of her past together*

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90 Paul Hasluck, ‘The Pre-History of the State Archives’. Address by the Rt. Hon. Sir Paul Hasluck, Friends of the Battye Library, 16th March 1982, p.4.

91 Charles Grenfell Nicolay, *Handbook of Western Australia*, B. Stein and co., Perth, 1881. Nicolay had begun making notes from explorer’s journals, maps and charts in 1876 when they were housed in the Crown Lands and Survey Department: C.G. Nicolay - notes made by Nicolay in 1876 from explorer’s journals, maps and charts in the Department, AU WA S2117- cons 5000 331

92 Ibid., p.215

93 acquired from Government of Western Australia, 31/5/1898, ACC7652

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*with biographies of her leading men* was published in Melbourne and acquired by the Library.<sup>94</sup> Kimberly's history – the first official historical account of Western Australia – utilised early colonial records prior to the acquisition of these records by the VPL, and has a chapter on 'the Aborigines'. As revisionist historian, Phyl Garrick, later noted, Kimberly claimed to write a 'full and true account of the history of the state' and 'Aboriginal-European relations form an integral part'.<sup>95</sup> Paul Hasluck reflected many decades later, Kimberly's history was 'the first extensive exploration of Western Australian documentary records', and he relied heavily on Battye to guide his narrative.<sup>96</sup>

Archivist Michael Piggott suggests archival acquisition stories, 'if imaginatively told ... will yield insights about the behaviour of institutions and the often strong determined personalities leading them, and at the same time add details of the social and cultural contexts of the material itself'.<sup>97</sup> As Principal Librarian from 1894-1954, Battye was the most important influence in making foundational Western Australian historical collections which were the basis for Western Australian historiography until the 1970s. As discussed above, he was on the 1903 committee, which was the first to investigate the best method of preservation of early government records. At the recommendation of the committee, Battye was asked to personally review 'all the old records, and extract such as deal with matters of historic interest, and that such records be placed in the Public Library for safe keeping'.<sup>98</sup> He therefore had great influence on which documents were preserved and which were not. Garrick argued that the:

influence of Battye cannot be overestimated. As State Librarian he was responsible for the collection and selection of historical material and had by implication been influential in determining views of Western Australian history. Through his prestige as

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94 W.B. Kimberly, *History of West Australia: A narrative of her past together with biographies of her leading men*, Melbourne, McNiven, 1897. Most likely acquired on 23rd, 24th or 25th June 1898. Accession no 7639. See also Phyl Garrick, 'Two historians and the aborigines: Kimberly and Battye, commentary on their different attitudes', *Studies in Western Australian History*, no.8, December 1983, pp.111-130.

95 Garrick, 'Two historians and the aborigines', p.1

96 Hasluck, 'The Pre-History of the State Archives', pp.1-3.

97 M. Piggott, 'The history of Australian record-keeping: A framework for research', *The Australian Library Journal*, 1998, 47: 4, p.344.

98 Jas. S Battye, Oct. Burt, and A.O. Neville to the Colonial Secretary, 8/12/1903, 'Archives - Preservation of', Correspondence Files, fol 19.

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an authority on the history of the West, his opinions have shaped ... the attitudes of two generations.<sup>99</sup>

Tom Stannage further critiqued Battye's work as librarian-collector, and later historian, arguing that Battye drove the influential historical template of the pioneer myth: 'the most potent of the major traditions of interpretation of history in and about Australia is modern British historical writing, which was devised to help define Englishness and to validate and serve the British Empire'.<sup>100</sup> This historical tradition had a 'moral purpose': to 'bear the idea of progress', and it set up a dichotomous power relationship of heroic pioneer settlers against a treacherous, hostile and degraded Aboriginal population.<sup>101</sup> This narrative was presented first in 1912 in Battye's edited *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia (Illustrated) in Two Volumes: An Historical and Commercial Review, Descriptive and Biographical Facts Figures and Illustrations: An Epitome of Progress*.<sup>102</sup> As indicated in the title, the *Cyclopaedia* celebrates the pioneer myth of settler achievement and progress. In the preface, he acknowledged a debt to previous historians, writing that '[w]herever possible I have taken advantage of previous publications,' as well as using '[n]ewspaper files, official reports, all those avenues of research open to one with the treasures of a large Public Library at his disposal'.<sup>103</sup> The historian he was indebted to was Kimberly, and as historian Geoffrey Bolton later made clear, Battye's use of Kimberly's work reveal 'parallels ... too numerous for accident'. Garrick pushed this point further to say that 'Kimberly's jigsaw of phrases appear to be reassembled by Battye'.<sup>104</sup> Garrick revealed how the two historians used 'identical source materials', but it is also the 'observations' which are 'couched in language too similar for coincidence'. Garrick suggests that this result may have arisen due to Battye's position

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99 Garrick, 'Two historians and the aborigines', p.124.

100 Stannage, 'New Norcia in History', p.99.

101 Ibid.

102 J.S. Battye (ed.), *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia (Illustrated) in Two Volumes: An Historical and Commercial Review, Descriptive and Biographical Facts Figures and Illustrations: An Epitome of Progress*, Hussey and Gillingham for the Cyclopaedia Co., 1912-1913.

103 Ibid., vol 1, Preface

104 Bolton quoted in Garrick, 'Two historians and the aborigines', p.113

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as Librarian – he assisted ‘extensively in Kimberly’s work and their mutual dependence has been unperceived’.<sup>105</sup> Despite utilising the same sources, there are some key differences relating to the selection and interpretation of them, revealing Battye’s dedication to the ‘pioneer myth’. For example, Battye’s downplaying of Rev Gribble’s vocal criticism of the violence of colonists against Indigenous people in the north, and whose book *Dark Deeds in a sunny land* was not acquired by the Library despite *Copyright Act* requirements, was not referenced in Battye’s *Cyclopaedia*. Instead, Battye dismissed Gribble by stating that ‘[h]is enthusiasm and lack of judgement led him to make serious accusations against the squatters without due consideration of all the circumstances’.<sup>106</sup>

Battye’s *Cyclopaedia* does have a significant section on ‘The Aborigines of Western Australia’, which, he admitted, ‘relied on the Registrar General [Malcolm Fraser] for the excellent information’ published in his *Notes on Natural History etc of Western Australia in 1901*. This inclusion of Aboriginal people alongside ‘natural history’ reflected Fraser’s belief in Social Darwinist tropes of Aboriginal people as being ‘of nature’. Indeed, Battye’s section on ‘Aborigines’ in his *Cyclopaedia* also comes directly after ‘flora’ and before chapter 1: ‘History of Western Australia’, suggesting that Aboriginal people were considered as part of pre-history.<sup>107</sup> In the section on the origins of language and philology, amongst all the language books collected by the Library in the early 1900s, Battye selectively relied on the vocabulary and expedition journals of George Grey, who had become a highly regarded and successful mobile colonial administrator and Governor of both South Australia and New Zealand. Moore’s *Descriptive Vocabulary* is an unexplained absence. In addition to Grey, Battye’s only other Western Australian source is Daisy Bates, while all other ethnographic observations were from colonists in NSW, SA and VIC such as A.W. Howitt, Rev. John Matthews, Edward Curr, and English-based comparative anatomists Thomas Huxley

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105 Ibid., p.113.

106 Battye, *Cyclopaedia*, vol.1, p.218.

107 Ibid., pp.45-46

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and Paul Topinard, despite local ethnographic collections revealing Indigenous Western Australian traditional life, language and culture. This selection of sources assisted with Battye's derogatory analysis of Aboriginal people, their origins, lifestyle and future, drawing on broad racial scientific analysis.

The works of the ethnographers that Battye drew on for the *Cyclopaedia* were also listed in another revealing document that Battye published seven years earlier, in 1905: *Catalogue of books in the Public Library of Western Australia (Queen Victoria Jubilee Memorial)* published by Battye for the Library committee.<sup>108</sup> In the Preface, Battye explained that the books are catalogued and grouped 'under both author and subject'. For example, under the topic 'Aborigines', (see Figure 5b) the books listed match the books used in his 'Aborigines of Western Australia' section in *Cyclopaedia*. However, no books were shelved under the subject 'Aborigines', indeed on the shelf, that subject didn't exist, and the books were dispersed across different subject categories and sub-categories, with a corresponding shelf location (see Figure 5a). Therefore, physically in the Library, these books were shelved under the following topics: **Science – Ethnology** (which included most of the racial science references he used in his *Cyclopaedia*); **Works relating to Australia – Western Australia** (which included Salvado's *Memorie* and Grey's journals of exploration); **Linguistics and Philology – African, American and Polynesian Languages** (which included Grey's Vocabulary); **Works relating to Australasia – Description, Social Conditions etc; and English History – British Colonies**. This physical arrangement of the Aboriginal collections in the Library is evidence of Battye's power to guide Library users through his beliefs and values via the physical categorisation of the collection on the Library shelves. Tellingly, the subheadings used in the catalogue mirror the *Cyclopaedia* references and further reveal Battye's thinking about the content of collections at the time and his power in directing

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108 Battye, J.S., *Catalogue of books in the Public Library of Western Australia (Queen Victoria Jubilee Memorial)*, A-L. [3 copies of the Catalogue have Part 8: M - Migne, (pp. 1-57, undated, but known to have been issued in 1909) bound in. These copies were bound at the Public Library. A note dated in 1902 on the wrapper of Part 8 states: 'The work will be issued in parts of 64 pages with intervals of three months between each part'. Mainly owing to financial difficulties this programme was not maintained; no further parts were issued after part 8.]

Library users in furthering the pioneer narrative tradition.

SECTION.	SUBJECT.	
A.	Theology	
B.	Philosophy	
C.	Linguistics and Philology.	
D.	Literature	
E.	Poetry	
F.	Drama	
G.	Fiction	
H.	History.—Universal and ancient	
I.	„ Greece and Rome	
J.	„ Great Britain and Ireland	
K.	„ France	
L.	„ Other European countries	
M.	„ America	
N.	„ Asia and Africa	
O.	Works relating to Australasia	
P.	Biography	
Q.	Heraldry, Genealogy, etc.	
R.	Topography, Geography, Voyages and Travels, etc.	
S.	Science	
T.	Arts and Trades	
U.	Social Science, Education, etc.	
V.	Law	
W.	Political Science	
X.	Political Economy	
Y.	Statistics	
Z.	Fine Arts, Music and Medicine	
Pam.	Pamphlets	
Pat.	Patents	
		<b>Aborigines.</b> Aboriginal tribes (North America, New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and British Guiana).—Return to several addresses to His Majesty, 19 March, 1834. fo. [Lond.], 1834. <b>S131, 13.</b> (Great Britain. <i>Parl. paper.</i> )
		Report from the Select committee on aborigines (British settlements), with minutes of evidence, appendix and index. fo. [Lond.], 1836. <b>S131, 14</b> ( <i>Ibid.</i> )
		Report from the Select committee on aborigines (British settlements), with minutes of evidence, appendix and index. fo. [Lond.], 1837. <b>S131, 15</b> ( <i>Ibid.</i> )
		Aborigines (Australian colonies). Return to an address of the House of Commons dated 5 Aug., 1844, for copies or extracts from the despatches of the Governors of the Australian colonies, with the reports of the protectors of aborigines, etc. fo. [Lond.], 1844. <b>01, 18</b> ( <i>Ibid.</i> )
		Bannister, S. British colonization and coloured tribes. <b>J12, b2</b>
		Bunce, D. Language of the aborigines of the colony of Victoria, and other Australian districts. <b>Pam. 5, a21</b>
		Calder, J. E. Some account of the wars, extirpation, habits, etc., of the native tribes of Tasmania. <b>S131, a12</b>
		Manning, J. Notes on the aborigines of New Holland. <b>S131, b8</b>
		Roth, W. E. Ethnological studies among the North-west-central Queensland aborigines. <b>S131, f1</b>
		Sadler, R. Aborigines of Australia. <b>S131, 11p</b>
		Smith, Mrs. J. The Booandik tribe of South Australian aborigines. <b>S131, a11</b>
		Smyth, R. B. Aborigines of Victoria. <b>S131, 16-7</b>
		Worsnop, T. Prehistoric arts, manufactures, works, weapons, etc., of the aborigines of Australia. <b>S131, b7</b>

Figure 5A & 5B: Collections categorised under subject and the index under the subject 'Aborigines', J.S. Battye, Catalogue of books in the Public Library of Western Australia, A-L (State Library of Western Australia, Q 016 PUB)

The Catalogue of books also reveals two interesting early Aboriginal collections listed in the Stock Books as being purchased from Angus and Robertson. On the 'Science – Ethnology' shelf in 1905 were two folios of photographs with the same title of 'Australian Aborigines', one made by J.W. Lindt, (no date), and the other by H. King (no date). [See Figure 6] These are stamped with the acquisition date 22 November 1897, making them the earliest photographic collections of Aboriginal people to be collected by the Library, and one of the first Aboriginal collections to be acquired.<sup>109</sup>

109 J.W. Lindt, 'Australian Aborigines', nd, rare books, Q00611; H. King, Australian Aborigines, 3rd Floor RESTRICTED, Q306.0899915KIN.

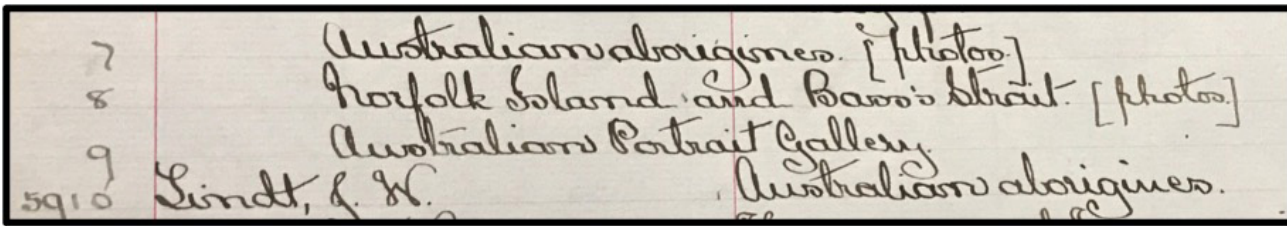


Figure 6: 1897 Stock Book showing purchase of Aboriginal photographs by J.W. Lindt 'Australian Aborigines', From Angus and Robertson (State Library of Western Australia).

With the publication of *Cyclopaedia*, and the establishment of a select colonial archive collection, Battye led the charge on the key twentieth century collecting moment for the Library and related historiography, which was driven by the need to celebrate the 'pioneer settlers' in the lead up to the Centenary of 1929.

### Centenary 1929

Just three years before the centenary of colonisation, and as part of the growing interest in the centenary, the Royal Western Australian Historical Society (RWAHS) was formed by members of the Perth community who were descendants of the colony's elite pioneering families, 'keen to document the story of their success'.<sup>110</sup> Archivist Joanna Sassoon has identified the Library as part of an active 'network of remembering' in the first half of the twentieth century. With the RWAHS, the Library was the force within a broader web of memory institutions and together these institutions 'played an important role in the history of an historical awareness in WA' and in preserving what they perceived should be the 'collective memory' of the state. Preserving and shaping a particular past, and denying Aboriginal heritage, these institutions have had a 'broad influence' on the kinds of histories that were written in the twentieth century.<sup>111</sup> As Sassoon argued, both the Library and the RWAHS collected materials representing their own views on

<sup>110</sup> Hays, *Worth Telling, Worth Keeping*, p.49.

<sup>111</sup> Sassoon, 'Phantoms of Remembrance: libraries and archives as the collective memory', *Public History Review*, vol.10, 2003, p.46.

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the gentry tradition of history in the colony. Battye was a founding member of the RWAHS. At the inaugural meeting, Sir James Mitchell (Premier of WA in 1919-24 and 1930-33) was reported in the *Western Mail* as saying that ‘although this was a new country, there were records and relics concerning it which were very old’.<sup>112</sup> The search for ‘historical data’ and its legacy was a key focus in this meeting, as it was stated that such ‘data would not be only of interest to contemporaries, but would form the basis of local historical knowledge for our children’s children’.<sup>113</sup> One of the Society’s objectives was the ‘creation of a public opinion ... and fit recognition of notable anniversaries in Western Australian history’.<sup>114</sup>

In 1923, in the lead up to the Centenary, the preservation of archives was given renewed focus. Battye had his request approved for the ‘small Advisory Committee’ to become ‘a Board for the collection and preservation of State and private historical Documents. Authority given to secure from any public department documents which the Board deems worthy of preservation’.<sup>115</sup> The Board was responsible for ‘pictures, photographs, maps, documents, relics [historical artefacts], manuscripts, and publications relating to the history of Western Australia’. There is no mention of collecting Aboriginal historical artefacts but in 1929 the Library received ‘a gun lock belonging to the gun with which Baxter, the companion of Eyre, the explorer, was murdered by natives’. This was another example of the celebration of the pioneer: the heroic explorer as a martyr in the face of so-called treacherous ‘natives’. With the growing interest in the Centenary and pioneer histories of Western Australia, Battye wrote a second history of Western Australia for his Doctor of Letters thesis at the University of Melbourne.<sup>116</sup> This was published in 1924 as *Western Australia:*

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112 Historical Society – inaugural meeting, saving old records’, *Western Mail*, 16th September 1926, p.25

113 *ibid*, underline in original

114 *Ibid*.

115 Secretary, Premier’s Department to newly formed Committee, 20/9/1923, fol. 38; and memo from Secretary, Premier’s Department, 13/11/1923, fol. 48. Both in AU WA S36- cons3621 1975/053 Historical - Preservation of Govt Documents (State Archives); Nind, ‘Towards a state archive’, p.369

116 B.K. de Garis, “Introduction”, in J.S. Battye, *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth* (London: Clarendon Press, 1924), n.p.; James Sykes Battye, Private Archives Manuscript Note MN1718, p.2. [http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/mn/mn1501\\_2000/mn1718.pdf](http://www.slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/mn/mn1501_2000/mn1718.pdf)

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*a History From Its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth*.<sup>117</sup> In the preface Battye noted that as part of his research, all the files of the Public Record Office in London had been searched for references to Western Australia, and copies made for the Library. This reveals a very personal curation of archives: Battye's selection of PRO files in London for the Library were the sources he was using for his book, and sources which he chose to then make available for Library users. In addition, he had drawn on the Library's extensive collection of published books and pamphlets about the colony, the 'almost complete files of local newspapers', and the Library's holdings of the Colonial Secretary's Office records to 1876.<sup>118</sup> As well as the Library's collections, Battye also had access to the Colonial Office dispatches to 1901. In the book's Preface, pride in the development of his own collection is clear, stating that the Library 'contains almost all of the published matter in the way of books and pamphlets dealing with the colony'. This publication forged part of the Western Australian community's 'memory making' in the lead up to the centenary celebrations; it reveals the further development of the pioneer historiography in its selection of sources, silences on particular topics and praise for colonists in the foundation of the colony. Battye's inclusion of Stirling's 'Proclamation', the document which he saved from the 'heap of rubbish', is included in full as an Appendix. Battye also made the same claims against Gribble from his earlier *Cyclopaedia*, referencing Gribble's article published in the *Inquirer*, and not *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*. In both *Cyclopedia* and *Western Australia: a History*, Battye attributed European-Aboriginal conflict to the Aboriginal propensity for violence and a 'lust for blood' and theft. As Bob Reece argued, he 'adopted the attitudes of his pioneering heroes', drawing from and interpreting the select sources he had collected.<sup>119</sup>

Battye's enthusiasm infected the community in the affluent Perth suburbs, evident in the Methodist President General, Rev R.R. Fleming's address at a civic reception in 1921 that 'members

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117 J.S. Battye, *Western Australia: A History from its Discovery to the Inauguration of the Commonwealth* (London: Clarendon Press, 1924)

118 *Ibid*, 'Preface', xxx, p.5.

119 Bob Reece, 'Prisoners in their own country: Aborigines in Western Australian historical writing', in B. Reece and T. Stannage, (eds), *European-Aboriginal relations in Western Australian History*, Studies in Western Australian History, 1984, p.132.

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of the older families and controllers of institutions should search through their old boxes and belongings and hand whatever interesting documents may be found to the Public Librarian'.<sup>120</sup> Battye also contacted pioneering families directly, which was a practice of other early librarian-historians, such as the Mitchell Librarian (NSW), Hugh Wright.<sup>121</sup> Battye's focused obsession in acquiring historical documents symbolic of a particular past is evident in his requests for specific donations for the Library, such as the diary sought from W Burgess in 1925 'for collection of all original matter concerning the early days of the colony'.<sup>122</sup> However, the writing from historical records was fiercely guarded by Battye. When Ivor Birtwhistle from the RWAHS asked Battye if the Society could view the CSO records at the VPL, Battye agreed but 'with the proviso that nothing should be published without his agreement ... as "there are quite a number of things amongst those records which it would not be wise to make public"'.<sup>123</sup>

Interestingly, reflecting in the 1980s on the absence of particular records in the Library, Paul Hasluck noted some reluctance by the public in donating records: 'Persons who had custody of other source materials were unwilling to let them pass into the care of the Public Library'.<sup>124</sup> Hasluck believed that this refusal to donate historical records was due to:

some persons with a lively interest of their own in the history of the colonial days or a strong view of their own about the books and articles Dr Battye had written there was some lack of personal confidence and even some resistance to letting "that man" get his hands on what they regarded as "my papers".<sup>125</sup>

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120 Quoted in Reynolds, T and Coggin, C 'The State Archives of Western Australia', in *Western Perspectives*, LISWA, Perth, 1990, R.C. Sharman and A. C. Laurel (eds), p.166.

121 Anne-Marie Whittaker, 'The Librarian as historian: Hugh Wright, C.H. Bertie and their circle', *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 2018, vol.67, no.1, p.22

122 W Burges, letter, 1925 re old diary, sought by Dr Battye, 1925. Listing in AN12, Acc 1198/481. Library Board of WA Correspondence Files, 1926-.

123 Nind, 'Towards a state archive', p370.

124 Hasluck, 'The Pre-history of the State Archives', p.4

125 Ibid

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Battye's collecting drive is most evident in his constant attempts in the lead up to the Centenary to obtain the private archive of John Septimus Roe.<sup>126</sup> He did this by writing letter to the women in the Roe family. Roe had been a midshipman on Phillip Parker King's hydrographic surveys of 1818-22 and later Surveyor General of WA, and his archive documented the pre-colonial European exploration of Western Australia, a record which Battye viewed as a crucial part of the state's 'discovery' story. Perhaps Battye viewed Roe as a kindred collector; Roe had donated the foundational collection of books to the SRMI, some of which later became part of the VPL collection, and some of Roe's material archive had been previously donated to the Perth Museum at the SRMI. Battye wanted Roe's paper archive. An article in the *Daily News* in 1926, stated that: 'many of the private effects of Western Australia's first explorer and Surveyor-General ... are to be seen at the Museum – the institution he founded in the early '40s, when he placed upon the museum's slender shelves the first specimens of the State's minerology ...'<sup>127</sup> This article used public persuasion to encourage the Roe family to donate the logbooks, adding: 'Though the examination of the private effects of Captain Roe, now on view at the Museum, is of absorbing Interest, there are a number of other valuable memoirs of his long, eventful and useful life in the possession of the Roe family, and which, it is hoped, will be added to the present collection'.<sup>128</sup>

Battye persisted in the acquisition of Roe's logbooks throughout the late 1920s, always writing to the Roe matriarchs. Mrs James Roe was asked by the RWAHS to be the Society's Vice-President, perhaps to further persuade her of the importance of her family's place in Western Australian historical legacies.<sup>129</sup> The signatories to the letter, James Mitchell, Edith Cowan and others, stressed that the 'backbone of such an organizationn' as the RWAHS, 'would be people connected by acts of their own with pioneering the state or related to those who performed such

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126 James Sykes Battye to Mrs J B Roe, 28 May 1924, in John Septimus Roe, Papers, (BL ACC 562A/11).

127 'Historical events and personalities, memory echoes', by 'H', *Daily News*, Tuesday 26 January 1926, p.7.

128 *Daily News*, Tuesday 26 January 1926, p.7.

129 Formation of Western Australian historical society, to Mrs James Roe, signed by James Mitchell, Edith Cowan, Mary Farrelly and Ivor Birtwhistle, 26 August 1926, two letters, ACC 563AD/11.

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work'.<sup>130</sup> In July 1928, Battye again tried to acquire Roe's archive, this time urging the family to lend some of Roe's archive to the RWHS for a loan exhibition. On this occasion Battye wrote to Mrs S B Roe in his role as Hon. Secretary of a Loan Exhibition. He asked her to 'join this exhibition by lending some of the interesting material in your possession'. The purpose of the loan exhibition was to 'rouse public interest in exact historical record. Needless to say it will be a fine educative prelude to the Centenary'.<sup>131</sup> Pressure mounted on the Roe descendants from the government as well, with a letter from the Premier's department publicity office written to Mrs J B Roe on 1 February 1928. The letter described how Sir Hal Colebatch had been commissioned by the government to write a history of WA for the Centenary, and that the State Department had been asked to cooperate with Colebatch in the 'collection of data of historic nature which might be used in the publication'.<sup>132</sup> Battye had urged the Premier's office to contact Mrs J.B Roe regarding any 'documents, photographs or sketches dealing with the early history of the State' for Colebatch to use.<sup>133</sup>

Despite Battye's demands, Roe's logbooks, except No.'s 3 and 5 were only lent to the Library for copying in 1955, when Mr J F Roe lent them, together with a collection of letter books, personal letters, commission, certificates, testimonials, Acts and statutes. It was not until 1976 that all this material was received by the Battye Library under 'indefinite loan' from Mrs M B Roe. Other logbooks were transferred from the Lands and Survey Department in 1972.<sup>134</sup> The Battye Library now holds the logs and logbooks kept by Roe during King's Australian survey. As historical records they document the shipboard observations of the coast, events of the expedition,

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130 ACC 563AD/11 26 August 1926

131 James Sykes Battye to Mrs S B Roe, 21st July 1928, John Septimus Roe Papers, (BL ACC 563A/11)

132 Ibid

133 Ibid

134 Battye Library MN0008; See also Library and Information Service Report 1975-76, p.22; James Sykes Battye to Mrs J B Roe, 28 May 1924, in John Septimus Roe, Papers, (BL ACC 562A/11); James Sykes Battye to Mrs J B Roe, 28 May 1924, in John Septimus Roe, Papers, (BL ACC 562A/11); Daily News, Tuesday 26 January 1926, p.7.; James Sykes Battye to Mrs S B Roe, 21st July 1928, John Septimus Roe Papers, (BL ACC 563A/11)

including pre-colonial encounters with Aboriginal people. However, while Battye's work brought records about Aboriginal people into the Library, it would be many years before these were interpreted by historians for evidence of Aboriginal perspectives of early coastal encounters.<sup>135</sup> As Greg Denning reflected, libraries and archives, 'hoard their primary sources: local historical societies are possessive of them: national prestige is measured in the millions of dollars that are paid for them'.<sup>136</sup> The State Library of New South Wales paid nearly \$1 million for a large series of letters that Roe wrote to his family during his Australian expeditions.<sup>137</sup>

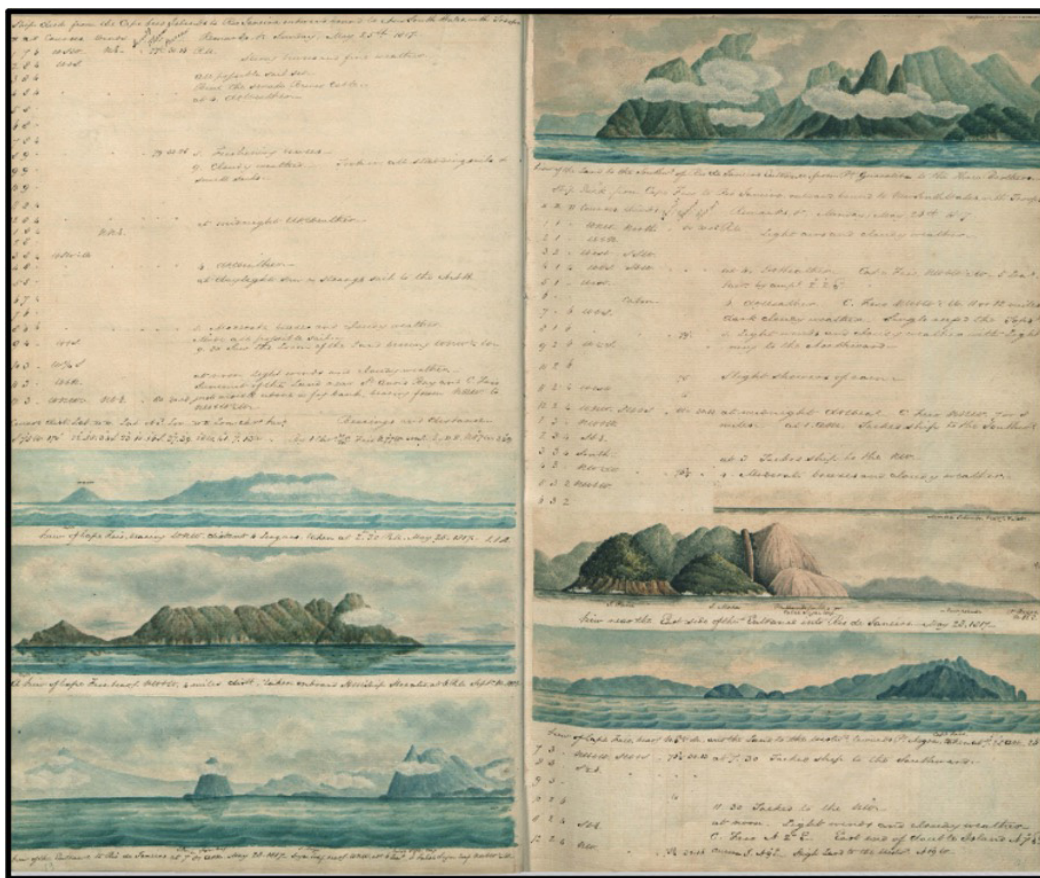


Figure 7: A section of J.S. Roe's log on board The Dick 16 February to 9 September 1817 and log on board HM Cutter Mermaid 16 October 1817 to 29 July 1818, (State Library of Western Australia, ACC301A/01)

135 See Tiffany Shellam, *Meeting the Waylo: Aboriginal encounters in the Archipelago*, Crawley, UWAP, 2019.

136 Greg Denning, *The Death of William Gooch: A history's Anthropology*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1985, p.54.

137 Shellam, *Meeting the Waylo*, p.11.

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The pioneer historiography continued with Colebatch's *A Story of a Hundred Years* (1929), which, as stated above, Battye assisted in the selection of records. Stannage remarked how Colebatch wrote of "Those rare spirits who laid the foundation of the State": the "gallant" bush pioneers'.<sup>138</sup> Like Battye before him, Colebatch's history was a 'success story of patriotism, confidence and courage'.<sup>139</sup> A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines, who had been the Records Keeper in the Colonial Office in 1903/04, wrote the chapter on 'the Aborigines' for Colebatch's book in which, as Stannage noted, he narrated a story of happy progress from 'savagery, nudity, stone-ageness and simpleness. Referring to Aboriginal people in the past tense, he wrote that as a people they "gave way" to the white man'.<sup>140</sup>

While celebratory histories were being written about the south, there was a denial of violence in the north. In 1927, a Royal Commission into the Forrest River Massacres of 1926 uncovered a widespread withholding of information about the atrocities, and the one outspoken critic was Rev E.R Gribble, whose earlier critical history *Dark Deeds in a Sunny Land*, had not been included in the VPL collections. This horrific history of a massacre at Forrest River would take some time to be recorded by historians. As Brian Fitzgerald commented in 1984, 'Historians too were quiet about this incident. Geoffrey Bolton mentioned it briefly in the 1950s but it was not until the 1970s when Peter Biskup claimed some importance for Onmalmeri that it resurfaced as an important part of our past'.<sup>141</sup>

Denial was also occurring in the south. E.O. Shann's history, *Cattle Chosen*, published in 1926 and acquired by the Library in that year, celebrated the history of the pioneering Bussell family. The title of the book, *Cattle Chosen*, was named after the residence of Alfred and John Bussell,

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138 C.T. Stannage, 'Western Australia's Heritage: the pioneer myth'.

139 Tom Stannage, 'New Norcia in History', p.100

140 Ibid

141 Brian Fitzgerald, 'Blood on the Saddle: The Forrest River Massacres, 1926', in Bob Reece and Tom Stannage (eds), 'European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History', *Studies in Western Australian History*, Crawley, UWA Press, 1984, p.16

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the first European home in the Busselton district, built in 1832 on Wardandi Country. Shann's book had a wide readership and as part of the Centenary celebrations in 1929, a plaque was erected on the homestead 'Cattle Chosen', 'surmounted by a black swan'.<sup>142</sup> This book celebrated the Bussell family as peaceful settlers in the south-west. However, the narrative is mixed: Shann quotes from John Bussell's diary in 1837 about frontier violence: 'such a guerilla warfare, once begun must, for the safety of the whites, be quickly stamped out'.<sup>143</sup> Violence against Nyungar people by the Bussell family is now well documented, for example the 1841 Minninup massacre.<sup>144</sup>

Other denials of frontier violence occurred in the lead up to the Centenary. The first edition of the RWAHS journal was published in 1927. Three articles on what is now known as the 'Pinjarra massacre' were published, building a story about treacherous Aboriginal people and their inevitable demise. Mrs Jane Elizabeth Grose wrote 'The background to the Encounter', based on reminiscences of her mother and the diary of her grandfather. Mrs E.S. Ilbery wrote 'The Battle of Pinjarra, 1834 – the passing of the Bibbulmun', presenting a 'dying race' story, and the third paper was by Battye: 'The Official Records of the Encounter', offering a biased interpretation based on his collection and interpretation of sources at the PLV, while the official records statement gave his version of the events the weight of authority.<sup>145</sup>

As well as his work at the Library, and the histories he wrote, Battye's influence is evidenced in the public talks he gave, which were also based on the resources in the Library which he had acquired. This outreach was another way in which he brought important private records into the

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142 <https://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/landscape/settlement/display/93070-%22cattle-chosen%22>

143 Accession number 77,508. Acquired from A.J. Ratcliffe, bookseller for 8'6. Added to Accession Register at SLWA 25th October 1926. E.O.G. Shann, *Cattle Chosen*, chapter 7, *Relations with the Natives*. See also, Malcolm Allbrook, *Henry Prinsep's Empire*, ANU epress, 2014, pp.145-6.

144 Malcolm Allbrook, 'George Coolbul: imagining a colonised life', *Aboriginal History*, vol.32, 2008, p.55; see also Philippa O'Brien, *No Stone without a name: A visual history of possession and dispossession in Australia's west*, Ellenbrook Cultural Foundation, 2022, pp.298-299.

145 E.S. Ilbery, 'The Battle of Pinjarrah, 1834 – the passing of the Bibbulmun', pp.24-29; J. E. Grose, 'The background to the encounter', pp.30-34; J.S. Battye, 'The Official Records of the Encounter', pp.35-38, all in *Early Days*, vol.1, 1927.

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Library and narrated the 'pioneer myth' outwards.<sup>146</sup> Battye gave many talks on local Perth radio station 6WF. In November 1936, his talk was about the difficulties early colonists had experienced with "natives". It began: 'Relations with the natives have invariably proved to be one of the most difficult problems in the history of colonisation, and the little band of settlers who formed the nucleus of the State of Western Australia had that problem to face'.<sup>147</sup>

Battye argued that although the settlers had been apprehensive because of tales of relations with Aboriginal people in other colonies they 'sincerely tried at the outset to make friends with the aborigines, and did not adopt stern measures until they were absolutely compelled to for their own safety', a clear whitewashing of the violent dispossession enacted on Aboriginal people in Western Australia.<sup>148</sup> Battye further stated that the Governor had urged them to act peacefully, and 'to teach them that the white man was not hostile to them nor was it his desire to drive them from their tribal homes'.<sup>149</sup>

Battye's view of Aboriginal people was strongly influenced by Social Darwinism, evident in his use of comparative anatomy for his *Cyclopaedia* and *Western Australia: A History*, and in his approval of violent and hostile acts, and draconian policies of the nineteenth century. As Stannage noted, 'he justified the Pinjarra massacre of 1834. He condemned the Reverend Gribble's attempt to defend the Aborigines of the north; and in the case of the *1899 Constitution Act*, which insisted that one per cent of the gross revenue should go to the Aborigines, Battye was in no doubt that Forrest was right to abolish that clause'.<sup>150</sup>

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146 Fred Alexander, 'Battye, James Sykes (1871-1954)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/battye-james-sykes-5156/text8651>, published first in hardcopy 1979, accessed online 14 February 2017. See also Preservation of Government Documents (State Archives), Cons 3621 1975/053, fol. 68. Thanks to Rebecca Repper for this reference.

147 'Sidelights on Perth', 6WF Tuesday 24 November 1936, James Sykes Battye papers, SLWA Acc 5191A/48, 1.

148 Ibid

149 Ibid

150 Stannage, T., *Western Australia's Heritage: The Pioneer Myth*, University of Western Australia, University Extension, monograph series no.1, 1985, p.10.

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Following the 1929 Centenary, historiography continued in much the same vein as Battye's foundational histories, with several public servants and colonists publishing works which combined Battye's historical collection and their own personal experiences of relations with Indigenous people. In 1936 self-taught anthropologist Daisy Bates published *The Passing of the Aborigines*, a very popular history of what she saw as the 'inevitable extinction' of Aboriginal people and in the same year, A.O. Neville read his paper 'Relations between Aborigines and Settlers in Western Australia', to the RWAHS on 26th June, subsequently published in *Early Days*. This paper drew on both Kimberly's *History of West Australia*, and Battye's *West Australia, A history*, in many instances word-for-word. For example, in writing about Aboriginal violence, he plagiarised from Kimberly 'their [the Aborigines] shrewdness was often demonstrated and when attacked they could offer the most dogged and determined resistance'.<sup>151</sup> Like Battye before him, Neville utilised the following sources which Battye had collected: the *Perth Gazette*, Stirling's *Proclamation*, the Colonial Secretary's Office Records, Shann's *Cattle Chosen*, amongst others.

Other histories followed in the 1930s and 40s, differing from the earlier histories in that they frequently drew on first-hand accounts of meetings and relationships with Aboriginal people, some in a more positive light than others, but all continuing in various degrees the pioneering historical tradition in the utilisation of sources from the Library. These authors were linked across a network of personnel in the Library and government; all (including Neville) were government agents, working in the administration of Aboriginal people, and extending their control of Aboriginal lives in the narration of the past. Jesse Hammond's book *Winjan's People: the story of the south-west Australian Aborigines* was based on Hammond's experience of growing up at Monger's Lake in Perth in the 1860s and his witnessing Aboriginal culture first-hand. Edited by Paul Hasluck and published in 1933, *Winjan's People* was received at the time as being sensitive to Aboriginal capabilities, but can be understood today as part of Social Darwinist thought.<sup>152</sup> Just four years

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151 Neville, 'Relations between Settlers and Aborigines in Western Australia', read before the Society, June 26, 1936, *The Western Australian Historical Society*, p.14, my emphasis.

152 'Winjan's People', *Mirror* (Perth), 13 October, 1934, p.12.

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later, Hammond's *Western Pioneers: the battle well fought* (1937) was published, and the following year he became 'Protector of Natives'. Tellingly, the manuscript of *Western Pioneers*, was submitted to the Imperial Printing Company, and included an introduction by Battye's son, Osland Kenyon Battye. In the Introduction, Osland Battye praised Hammond for his 'breadth and vision and remarkable memory – coupled with the most complete patriotism I have ever encountered – have enabled him to set out a most comprehensive study of old times, paying tribute to those who were the founders of the State'. In fact, Hammond and Osland Battye worked together – Hammond drawing on his memory of pioneering settlers and their achievements, and Osland Battye attempting to verify these memories with his father's collection of pioneering sources in the Library. Today, the SLWA's notes on Hammond describe him in terms relative to the pioneering trope that he helped develop: 'Jesse Hammond was a Western Australian pioneer and author'.<sup>153</sup>

In 1942, Paul Hasluck, who assisted in both of Jesse Hammond's books, published his MA thesis (completed in 1940) *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897*, which utilised British policy and original documents with his first-hand accounts of the reality of life for Aboriginal people. Hasluck had accompanied the Mosely Commission on its investigative tour of WA in 1934 as a journalist. Stannage argues, Hasluck 'attempted to alter the contours of Battye's story'.<sup>154</sup> Others, however, thought he offered a 'measured but devastating judgement on the pioneering era'.<sup>155</sup> A.O. Neville also drew on his experience in Aboriginal governance, for his book, *Australia's Coloured Minority* published in 1947. This was his foundational text promoting his belief in biological absorption, now seen as an attempted genocide of Aboriginal people.

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153 [https://slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/mn/mn3001\\_3500/mn3053.pdf](https://slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/mn/mn3001_3500/mn3053.pdf)

154 Stannage, 'Western Australia's Heritage: The Pioneer myth', p.10; Paul Hasluck, *Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1942.

155 Reece, 'Prisoners in their own country', p.133.

### 1.3 Persistent histories and emergence of Aboriginal rights



Figure 8: Mollie Lukis, on right, accepting records of the Edith Cowan Memorial Committee from Sarah May Monaghan (left) and Harriet Ann Monaghan (Centre), September 1952 (State Library of Western Australia, 005695D)

There were several structural and personnel changes within the Library in the 1940s and 1950s which influenced the collection of Western Australian documentary material. In 1945, in the same year that the Archives Branch was established, Mollie Lukis was appointed as the Library's first archivist. Nearly a decade later, Battye died. Despite his death, and while Lukis is remembered for her social history focus and her work in establishing the oral history department, pioneer collecting and narrating persisted well into the second half of the twentieth century. However, other changes in this second phase included the presence of Aboriginal people in the Library, as library users; an awareness by library users and personnel that the Library was a storehouse *for* information about Aboriginal histories, which included a renewed focus on Aboriginal language books; and new revisionist histories which called the pioneer tradition of historiography into question.

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Changes in personnel inevitably influenced collecting policies. Archivists and librarians continued to have the power to shape the collection, but in different ways to their predecessor, Battye. As Terry Cook has observed, in the early to mid-twentieth Century the role of the archivist changed:

Seen variously as “historian-archivists,” or “handmaidens of historians,” the archivist in this second paradigm discerned appraisal values primarily through the trends in historical writing, and then acquired records as archives to reflect or reinforce those historiographical patterns. Archival records gradually broadened in coverage as historical research itself changed to focus on “history from the bottom up,” on the lives of people in factories, farms, and families, rather than those primarily of the famous and influential ... The archivist thus became an active selector of the archive, if through the filter of academic history, and thereby consciously created public memory. Far from neutral and objective, and guarding what was inherited or received, the archivist determined what would be received by archives, with inevitable subjectivity entering that decision-making process. And so too with description.<sup>156</sup>

### **Professionalisation of Archives and new personnel – 1945 to 1960s**

Prior to Lukis’ arrival, there was little documentation of archives in the Library, in contrast to the published works which were all listed in large registers known as Stock Books.<sup>157</sup> Lukis began recording donations in a large register, which was later separated into registers for archives (A), photographs (B), maps (C), and objects (D).<sup>158</sup> Once the Archives Department was established, there is more information available about what was collected, how it was valued by the Library, and the interest to researchers. While collections were coming into the Library in much the same way to the previous decade, the Library Board was beginning to note that such records con-

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156 Terry Cook, *Archival Science* (2013) 13:95–120, pp. 107-108.

157 Some material, such as the Inquirer newspaper donation, was listed in the minutes of the Victoria Public Library Committee. Meeting 2 February 1894, Minutes of the Victoria Public Library Management Committee, 1888 to 1911, SROWA, Cons 658, Item 1, p.83. Correspondence to and from the library preserved in Colonial Secretary’s Office files gives a little information about government files passed to the archives for safekeeping. See for example, AU WA S675- cons752 1921/2532, 'Archives - Preservation of', Correspondence Files; Preservation of Government Documents (State Archives), Cons 3621 1975/053. In 1910, the Colonial Secretary’s Office started keeping a list of what was sent to the library but it is not known if this was continued. AU WA S675- cons752 1921/2532, 'Archives - Preservation of', Correspondence Files, fol. 71-2, 76.

158 Meroula (Mollie) Frances Lukis, verbatim transcript of an interview recorded by Erica Harvey for the JS Battye Library of West Australian History, recorded June – October 1992, OH2527, p.16.

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tained history relating to Aboriginal people, showing an increased awareness about the utility of previously considered 'colonial collections' beyond the pioneer narrative. For example, in a 1947 talk, Mollie Lukis noted that records relating to Aboriginal people in the Colonial Secretary's Office papers were among those, such as exploration, education and land settlement that were of interest in the Archives collection.<sup>159</sup>

### **Aboriginal words and language lists**

From at least the 1920s, Aboriginal words and language lists were both sought by the Library and Museum from members of the public, and people wrote to Battye directly, requesting Aboriginal names from his existing collection. In August 1926, John C. Thomson from Forrest River Mission wrote to Battye stating that 'I have heard of the book, which the Museum issues, to assist in obtaining a vocabulary of native languages. Will you kindly oblige me by sending me two copies'.<sup>160</sup> Thomson wrote how he had 'often attempted to master the dialect of the people amongst whom I live & work & such a book will be a great help'.<sup>161</sup> Battye's reply to Thomson explained that 'this book was not issued by the Museum but by the Registrar General's Department in 1904. I wrote to that Department for copies but am informed that the remaining copies were destroyed last year as lumber'. This was the vocabulary booklet, sent out by Malcolm Fraser, via editors of the newspapers. Battye did, however, send Thomson one of the Library's two remaining copies of Fraser's booklet 'in the hope that it will be of assistance to you'.<sup>162</sup>

Other requests came from members of the public, seeking Aboriginal words and names from Battye. Ernest Mitchell, Superintendent of Moore River Native Settlement (1918-21), then

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159 M.F.F. Lukis, 'The Work of the Western Australian Archives Department', Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, Perth Meeting 1947, p.4.

160 Thomson to Battye, 16 August 1926, Thomson, J.C. Forrest River Mission Wyndam 1926 re native Vocabulary 4 fols, AU WA53326 cons 1198 2939

161 Ibid

162 Battye to Thomson, 24 September 1926. Thomson, J.C. Forrest River Mission Wyndam 1926 re native Vocabulary 4 fols, AU WA53326 cons 1198 2939

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Superintendent of Carrolup Native Settlement (until 1922) and Protector of Aborigines in Northam, corresponded with Battye between 1944 and 1948, when Mitchell made inquiries about an Aboriginal place name. Battye permitted Mitchell to borrow Moore's *Descriptive Vocabulary* three times in 1947, despite his insistence that 'it in [sic] kept under lock and key and can only be procured for use on application from me personally'.<sup>163</sup> Their exchanges discussed in Case Study 1 below reveal the value that Battye gave to Moore's book, and the ways in which members of the public viewed the Library as a place to learn about Aboriginal place names and languages in the mid-twentieth century. This reflects the wider interest in Aboriginal words, and more particularly Aboriginal place names, across Australia at a time of growing nationalism, salvage anthropology and intergenerational change. As heritage expert Denis Byrne has noted, 'new natives' – the colonial born – were emerging at a time when the belief in Aboriginal population decline was strong. 'Yet certain aspects of Aboriginal culture were powerfully attractive to a new nation casting around for symbols and emblems of essential Australianness and some of these aspects were admissible'. Aboriginal words 'provided original-sounding place names and were used from the earliest days of the colony'.<sup>164</sup>

While Mitchell and Thomson (Forrest River) had a direct interest in learning Aboriginal languages, the majority of requests to Battye at this time were superficial. In 1929, Miss K. Walsh wrote to Battye from North Sydney in New South Wales, to ask for the meaning of the Aboriginal word "Koolanoo- ka".<sup>165</sup> This was the name given to a property in a farming district in WA owned by Walsh's brother who had recently deceased, and she wanted to adopt this name for her home in Sydney. Battye replied that unfortunately he could not find a reference to the name 'in any of our vocabularies of aboriginal dialect'.<sup>166</sup> A similar request from Mr A.S. Pepper in 1951

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163 J.S. Battye letter to E.C. Mitchell, 'Bo-in-garra', Benjaberring, 9 November 1944, AU WA S3326

164 Denis Byrne, 'Deep Nation: Australia's acquisition of a deep past', *Aboriginal History*, vol.20, 1996, p.20

165 K. Walsh to J.S. Battye, Walsh K., Sydney 1929 re meaning of nature name "Koolanooka" 3 fols, AUWA S3326 – cons 1198 3094

166 Batte to Miss K. Walsh, 10 June 1929, Walsh K., Sydney 1929 re meaning of nature name "Koolanooka" 3 fols, AUWA S3326 – cons 1198 3094

from Nedlands, asking the meaning of the name Qualen, which was the name of the house he occupied. Battye replied that 'The Curator of the Museum, Mr. L. Glauert who collects Aboriginal words, has looked into his lists and believes that the probable meaning of "Qualen" is "She-oak".<sup>167</sup> Other requests represent similar expressions of putting down roots. In 1930, Miss Bertha Hanks sent a list of towns to Battye asking for their Aboriginal names to send to an English school teacher.<sup>168</sup> Battye sent her list back, stating that 'all the information that is procurable I have marked on the list. Those names against which a tick is placed are definitely known to be native names'.<sup>169</sup> In 1935, Mrs Johnston from Dardanup wrote to Battye for his suggestions of 'pretty native names, by one of which to call our home'.<sup>170</sup> She was searching for the Aboriginal word for happiness. Battye replied 'the blacks being a simple folk knew nothing about such an abstract subject as happiness'. He suggested instead, the words for 'good camp', 'happy place' or 'cleared ground'.<sup>171</sup> A similar request came from Mrs Thelma Cuts in Gedgegannup, in 1952, to which he again replied 'there is no word for happiness'.<sup>172</sup>

As part of 'native born' cultural claims, in the 1930s several Western Australian Aboriginal language lists were compiled by Western Australian-born colonists. Jesse Hammond wrote 'The Aborigines vocabulary of the South-West portion of West Australia', and Alfred John Bussell compiled a 'South West Aboriginal language or dialect'.<sup>173</sup> This surge in interest sometimes had a purpose: In 1937, at the request of the Premier, Daisy Bates compiled a list of 'Native names for places, birds, fishes, etc., *suitable as names of ships*'.<sup>174</sup> Bates' list was also sent to Malcolm

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167 Pepper, A.S., Nedlands 1951 re meaning of "Qualen" 2 fols AU WA S3326- cons 1198 2269

168 Hanks, B. Perth 1930 re native names of towns 4 fols, AU WA S3326 - cons 1198 1328.

169 6 July 1930, Battye to Hanks, Hanks, B. Perth 1930 re native names of towns 4 fols, AU WA S3326 - cons 1198 1328

170 Johnston, B., Dardanup 1935 re native names 3 fols.

171 Battye to Johnston, 12 April 1935, Johnston, B., Dardanup 1935 re native names 3 fols.

172 Cuts, t., Mt Helena 1952 re translation of Aboriginal words 3 fols. AU WA 53326- cons 1198 0838.

173 J.E. Hammond, 'The Aborigines vocabulary of the South-West portion of West Australia', (BL 499.15HAM); A.J. Bussell, 'South West Aboriginal language or dialect', (BL Q499.15)

174 Daisy Bates, 'Native names for places, birds, fishes, etc., suitable as names of ships', Compiled by D.M. Bates at the request of the Premier and forwarded to Mr. Fraser, dated 16.?.1937? (BL PR565/2) My emphasis.

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Fraser. This push for Aboriginal names was encouraged by Paul Hasluck, who wrote articles in 1936 in the *West Australian* under his pen name 'Polygon' with a concern of the loss of proper pronunciation of Aboriginal placenames. He stated that the lack of knowledge of place names was due to intergenerational change in the pioneer community, as well as a belief in the 'dying out' of "authentic" Aboriginal speakers: 'the names seem to be in that critical stage where the old colonial usage, which was at least in touch with the native derivation, is being debased by the impact of newcomers'. In order to preserve Aboriginal placenames, what was required was 'above all, an attempt to find out from the old settlers what a name really is'. He added 'Generally speaking, the reliable black and the genuine old pioneer ... are still the best guides to the pronunciation of names'.<sup>175</sup> Hasluck found a beauty in Aboriginal place- names because of their deep history and, as he stated, 'the camping places in this land had musical names of their own, rich in meaning'.<sup>176</sup> Hasluck located the knowledge of Aboriginal placenames to historical records in the Library, stating: 'Many of these [placenames] after having been handed down in the black family have been preserved to us by the early settlers and surveyors'. He continued: 'In deciding how a name should be pronounced the opinion of the genuine old-timer is probably as good an authority as one could get: but genuine old-timers are few. There are, luckily, two other useful guides. One, as already indicated, is the variations in the early spellings in records and maps'.<sup>177</sup> Hasluck then drew on the survey records of John Forrest to prove his point. The racist irony of locating 'old-timer colonists' as the authority on the pronunciations of Aboriginal place names was seemingly lost on Hasluck.

The public search for Aboriginal names and language continued in the 1940s and 50s and this demand was responded to from a variety of people connected with the Library and Museum. In 1949, palaeontologist and museum curator (later Director of the Western Australian Museum),

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175 Polygon, 'Native Names: A study in pronunciation', *West Australian*, 12 December 1936, p.6.

176 Polygon, 'Native Place Names: Pronunciation Problems', *West Australian*, 29 February 1936, p.5

177 Ibid

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Ludwig Glauert, wrote a 'Provisional list of Aboriginal place names and their meanings', published in the RWAHS journal.<sup>178</sup> In 1957, the Library's Annual Report noted that the Information Centre in the Library answered questions such as 'aboriginal names for homes, clubs, etc'.<sup>179</sup> Other knowledge about the Aboriginal past was sought in 1949 when an author made inquiries about prison escapees from Rottnest Island swimming the twenty kilometres to the mainland. Among those consulted were 'the Historical Society [and] the Archivist Public Library (Mr Bray)'. Incidentally, none of them could find any evidence that a prisoner had done so, but that the author sought this knowledge from the Library is revealing of the way the Library was being viewed by members of the public as a storehouse for information about Aboriginal history.<sup>180</sup>

More collections which recorded Aboriginal lives came into the Library in 1950 and 1951, received from the Department of Native Affairs. This was probably a routine deposit of government records.<sup>181</sup> In 1955-56, the Library purchased the *Journal of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of Western Australia* for the year 1842 and as the Annual Report of the Library Board noted, 'in addition to the activities of the Agricultural society, it contains statistics, reports on the weather, and *information about the aborigines ...*'.<sup>182</sup>

## Photographic collections

The Library began to receive, from at least 1945, collections of photographs of Aboriginal people, signalling a focus on both Aboriginal people as subjects and on the photographic medium.

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178 Ludwig Glauert, 'Provisional list of Aboriginal place names and their meanings', WAHSJP, vol.4, Part 2, 1949 (or 1950), pp.83-86.

179 The Library Service of Western Australia, 5th Annual Report of the Board, 1956-57, slwa\_b3125286\_5, p.18.

180 Neville Green and Susan Moon, *Far From Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest Island 1838-1931, Dictionary of Western Australians Volume X* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1997) p.73.. The Library may have been aware it needed to guide researchers, particularly future historians, on what their collections held; in 1949 Frank Crowley wrote *A Guide to the principal documents and publications relating to the history of Western Australia* which documented all the unpublished and published material relating to the history of Western Australia, held by the Public Library, Archives, the RWAHS and the University of Western Australia Library. The word 'Aborigine' was mentioned once. Frank Crowley. *A Guide to the principal documents and publications relating to the history of Western Australia*, [https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa\\_b1323003\\_85](https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b1323003_85)

181 See Archives Accession Register, 327 folio 79. SROWA. These files spanned the years 1913 to 1934. See also 388 and 389, folio 91

182 The Library Service of Western Australia, 4th Annual Report of the Board, 1955-56, slwa\_b3125286\_4. Author's emphasis.

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Sometime before 1945, 13 photoprints, several of Aboriginal people, taken by William R. Easton who led the Kimberley Expedition of 1921, were acquired by the Library.<sup>183</sup> In 1954, the Department of Native Affairs donated albums, photographs, negatives and unmounted photoprints collected by the Department, many of which had been taken by officers during tours of inspection, circa 1900-1940.<sup>184</sup> In 1952 the Premier's Department donated 16 photographs of 'general tribal scenes and of the Forrest River Mission'.<sup>185</sup> Later, in 1966 an album of photographs taken by A.O. Neville in 1916 with Honorary Minister, Mr R. H. Underwood, was donated by Underwood.<sup>186</sup>

Other photographic donations reflect a push and pull between earlier pioneering histories and the beginnings of alternative histories of Aboriginal-European relationships. In November 1949 the Library acquired a photograph of the stone spearhead which wounded George Grey during his expeditions to the Kimberley in 1839.<sup>187</sup> This unusual photographic acquisition frames the white explorer as valorous and Aboriginal people as treacherous. In the early 1950s, photographer, E.L. Mitchell 'made arrangements' with Battye to transfer his collection of several thousand negatives to the Library.<sup>188</sup> As Joanna Sassoon has written, 'The two men had long known each other in the small community of Perth ... Dr Battye was long familiar with Mitchell's photographs having used some in his 1912 *Cyclopaedia*, selected them as the basis for illustrations in Colebatch's centenary volume ... and he had seen them when they were published in materials that he

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183 Easton Expedition, 1921, 96B; Robin South, 'Photographic Sources of Aboriginal History in Western Australia: A Guide to Major Collections in the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History', in Bob Reece and Tom Stannage (eds), *European-Aboriginal Relations in Western Australian History, Studies in Western Australian History*, UWA Press, December 1984, p105

184 Department of Native Affairs, 721B-731B, 733B-734B; South, 'Photographic Sources of Aboriginal History', p.104.

185 Groups of aborigines at missions, mainly Forrest River Mission, 632B and 633B, South, 'Photographic Sources of Aboriginal History', p.107

186 Photographs taken by the Chief Protector of Aborigines Mr A.O. Neville when accompanying Honorary Minister Mr R.H. Underwood on a trip through Kimberley April-June 1916, 3231B

187 On the photograph of this spearhead, an archivist has written 'Stone arrowhead with which Grey was wounded when exploring in the Kimberley, 1839', revealing of the outdated understanding of Aboriginal weapons. (BL 264B vol.39)

188 Joanna Sassoon, *Agents of Empire: How E.L. Mitchell's Photographs shaped Australia*, North Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2017, pp.235-236

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collected for the State Library'.<sup>189</sup> Battye left his mark on Mitchell's photographic collection, as the accession register stated 'collected by Dr Battye', and 'while this label obscures' the collections' origins, Sassoon notes 'it preserves the relationship between the two men'.<sup>190</sup> But the tide of history was turning. In 1968, Neville Green, who would become one of Western Australia's first revisionist historians, lent Forrest River Mission photographic records to the Library for copying, including many photographs from the Rev E. R. Gribble collection – whose critical voice Battye had managed to keep out of the Library collection for decades.<sup>191</sup>

### **A persistent pioneer collection**

In 1951, the Library Board was created to work with local government authorities to establish public libraries. Despite structural and personnel changes, the pioneer historiography and acquisitions that Battye had built and nurtured, continued to a certain degree, with the appointment of Fred Alexander as the Chairman of the Library Board. Alexander was a historian of Commonwealth and empire. His histories, beginning in the 1930s evoked Battye's pioneer narrative. As Stannage described, Alexander's work was 'English, Protestant, Christian, male, and imbued with racial superiority'.<sup>192</sup> He chaired the Board for 30 years, until 1982.

In 1954 the Public Library including the Archives Branch was transferred to the control of the Library Board.<sup>193</sup> At that time it was separated from the Museum and Art Gallery. In 1955-56 Battye's collecting legacy was honoured when a special section of the Library was named the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History. This Library would:

be developed from the present so called Archives Section, which is of course concerned with local history generally and not only with the archives of the government. All material relating to West Australian history whether official, unofficial, printed or manuscript will be

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189 Ibid

190 Ibid., p.236. See 'Glass negative collection acquired by Dr James Sykes Battye', (SLWA 8956b)

191 Forrest River Mission, 3611B, 3612B, South, 'Photographic Sources of Aboriginal History', p.105.

192 Stannage, 'New Norcia in History', p.99.

193 LISWA, *Past Imperfect, Future Imperative: Collection Development at The Library and Information Service of Western Australia*, Vol. 1, 1990.

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concentrated and coordinated in one library, which will also contain ... the collection of Western Australian literature.<sup>194</sup>

In the same year, the Annual Report reveals a continuation of Battye's approach to acquiring 'pioneer' history, in the comment that Library staff continued to trace 'descendants of pioneer settlers and officials, who may hold valuable private records bearing on the history of the State which they are prepared to make available'.<sup>195</sup> In 1957, the State Library reopened after being reorganised and a number of large donations were recorded in the Annual Report. This report highlighted that the acquisitions of particular value or importance were a continuation of what Stannage referred to as the 'gentry tradition'.<sup>196</sup>

From 1946 until about 1960, the RWAHS collections were temporarily housed at the Library, for the archivist and research students to use.<sup>197</sup> Lukis noted in 1946 that the RWAHS had collected 'many diaries, letters and other personal papers which might otherwise have been lost'.<sup>198</sup> The RWAHS journal, *Early Days*, published many articles by pioneers and their descendants. In the period 1945-early 1960s very little Western Australian history was published beyond these articles.<sup>199</sup> Literature also continued the pioneer story, even when the focus of the work was on Aboriginal figures. Mary Durack published *Yagan of the Bibbulmun* in 1964. The book was a sensitive account of Nyungar warrior, Yagan, but Durack framed his story firmly within a 'doomed

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194 The Library Service of Western Australia, 4th Annual Report of the Board, 1955-56, slwa\_b3125286\_4, p.12.

195 Ibid. p.21.

196 Acquisitions highlighted include 'The Record or Pastorals for Guildford', 1842, the 'first periodical printed in the Colony'; the diaries of G. de Courcy Lefroy of Walebing 1844-1852; a group of letters of Bishop Hale; and a group of letters by Robert Button, a 'pioneer pastoralist of the Kimberleys 1884-1905'.

197 Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia, Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 30th June, 1946, SLWA; Lukis, 'The Work of the Western Australian Archives Department', SLWA 025.171 LUK, p.5; Meroula (Mollie) Frances Lukis, verbatim transcript of an interview recorded by Erica Harvey for the JS Battye Library of West Australian History, recorded June - October 1992, OH2527, p.50. Note: Miss Lukis stated that the RWAHS collections were moved out of the Battye Library when the Historical Society bought Stirling House in Nedlands and was able to move them there.

198 Lukis, 'The Work of the Western Australian Archives Department', p.2.

199 In 1961, Alexandra Hasluck wrote an article for *Early Days* titled 'Yagan the Patriot', which crafted a narrative against those who believed Yagan was a hero, arguing instead that Yagan, and his father Midgegooroo, were 'responsible for destroying the settlers' goodwill towards the Aborigines', Reece, 'Prisoners in their own country', p.136.

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race' narrative, with the final sentence of the book: 'the Bibbulmun tribe, with all its laughter and its songs, was doomed to vanish from the face of the land'. The book was illustrated by Bibbulmun artist, Revel Cooper, (see cover image for some of his collection) who had also worked with Durack on the Carrolup story Child artists of the Australian bush in 1952.

In the early 1960s a small shift was noted by Lukis in the Library Board Report of 1962/63: a dwindling of pioneer records coming into the Battye, and a beginning of oral history recordings. While Lukis noted the acquisition of the family papers of George Fletcher Moore, she also wrote: 'The intake of private records of colonial days is gradually diminishing, most material of this period having now been collected, or at least located and microfilmed'.<sup>200</sup> In the same report she noted that the 'tape recorder has been used to record reminiscences ... mainly elderly pioneers with interesting recollections of the districts with which they had been associated'.<sup>201</sup> This change in medium would eventually enable the voices of Aboriginal people to be preserved in the Library too.

### **Beginnings of oral history collecting from 1960s**

In the 1960s the Library began to explicitly collect Aboriginal material in the form of recordings, mainly oral histories, using the newly popularised reel-to-reel tape recorder. In 1963, the Library collected the first examples of recordings with Aboriginal people. Through reading the journal *American Archivist* Mollie Lukis had become aware of oral history work being undertaken in the United States, particularly by Professor Alan Neavins at Columbia University in New York. On her 1957 Carnegie Fellowship research trip to the United States and United Kingdom, Lukis visited the archives at Columbia University as well as the Ford Motor Archives set up by Neavins. She commented much later that she didn't see oral histories in any other archives that she visited, but in New York, the oral history programme had been going since 1948.<sup>202</sup>

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200 Lukis, in *The Library Service of Western Australia, 1962-63*, p.17

201 Ibid

202 Mollie Lukis, oral history, (OH2527) p.57.

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In New York they had started by interviewing well-known people, but over time had broadened to focus oral histories on a particular theme, such as the health system, and to interview a wide range of people connected with the work.<sup>203</sup> Before her trip, Lukis had been keen to begin recording oral histories in WA, and she added these locations to her itinerary to learn more about it. She commented later that the programmes in the USA obviously had much more extensive financial support than was available in WA, and with restricted funding here 'it was fairly obvious that that wasn't going to be what I could do when I came home'.<sup>204</sup> She was, however, encouraged to see how much could be done.

On her return to WA, the Library had no funds to set up an oral history programme. However, Jean Rogerson, a member of the University of Western Australia Senate, and a friend of Lukis' with a long-standing interest in preserving historical materials, made an anonymous donation to enable Lukis to buy the first tape recorder.<sup>205</sup> As suggested on her overseas trip, Lukis looked for someone to interview who wasn't too old, and still had clear memories. For her first oral history, she chose Major Norman Brierley, who was sixty but retired.<sup>206</sup> After that, she recorded oral histories with 'people I could think of when the opportunity was available'.<sup>207</sup> Her focus at that time was still more on collecting written archives because there was so much not yet in the collection and they only had limited time. Likewise, Lukis was concerned about bias in oral histories and thought that they needed to be backed up by the written record, and that it was important to interview someone from both sides when dealing with controversial issues.<sup>208</sup>

Consequently, it was only for 'something special' or a 'really important' person that they made a

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203 Ibid., pp.64-5.

204 Ibid., p.65.

205 Ibid., p.69.

206 Ibid

207 Ibid

208 Ibid., p.77.

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big effort to record an oral history.<sup>209</sup>

Oral histories offered the opportunity to provide access to material from an Aboriginal point of view and in Aboriginal people's voices, and in 1963, the Library collected the first example of recordings with Aboriginal people.<sup>210</sup> Rather than being oral histories, these recordings were messages between groups of Aboriginal people connected to Ethel Creek Station near what is now the town of Newman in the Pilbara. Having heard about the recordings, Lukis contacted the station owners and obtained copies for the Library. See case study 2 below.

The first conventional oral history recorded for the Library with an Aboriginal person was with Ernie Chapman in 1966. Chapman was an Aboriginal stockman from Ivanhoe Station, and in the interview, he spoke about his life on the station from 1936, his work as an Aboriginal stockman and 'jack-of-all-trades', and his feelings about an Aboriginal graveyard. He also talked about the burning-down of Ivanhoe homestead in 1945 and the graves of Thomas Deacon and Neal Durack.<sup>211</sup> It is possible that Chapman's connections to the well-known Durack pioneer family may have influenced the decision to record his story. John Thomson, a forester with the Department of the North West, recorded the oral history, having volunteered to record interviews for the Library 'with people associated with the many aspects of life and work' from the Pilbara to the Kimberley.<sup>212</sup> According to that year's Annual Report, these included 'leading citizens and old identities, station owners, drovers, shearers, stockmen, station hands and in some cases their wives'.

The report added that '[s]ome are more articulate than others but all are able to add something to

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209 Ibid., p.70.

210 [Recording of Ethel Creek Aborigines and played to McKay Range Aborigines 1963] [sound recording], OH50.

211 Catalogue record for OH 28, Interview with Ernie Chapman; Hays, *Worth Telling Worth Keeping*.

212 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1965-1966: Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1966. slwa\_b3125287\_3, p.29

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the picture of a way of life which will be unknown to the next generation'.<sup>213</sup> As with oral histories elsewhere, this was the beginnings of the Library's commitment to social history and making available the stories of lesser-known people, though in this case emphasising men's rather than women's perspectives.

While the Library began to collect recordings with Aboriginal people from the early 1960s, library policies were largely silent about the value of oral histories or other Aboriginal collections. In 1961, the Library developed the Statement on Book Selection Policy, and in 1966, the collection policy document Book Provision and Book Selection: Policy and Practice was published. Neither did more than acknowledge that books include archives (1961),<sup>214</sup> and that the Library had a research collection of Western Australian material in the Batty Library (1966).<sup>215</sup> However, both were written by the State Librarian, Francis Aubie Sharr, who in 1997 recorded an oral history about his twenty-three years' service with the Library (1953-1976) without mentioning Aboriginal collections or Aboriginal people.<sup>216</sup> A 1982 revision of the 1966 document likewise made no mention of Aboriginal people, noting that literary manuscripts by WA authors as well as '[d]iaries and letters of early settlers are ... justifiably prized by the Library'.<sup>217</sup> The 1982 oral history collection policy was broader, aiming to 'tape record the reminiscences of people who have made a significant contribution to life in this State, or whose experience makes them typical of a group, class or family of people who have contributed to the rich fabric of community life'.<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, there is no explicit mention of Aboriginal records. This would come in later policy documents.

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213 Ibid

214 The Library Board of Western Australia, Statement on Book Selection Policy Perth, 1961, p.1.

215 The Library Board of Western Australia, Book Provision and Book Selection: Policy and Practice Perth, 1966, p.19.

216 Francis Aubie (Ali) Sharr, Transcript of an interview with Francis Aubie (Ali) Sharr, OH 2794, SLWA, 1997; The Library Board of Western Australia, The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1975-1976: Twenty Fourth Annual Report of the Board. Perth, 1976, p.7. slwa\_b3125287\_13.

217 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Book Provision and Book Selection: Policy and Practice second edition, Perth, 1982, p.38.

218 Ibid.

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## Use of collections by Aboriginal people: assimilation and activism

The first reference to the importance of the Library's collections for research that might aid Aboriginal people also dates to the post-war period. In Lukis' 1992 oral history, she recalled that the Library was used after the war by Don McLeod, a Pilbara prospector and activist for Aboriginal people, to research the state's financial obligations to Aboriginal people, and that he came into the Library with Aboriginal people:

The Aborigines; I haven't mentioned amongst the people that were using the library, that Mr McLeod who was a great promoter of the Aborigines and who, with a group of Aborigines in the Pilbara district, led a strike in the late 1940s when a lot of the Aborigines walked off the stations. They went on strike. ... Mr McLeod was interested particularly to go back to 1890 when Western Australia got responsible government, the people in the UK were very concerned about the Aborigines, and provision was made for a certain amount of money to be given ... to the Aborigines. ... McLeod was very interested in bringing this forward and he did a lot of research into the correspondence between the Colonial Office and the West Australian Government, both at the British end and at our end, looking at statutes and so on at that time. He sometimes used to bring in Aborigines with him. Mr McLeod was a very scruffy-looking white man and I always remember that the Aborigines that came were [?] with him on two different occasions were most beautifully dressed.<sup>219</sup>

This suggests that while the Library's collections were used for the 'gentry tradition' of history at this time, the collection was also beginning to be seen as having value for Aboriginal rights, from at least the 1950s.

From the 1950s, assimilation of Aboriginal people into the non-Aboriginal population was government policy.<sup>220</sup> In 1961, the Annual Report mentioned for the first time that Aboriginal people were clients of local libraries.

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219 Meroula (Mollie) Frances Lukis, verbatim transcript of an interview recorded by Erica Harvey for the JS Battye Library of West Australian History, recorded June-October 1992, OH2527, p.47.

220 Anna Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800 – 2000* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), pp.418-9.

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The emphasis was on the role of libraries in assimilation, accompanied by patronising comments about Aboriginal people:

In a number of library districts there is a significant aboriginal population. The Board is pleased to report that in every such case, the aboriginals have exactly the same facilities and service in and from the library as white Australians. Naturally, not many of the adults use the libraries as yet, but the children, who attend school, use them and enjoy the books. Sometimes difficulties arise over the proper care and return of books by the children but they are gradually being overcome. It is felt that the libraries can make a valuable contribution towards the integration of these children into the community.<sup>221</sup>

The Annual Report of the following year included a photo of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children outside Laverton Library with the caption 'There is no colour bar to the enjoyment of books' [See Figure 9].<sup>222</sup>

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221 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library Service of Western Australia 1960-61 9th Annual Report of the Board*, Perth, 1961. slwa\_b3125286\_9, p.13; For the role that libraries have played in civilising agendas, in an American context, see Schlesselman-Tarango, G 'The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library', *Library Trends*, 2016, vol. 64, no. 4, p. 667-686, doi:10.1353/lib.2016.0015

222 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library Service of Western Australia 1961-62 10th Annual Report of the Board*, Perth, 1961. slwa\_b3125286\_10, p.9.

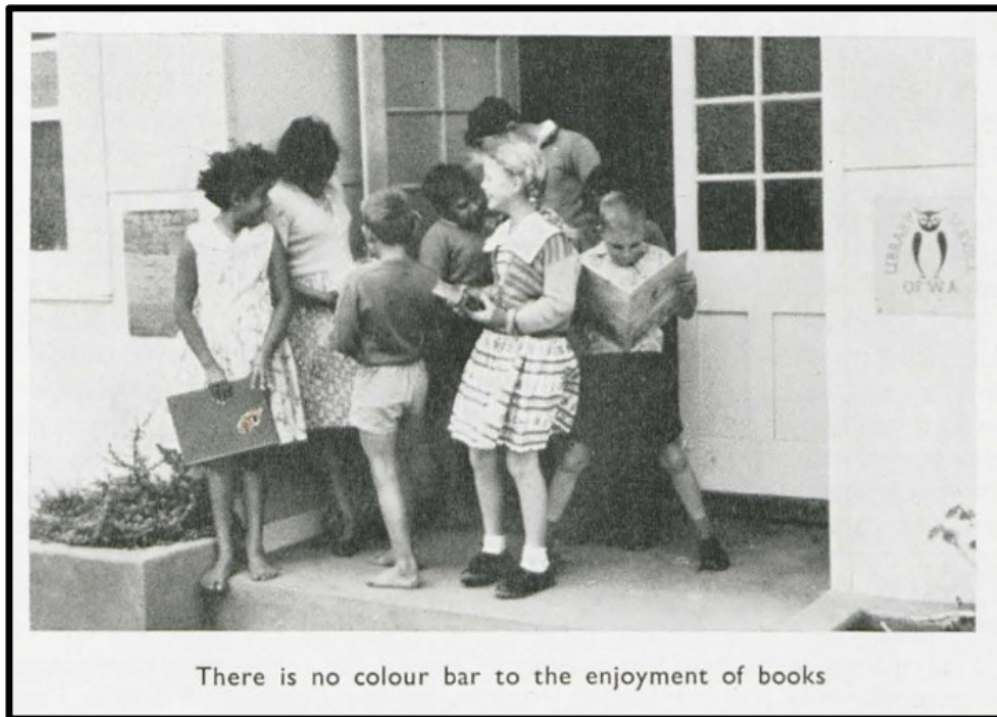


Figure 9: The Library Board of Western Australia, The Library Service of Western Australia 1961- 62 10th Annual Report of the Board, Perth, 1961, (State Library of Western Australia)

The report discussed the new library at Laverton, continuing the racist language of assimilation from the previous report:

There is in that area a substantial native population, both full blood and half caste. A view expressed by the representatives of the Shire Council to the State Librarian was that a library could be of particular benefit to the younger natives by helping them to build on the educational foundation given in mission and State schools so that they could fit themselves in knowledge and skills for genuine integration into the community.<sup>223</sup>

It was not until 1991 that the first library was opened at an Aboriginal community – at Kupungarri, on Mt Barnett Station, 300km east of Derby.<sup>224</sup> There were, however, earlier comments about Aboriginal communities as users of the library, and of remote communities needing library and archival services. In 1974, it was noted that Public Works Department plans had been indexed,

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>224</sup> The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1990-91 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1991. slwa\_b3125288\_12, p.6.

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which enabled staff to satisfy a request 'for a detailed plan of a condenser at Coolgardie in the 1890's as a basis for a current project to build similar ones in desert country for the use of aborigines'.<sup>225</sup> In 1992, the Library's new collection policy, *Past Imperfect, Future Imperative*, noted that the Library provided public library resources for both adults and children 'to reflect the culture, interests, languages and concerns of Aboriginal West Australians living in independent, fringe or urban communities' and that it was important that this was done 'in consultation with those groups'.<sup>226</sup> In 1993-94 the Library conducted training courses for staff on services for Aboriginal people in public libraries<sup>227</sup>, and the following year the Roebourne Public Library won the Multicultural Services Award for an 'outstanding library information and education package for Aboriginal people'.<sup>228</sup>

In the late 1960s, the Aboriginal writer and poet, Jack Davis, wrote a study of the Bibbulman language, and published it in 1969. The Library copy of this pamphlet is dated 1968. It was compiled by the Western Australian Aboriginal Association, with the name 'Jack Davis' written in pencil on the front. *A study of the Bibbulmum dialect* was possibly the first time a Western Australian Aboriginal language list was produced by an Aboriginal person.<sup>229</sup>

### **Social history and the beginning of a revisionist approach**

In the 1970s and 1980s, interest in social history expanded, following increased public awareness of Aboriginal rights. This was reflected in an expansion of Library collections relating to Aboriginal people, and new finding aids to assist researchers. In 1972 a bibliography of natural history

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225 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1973-1974: Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1974. slwa\_b3125287\_11, p.22.

226 LISWA, *Past Imperfect, Future*, Section 3.5.3.

227 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, *Annual Report 1993-94 of The Library Board of Western Australia*. Perth, 1994, p.19. slwa\_b3125288\_15.

228 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, *Annual Report 1994-95 of The Library Board of Western Australia*. Perth, 1995, p.7. slwa\_b3125288\_16.

229 Western Australian Aboriginal Association/Jack Davis, *A study of the Bibbulmum dialect*, Perth, 1968

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for Western Australia was made, including the subject headings: 'explorations, maps, geology and physiography, flora, fauna and aboriginal rock art'.<sup>230</sup> Renewed interest in the records and preservation of the early colony occurred in the lead up to the Sesquicentenary of 1979, however, Library policy changed little until the end of the 1980s.

Bob Reece noted in 1984 that 'Aborigines hardly rated serious attention in Western Australian historical writing until recent years'.<sup>231</sup> While the RWASHS had occasionally published articles about Aboriginal people, such as Alexandra Hasluck's, 'Yagan the Patriot', (1961) 'such contributions', wrote Reece, 'have largely tended to perpetuate the traditional perception of Aborigines as a pioneering hazard'.<sup>232</sup> From the early 1970s, new histories were appearing which had a very different tenor to Battye's pioneer historiography: In 1973 Peter Biskup published, *Not Slaves, Not citizens*; in 1979, Tom Stannage wrote, *A Social History of Perth*; and several Phd theses, some of which were published as books, were written, utilising records of Aboriginal administration to reveal the extent and damage of the draconian governance of Aboriginal people in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These included, Anna Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, (1989), Howard Pederson, 'Pigeon', and significant biographical research was undertaken by the South West Aborigines Project at Mount Lawley College.

In 1972-1973, a significant resource for later Aboriginal family history was received, when early personal files held by the Department of Native Welfare were microfilmed. This was summarised in the Library's Annual Report: 'It was decided that early personal files relating to aborigines were of archival value but the bulk was large and a proposal was made to microfilm them. The

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230 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1972-1973: Twenty-First Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1973. slwa\_b3125287\_10, p.22

231 Reece, 'Prisoners in their own country', p.132.

232 Ibid., p.136

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Department is now in the process of doing this'.<sup>233</sup>

In her history of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs archive, Anna Haebich recounts this process:

The year 1972 saw thousands of carefully maintained and guarded records begin their final transfer to the archival repository for storage, conservation, preservation and public research. For the DAA files this did not mean retirement but a new era of fevered controversy. The catalyst for change was the 1972 Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act that dismantled the department and repealed the last discriminatory laws. The new Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority had only limited operational functions and the Department of Community Welfare now managed Aboriginal child and family welfare. The records were split up between the Planning Authority and the Department of Community Welfare and historical files over 30 years old were cleared and moved in batches over several years to be managed by the State Archivist in the Battye Library. Then began the archival processes of listing, shelving and microfilming records for access by researchers.<sup>234</sup>

In 1973, agreement was reached to copy the records of New Norcia Aboriginal mission, with assistance from Tom Stannage. This would be completed in 1976 after 'a difficult and time-consuming process', including the assistance of a Spanish-speaker to help order the records.<sup>235</sup>

The collection and process of acquiring it was described as follows:

After some years of negotiation with the Benedictine Monastery at New Norcia an arrangement has been reached whereby this library is to microfilm its records, which include correspondence and other papers, 1844-1900, and diaries, letterbooks, etc., of Bishop Salvado and his successors, 1844-1908. The assistance of Professor K Garrad, Professor of Spanish at Flinders University, was enlisted to help in sorting the Spanish

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233 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1972-1973: Twenty-First Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1973. slwa\_b3125287\_10, p.23. It was not until 1990-1991 that the correspondence of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A.O. Neville, was received in the library. However, this is not complete, with correspondence also lodged at the Berndt Museum (Conversation between Andrea Witcomb and then Berndt Museum Director, Dr Vanessa Russ, 2018). *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1990-91 of The Library Board of Western Australia*. Perth, 1991. slwa\_b3125288\_12, p.24.

234 Haebich, 'Fever in the Archive', pp.82-98.

235 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1975-1976: Twenty Fourth Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1976, p.14. slwa\_b3125287\_13.

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documents into a significant order. Microfilming has begun and the originals will be returned to New Norcia together with a microfilm positive; a negative and a positive will be held in the Batty Library.<sup>236</sup>

Access to these New Norcia microfilms assisted Fr. EJ Stormon to finally translate Salvado's Memoir from Italian into English. This was published in 1977, 126 years after the first edition in Italian.<sup>237</sup>

Other mission records followed. In 1975, one of the larger donations to the Library was records from the Forrest River Mission,<sup>238</sup> and in 1980 records from the Kalumburu Benedictine Mission were lent for copying.<sup>239</sup>

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236 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1972-1973: Twenty-First Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1973, p.24. slwa\_b3125287\_10.

237 'Introduction', Rosendo Salvado, translated and edited by E.J. Stormon, *The Salvado Memoirs: Historical Memoirs of Australia and Particularly of the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia and of the Habits and Customs of the Australian Natives* (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1977. [https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb1244229](https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C_Rb1244229)

238 The Library Board of Western Australia, *The Library and Information Service of Western Australia 1974-1975: Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Board*. Perth, 1975. slwa\_b3125287\_12, p.25.

239 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, *Annual Report 1979-80 of the Library Board of Western Australia*. Perth, 1980. slwa\_b3125288\_1, p.13.



Figure 10: Front page of the Annual Report of the Library and Information Service of Western Australia, 1978- 79, (State Library of Western Australia)

## 1979

'All types of records are in demand', wrote Margaret Medcalf in 1979, Western Australia's sesquicentenary.<sup>240</sup> Like 1904 and 1929 before it, this anniversary of colonisation spurred 'a great surge of interest in history at all levels; individual, family, local, business, society and

<sup>240</sup> Margaret Medcalf, 'Sesquicentenary's impact on the Battye Library', *Australian Library Journal*, 28 (14), 1979, p.250.

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governmental' with an associated interest in the care of historical records.<sup>241</sup> 'From all this activity the library has gained a spin-off', Medcalf wrote. 'People are finding items of primary source material and either donating them or lending them for copying'.<sup>242</sup> As the collecting drive associated with the Centenary of 1929 had further enabled the development of pioneer collections and histories, revisionist historians of the 1970s and 80s began to use much of the same source material, to overturn the dominance of the pioneer narrative. Medcalf, who took over from Mollie Lukis as the Principal Librarian of the Battye Library and State Archivist in 1971, witnessed some of this change. Aboriginal content in the Library began to be used not to tell a story of progress but a story of colonial violence. Therefore, what defined the collecting moment of 1979 was an increasing tension: a push-and-pull between Battye's pioneer historiography and new revisionist histories. The push for the pioneer story is evident on the books chosen to adorn the cover of the Library's Annual Report for 1978-79: Battye's History of Western Australia is centred, alongside the 1905 Public Library Catalogue of the collection he founded, and books that his collection enabled (Figure 10).

As Stannage wrote in 1984, 'Major historical revision came in the 1970s (Biskup) and early 1980s (Green, Tilbrook, Hallam, Hunt, Gill, Garrick, Welborn, Crawford, Shaw, Izzard), and by then the Aborigines themselves were rewriting Western Australian history'.<sup>243</sup> Stannage had led the critique against the pioneer tradition and paved the way with other revisionist historians for a new narrative. In 1981 he edited *A New History of Western Australia*, the title itself signalling a break from the old historiography, with the first four chapters dealing solely with Aboriginal-European relations, and a final chapter by Geoffrey Bolton reflecting on this new historiography.<sup>244</sup> In 1984, Stannage wrote defiantly, 'By the early 1980s the gentry tradition of historical writing had

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241 Kandy-Jane Henderson, 'Co-operation for the Future: The Manuscripts Programme at the Battye Library', *Archives and Manuscripts* 10 (2), 1982, p.137.

242 Ibid., p.251

243 Stannage, Editorial note, 'European-Aboriginal relations in Western Australian history', *Studies in Western Australian History*, 1984.

244 Stannage, Tom (ed), *A New History of Western Australia*, Crawley, UWA Publishing, 1981

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been massively eroded'.<sup>245</sup> In some instances, the Library pushed against revisionist histories by denying access to source material. One example of this comes from research in the 1970s that drew attention to the political power of archives. With the permission of the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Gill accessed Police Department files and police station records to write 'Aborigines, Settlers and Police in the Kimberleys 1887-1905'.<sup>246</sup> It was published in the first volume of *Studies in Western Australian History* in 1977. Gill differentiated his work from previous histories on Aboriginal administration by Paul Hasluck<sup>247</sup> and Peter Biskup,<sup>248</sup> in that his was a more detailed understanding of 'day-to-day relationships between the European and Aboriginal sections of Western Australia society'.<sup>249</sup> In the article, Gill quoted from the archives to detail the actions of police in shooting Aboriginal people and the impunity with which they were able to do so. Gill summarised the situation as follows:

The line between the police shooting in their own defence or ostensibly to endeavour to make the natives surrender, and indiscriminate shooting in which all natives, 'guilty' and innocent, suffered was perilously thin; and at times indistinguishable.<sup>250</sup>

Archivist Tom Reynolds commented recently that this article upset police public relations and that as a result the police records in the archives were embargoed.<sup>251</sup> In fact, they were not available for access again until 1988, during the Australian bicentenary.<sup>252</sup> As Haebich reflected: 'The first official act of obstruction was by the Minister for Police, Bill Hassell, who in 1980 banned access to all Police Department records about Aboriginal people in retaliation for the alleged defamation

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245 Stannage, Editorial note, 'European-Aboriginal relations in Western Australian history'.

246 Andrew Gill, 'Aborigines, Settlers and Police in the Kimberleys 1887-1905', *Studies in Western Australian History* 1, June 1977, p.28.

247 Hasluck, *Black Australians*.

248 Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*.

249 Gill, 'Aborigines, Settlers and Police', p.1.

250 *Ibid.*, p.17.

251 Tom Reynolds, conversation with Denise Cook, 22 March 2021.

252 State Records Office of WA, Correspondence file SJ6/1/135, Police Department – Access (SRO corporate records). Thanks to Damien Hassan for this information.

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of the family of a serving senior police officer by historian Andrew Gill.’ When Hassell changed ministerial portfolios the following year, as Minister for Community Welfare he ‘embargoed use of the DAA archive after a researcher allegedly breached classified material’. Historians and Aboriginal leaders joined forces to dispute these obstructions to the archive.<sup>253</sup>

Social history and political activism also brought in new sources and new uses of the archive by Aboriginal people. As Haebich has written, from the 1970s Aboriginal writers such as playwright Jack Davis in Perth, negotiating between the archives and their own community stories, produced powerful works combining both. It was in the lead up to the sesquicentenary that Davis and theatre professional Andrew Ross met and began researching the play *Kullark (Home)* to be performed alongside but not as part of the 1979 Festival of Perth. *Kullark* told the story of WA’s 150 years of colonisation from an Aboriginal perspective. Ross remembered that the response of some theatre people was that they were inventing stories to send up white people. Ross recalled in 2011: ‘It was a time when people were coming to realise that Aboriginal people had been written out of official Australian history and that the accepted narrative of our colonial past was a long way short of the true story’.<sup>254</sup>

One element of the play was the removal of all the Aboriginal residents of Northam to Moore River Native Settlement in 1933. Research for this in the Battye Library included police occurrence books and police reports, correspondence between the Northam Shire and the Chief Protector of Aborigines, AO Neville, and reports in the *Northam Advertiser*. Reflecting a different approach to history, research included interviews, and Davis’ own memories of the event.<sup>255</sup> As Haebich has observed, Aboriginal researchers must negotiate what Lynette Russell has described as the

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253 Haebich, ‘Fever in the archive’, pp.82-98; Aisbett, ‘Clamp on Aborigines Files’, *The West Australian*, 1981

254 The Making of No Sugar: Interview with Andrew Ross’, ed. Anna Haebich and Andrew Ross, in Anna Haebich, *Dancing in Shadows: Histories of Nyungar Performance*, Crawley, UWAP, 2018, pp.229, 245.

255 ‘The Making of No Sugar’ ed. Haebich and Ross, pp.242-5.

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'incommensurable ontologies' of western and Indigenous knowledge systems'.<sup>256</sup> Interactions between these two knowledge systems, Haebich suggests, 'can bring positive transformations when circumstances of equality and respect support Indigenous knowledge and activities and promote mutual communication and decision-making. In this way archival knowledge about Aboriginal people can become reabsorbed as Indigenous knowledge. We can see this in the Aboriginal writers' use of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs archive.'<sup>257</sup> Subsequent plays, such as *No Sugar* also involved extensive archival research. Other Aboriginal-authored histories written at this time, included Robert Bropho, *Fringedweller*, (1980).

Pioneer figures, however, also continued to be celebrated by the Library. At the 1979 ceremony to mark the beginning of construction of the new library building, a 'valuable item' was presented by 'Lieutenant I.M. Colonel Wells, a descendant of Francis Fraser Armstrong, at one time official interpreter for the Aboriginal tribes in the Swan River Settlement ... a copy of G.F. Moore's *Descriptive Australian Vocabulary*, with manuscript annotations by F.F. Armstrong. This valuable item is lodged in the J.S. Battye Library of West Australia History'. (see case study below)<sup>258</sup> While such books celebrated the pioneer heroes, histories of both pioneer and Aboriginal lives were beginning to be narrated and collected in tandem. Oral histories in 1979 included the topic of 'aboriginal/white relationships'.<sup>259</sup> The first three volumes of the *Dictionary of Western Australians*, edited by Rica Erickson, were published in 1979, and the Library's Annual Report noted that another volume about Aboriginal people was scheduled. Indeed, the Bicentennial Authority partly funded several Aboriginal volumes of the *Dictionary of Western Australians*, published in the 1980s and 90s: *Aborigines of the Albany Region, 1821-1898, vol. VI (1989)*, *Aborigines of New Norcia, 1845-1914, vol. VII*, *Aborigines of the Southwest Region, 1829-1840, vol. VIII, (1990)*, *Far*

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256 Haebich, 'Fever in the archive', pp.82-98.

257 Ibid

258 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1979-80 of the Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1980, p.5. slwa\_b3125288\_1. The library has several copies at 499.15 MOO. The catalogue doesn't indicate which was Armstrong's copy.

259 Ibid

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*From Home: Aboriginal Prisoners of Rottnest Island, 1838-1931, vol. X, (1993).*

The Library was noticing the focus on its collections for the writing of Aboriginal history. For example, the 1982 Annual Report noted that library resources had been used to research topics that included 'aboriginal affairs'.<sup>260</sup> Rather than pushing back, to aid researchers two articles were published in *Studies in Western Australian History* in 1984 by librarians from the Battye Library, identifying records and photographs relating to Aboriginal people.<sup>261</sup> The first is a detailed listing of government records relating to Aboriginal people, including finding aids, and the second is a detailed listing of the major Battye Library collections of photographs of Aboriginal people. As Robin South noted, 'Many of these [photographs] are readily available to the researcher where they are indexed under ABORIGINES in the Library's indexes'.<sup>262</sup> There was a great demand for photographs from the Library as well as a large increase in donations, therefore this guide reflected the demand in use of the collections.<sup>263</sup> In 1986, the Library was having discussions with anthropologists about limiting access to photographs depicting secret or sacred material. Interestingly, these decisions were being made by male, non-Indigenous anthropologists (John Stanton from the Berndt Museum and Ian Crawford from the WA Museum) rather than senior Aboriginal men or women.<sup>264</sup>

In 1986 papers of the Molloy family, the first European colonists to emigrate to the Vasse and Augusta area, were acquired by the Library. Hidden within this collection undiscovered until very

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260 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1981-82 of the Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1982, p.12. slwa\_b3125288\_3.

261 Reynolds, 'Records relating to Aborigines', pp.88-101; South, 'Photographic Sources of Aboriginal History', pp.102-110.

262 South, 'Photographic Sources', p.102.

263 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1978-79 27th Annual Report of the Board. Perth, 1979, p.25. slwa\_b3125287\_16; For donations see Henderson, Kandy-Jane, 'Co-operation for the Future', p.136.

264 See for example Memorandum to PL: MB from L:PC (Robin South) re Aboriginal Photographs, 17 February 1986; Memorandum to PL: MB from L:PC (Robin South) re Aboriginal Photographs/Secret and Sacred, 6 May 1986, with file note reply from Margaret Medcalf, 7 January 1987, both in in CIU BA/PC/00/002 'Western Australian Documentary Heritage Services - Donations - Pictorial Collection - Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority'.

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recently are Aboriginal language lists probably collected by Georgiana Molloy in 1833. The words include Aboriginal names from both the 'south-west' and 'King George's Sound'.<sup>265</sup> It is likely that this vocabulary was obtained from Gyaliput, whose sketch of an encampment was acquired by the Library in the period 1904-07 (Figure 3). The existence and value of these lists were not known to Library staff until very recently.

In 1986, a number of donations relating to Aboriginal history were highlighted in the Annual Report. The State Film Archives noted that 'in the field of amateur film the most noteworthy addition was a collection of five reels portraying the former Swan Orphanages. Of particular interest among the new purchases were four depicting Aboriginal life-styles – Munda Nyuringu, Milliya Rumarra, Frame on Dreaming and Cass'.<sup>266</sup> Private archives were received from Sister Kate's Children's Home.<sup>267</sup> (See case study below.) And significant donations to the oral history collection included 'interviews conducted by Bill Bunbury of the ABC concerning internment, the Aboriginal experience, and the Vietnam war'.<sup>268</sup> One of these interviews was of playwright, Jack Davis. Call for Aboriginal collections kept increasing. In 1988, the Library's Annual Report noted that 'material that was in high demand by researchers included ... records relating to Aboriginal people (particularly records of genealogical potential)'.<sup>269</sup>

In 1990-91, the correspondence of the former Chief Protector of Aborigines, AO Neville was identified as a notable donation to the Library.<sup>270</sup> In 1990, John Slade Durlacher's diary, written in

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265 Part of a diary originally written in pencil and gone over later in ink. Covers an excursion by boat and on foot from "The Island" including the Chapman River area in the Augusta region, dated Monday 7 - Friday 18, 1833. Contains seven pages of Aboriginal words, both South-West and King George's Sound, for parts of the human body, weather, topographical features, etc. Five pages of miscellaneous notes. (Molloy Family papers, BL 3278A/1)

266 Library Board of WA Annual Report 1985-86, p.11.

267 Ibid., p.10.

268 Ibid., p.12; Interview with Jack Davis, sound recording by Bill Bunbury, 1984, (BL OH1302)

269 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 198-88 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1988, p.19. slwa\_b3125288\_9.

270 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1990-91 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1991, p.24. slwa\_b3125288\_12.

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1900 was purchased with assistance from the National Library, and its value noted in the Annual Report for containing information about the early pearling industry and ‘the Aboriginal way of life and customs before 1885’.<sup>271</sup> This manuscript includes a 12-page vocabulary and is richly illustrated with images of Pilbara Aboriginal people and their cultural practices.

In the late 1980s, there are the first indications in the annual reports of collecting records of Aboriginal organisations. In 1988, it was the records of the Aboriginal Advisory Council,<sup>272</sup> and in 1990, ‘Allawah Grove – one of the first Aboriginal Support Groups concerned with housing, 1958-1969’.<sup>273</sup> As late as 2002, the records of the Western Australian Aboriginal Advancement Council (1952-1978) were one of only a few collections in Private Archives ‘which represent Aboriginal perspectives’.<sup>274</sup>

Library policy changed dramatically at the end of this period. The State Reference Library Purpose and Objectives written in 1982 made no reference to Aboriginal material, and little mention of archives.<sup>275</sup> When it was updated in 1983, the policy included ‘adequately represent[ing] the world’s cultural heritage in general and the Australian cultural heritage in particular’ but there was no specific mention of Aboriginal records.<sup>276</sup> A key shift occurred after the 1988 Australian Libraries Summit where it was resolved that ‘institutions whose collections are of significance to the national collection develop and publish collection policy statements within 3 years.’<sup>277</sup>

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271 Ibid; John Slade Durlacher, ‘Account of Aboriginal customs in north west Western Australia, 1900’, ACC3839A,

272 Library Board of WA Annual Report 1987-88, p.19.

273 Library Board of WA Annual Report 1989-90, pp.21-22.

274 Hays, *Worth Telling Worth*, p.50.

275 ‘State Reference Library Purpose and Objectives’, July 1982, in COLLECTION MANAGEMENT – POLICY – Collection Development Policy Drafts (1989-1990), CIU 09/318.

276 ‘State Reference Library Purpose and Objectives’, July 1983, in COLLECTION MANAGEMENT – POLICY – Collection Development Policy Drafts (1989-1990), CIU 09/318.

277 LISWA, *Past Imperfect, Future Imperative*, 1990, p.1.

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In 1989, the new State Librarian, Lynn Allen set up a committee to develop ‘a new and detailed statement of collection development policy’.<sup>278</sup> This was launched in 1990 as *Past Imperfect, Future Imperative: Collection Development at the Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Volume 1 – The Alexander Library Building Collections*. The policy gave an overview of both the non-fiction and Western Australian history collections in the State Library and identified current strengths and collecting intentions for the future. While this was a much more detailed policy than previously, for the first time several collection strengths and future collecting recommendations related to Aboriginal collections. For example, in the Pictorial collection, strengths included ‘a large representation of Aboriginal subjects’<sup>279</sup>, with future focus to include ‘Aborigines and ethnic communities’<sup>280</sup>. In the State Film and Video Library, strengths included ‘Aborigines ... Aboriginal art, culture, land rights and social conditions. Although many are dated, the titles cover issues of current interest’, with future collecting to continue to collect titles on topical issues relating to Aboriginal people.<sup>281</sup> The oral history collection covered interviews with Western Australians ‘from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Aborigines’, with future collections to target current gaps in information.<sup>282</sup> For the State Archives, their target group included those who use the archives to ‘advance the interests of a particular group or organisation in areas such as ... Aboriginal issues’.<sup>283</sup> Private Archives sought ‘to address critical deficiencies in collections from minority groups such as Aborigines, and migrant groups and ensure that the work of women is equally represented where possible’.<sup>284</sup> At the end of 1990, archivist David Whiteford wrote a paper identifying the records of recently-established Aboriginal communities

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278 Lynn Allen, State Librarian, ‘The Library Board of Western Australia Collection Development Policy’, 17 July 1990, in ‘Collection Development Policy – State Reference Library – SRL’, CIU 2A.100.

279 LISWA, *Past Imperfect, Future Imperative*, 1990, p.181.

280 *Ibid.*, p.182.

281 LISWA, *Past Imperfect, Future Imperative: Collection Development at The Library and Information Service of Western Australia*, Vol. 1, 1990, pp.141, 143.

282 *Ibid.*, pp.184-5.

283 *Ibid.*, p.187.

284 *Ibid.*, p.193.

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and their associated business enterprises as a gap in the Private Archives collection.<sup>285</sup> By May 1991, a draft paper for the Library Board recommended developing an Aboriginal resource collection (among other areas for collection). It suggested trying to get funding, possibly through a social justice programme, noting that the Public Records Office of South Australia had recently identified and done an inventory of Aboriginal records:

A separately-identifiable project, or unit, based in the State Archives could be worth considering. Components of its work could include semi-permanent displays, reproduction of archival texts, compilation of biographies and other finding aids.<sup>286</sup>

In 1991, a National Library report on state collections noted in regards to Aboriginal language material that in the SLWA they '[c]ollect what they can, but they suspect that there is a lot more published 'up north' which is not reaching them.'<sup>287</sup>

In 1992, Lukis commented in her oral history that schools had counteracted the attitude that Western Australia doesn't have a history. 'You see they weren't teaching Australian history to any extent, and now of course, they are doing projects on local history. Local history and Aborigines are very much promoted in their teaching so that the whole attitude has changed.'<sup>288</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the new interest in Aboriginal collections, the Library continued to support interpretations of Australian history from a colonial perspective. In 1991 the Royal Western Australian Historical Society's exhibition highlighted explorer Edward Eyre's journey from the

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285 David Whiteford, 'Collecting gaps in Private Archives collection', 27/12/1990, in 'Collection Management – POLICY – Private Archives – Policy Development – 1982-2000', CIU 12/454.

286 Lynn Allen, State Librarian, Draft of 'The Library Board of Western Australia: The Private Archives Collection: Some Policy Issues', 21/5/1991, in 'Collection Management – POLICY – Private Archives – Policy Development – 1982-2000', CIU 12/454.

287 Extract from report of visits by NLA staff to Australian state libraries, attached to letter Eric Wainwright, Deputy Director-General, National Library of Australia to Lynn Allen, State Librarian, State Library of WA, 13 February 1991, in 'Collection Development Policy – State Reference Library – SRL', CIU 2A.100

288 Meroula (Mollie) Frances Lukis, verbatim transcript of an interview recorded by Erica Harvey for the JS Battye Library of West Australian History, recorded June-October 1992, OH2527, p.47.

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Great Australian Bight in South Australia to Albany. Using the language of terra nullius, they referred to his journey as being through an “empty” landscape. The Library lent its support for the exhibition:

The re-enactment of Edward John Eyre’s epic journey of 150 years ago across the Great Australian Bight was complemented by an exhibition Edward John Eyre: Hero in an Empty Landscape assisted by the Royal Western Australian Historical Society Inc. It gave LISWA [the Library and Information Service of WA] the opportunity to display rare and historically significant items from the collection.<sup>289</sup>

#### **1.4 National Human Rights: 1990s Reports and changing Library policy**

In the 1990s influential reports and policy documents which identified Aboriginal collections and Library users as important stakeholders were produced. Released in 1991, the National Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody strongly influenced library policy towards Aboriginal people and collections.<sup>290</sup> The report emphasised the importance of Australia’s history of dispossession, violence, control over Aboriginal people’s lives, and the removal of children on the high rate of incarceration of Aboriginal people.<sup>291</sup> It recommended a wide range of both broad and specific actions to redress this, including a focus on consultation with and direction from Aboriginal people and organisations in implementing the recommendations.<sup>292</sup>

With regard to archives, the report called on governments to:

provide access to all government archival records pertaining to the family and community

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289 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1990-91 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1991, p.35. slwa\_b3125288\_12.

290 LISWA, A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia, 1997, p.2; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, ‘Recommendations’, National Report, Volume 5, Indigenous Law Resources, Reconciliation and Social Justice Library. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/national/vol5/5.html>

291 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1.4 ‘The Importance of History’, National Report, Volume 1, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/national/vol1/1.html>

292 See for example Recommendations 1, 188 and 192. Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, ‘Recommendations’, National Report, Volume 5, Indigenous Law Resources, Reconciliation and Social Justice Library. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/national/vol5/5.html>

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histories of Aboriginal people so as to assist the process of enabling Aboriginal people to re-establish community and family links with those people from whom they were separated as a result of past policies of government. The Commission recognises that questions of the rights to privacy and questions of confidentiality may arise and recommends that the principles and processes for access to such records should be negotiated between government and appropriate Aboriginal organisations, but such negotiations should proceed on the basis that as a general principle access to such documents should be permitted.<sup>293</sup>

In addition, the Report recommended that school curricula 'should reflect the fact that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters', and this should be reflected in teacher training.<sup>294</sup>

The 1994 Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Social Justice further influenced the development of policy at the State Library.<sup>295</sup> In 1995, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* was published on behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN).<sup>296</sup> In it the authors argued that:

[i]n addressing the needs and concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, libraries, archives and information services have a great opportunity, and responsibility, to contribute to the nationally vital process of reconciliation. ... The goal is of such importance that we must pursue it. It will enrich all of us.<sup>297</sup>

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293 Recommendation 53, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 'Recommendations', National Report, Volume 5, Indigenous Law Resources, Reconciliation and Social Justice Library. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/national/vol5/5.html>

294 Recommendations 290 and 295, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

295 LISWA, *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* in Western Australia, 1997, p.2.

296 <https://www.nsla.org.au/resources/cslp-collections/protocol6>

297 Alex Byrne, Heather Moorcroft, Alana Garwood and Alan Barnes (compilers), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* published by Australian Library and Information Association for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network, Deakin, ACT, 1995, p.3.

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In 1995, the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) published its *Public Library Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Plan*. Developed in consultation with Aboriginal groups and public libraries, it was launched during NAIDOC Week. The Plan contained:

recommendations for improving access by Aboriginal people to employment opportunities within the library service, gaining knowledge and understanding of the services provided by public libraries and promoting the use of library services by Aboriginal people.<sup>298</sup>

In 1996, LISWA released two draft plans:

1. *Working Together: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Plan for the State Reference Library of Western Australia.*
2. *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Plan: Looking at Ways to Improve Service Delivery for Aboriginal People from the Battye Library.*

These papers, and a summary document produced by LISWA's Aboriginal Services Officer, were sent to WA and interstate clients for comment. The plans were also discussed at a workshop in Geraldton, then a public forum in Perth. Both of these were held by LISWA's Aboriginal Services Officer and Special Needs Consultant. Much of the extensive feedback was incorporated in the 1997 Plan.<sup>299</sup>

The next important development came from the 1997 *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, an investigation into the generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families under assimilation policies.<sup>300</sup> As Haebich noted, 'The inquiry drew principally on Aboriginal oral testimony that was not given under oath or verified by archival

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298 Annual Report 1994-95 of The Library Board of Western Australia, p.7.

299 LISWA, *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia*, 1997, p.1.

300 *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. Commonwealth of Australia, 1997. <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/the-report/bringing-them-home-report>

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research’, and, ‘the reports prompted a national campaign for Aboriginal control of the archives backed by human rights principles’.<sup>301</sup> Important recommendations relating to archives included prohibitions on destroying private or government records relating to Aboriginal communities, individuals or families, including children who had been removed; and that government record agencies be given funding to both preserve and index these records as well as creating finding aids that maintained people’s privacy.<sup>302</sup> Church and non-government agencies which placed or cared for children removed from their families were to identify, index and make accessible their records, transferring them to an appropriate Indigenous language, culture or history centre on request.<sup>303</sup> Other recommendations were that the ‘history and continuing effects of forcible removal’ be included in school curricula,<sup>304</sup> as well as in training for relevant professions, such as those who work with Aboriginal people.<sup>305</sup> The report also recommended funding be provided for ‘Indigenous language, culture and history centres’,<sup>306</sup> noting that ‘reclamation of historical documentation’ might be key to regenerating community and family connections.<sup>307</sup> In terms of staff, the report recommended that Commonwealth and state governments fund training for Aboriginal archivists, genealogists and researchers.<sup>308</sup> Public Records Office and Battye Library staff were involved with the State Records Taskforce established to review the issues relating to records raised in *Bringing Them Home*.<sup>309</sup>

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301 Haebich, ‘Fever in the archive’, pp.82-98.

302 *Bringing Them Home*, Recommendations 21 and 22a.

303 *Bringing Them Home*, Recommendations 38a and 38b.

304 ‘Chapter 14 Making Reparation’, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. Commonwealth of Australia, 1997, recommendation 8a, <https://bth.humanrights.gov.au/the-report/bringing-them-home-report>

305 *Bringing Them Home*, Recommendations 9a and b.

306 *Bringing Them Home*, Recommendations 12a and b.

307 *Bringing Them Home*, “Cultural Renewal”.

308 *Bringing Them Home*, Recommendation 28.

309 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1997-98 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1998, p.16. slwa\_b3407723\_2; The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1998-99 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1999, p.21. slwa\_b3407723\_3.

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Also in 1997, the Library released *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia from The JS Battye Library of Western Australia and The State Reference Library*.<sup>310</sup> Recognising the importance of talking to the appropriate people, for the first time it listed the names of the Aboriginal people who were consulted in the development of the Plan. For the Battye Library, the employment of Aboriginal staff was the highest priority of the Plan, particularly in public contact areas. Other elements were collection development, especially from an Aboriginal perspective, making collections as accessible as possible, consulting with communities regarding the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) materials in the collection which may have been taken without full consultation, updating terminology to describe collections, appropriate management of secret/sacred and sensitive materials, improved governance such as creating a Ministry of Culture and the Arts Aboriginal Advisory Group, raising community awareness of ATSI people and issues, and cultural awareness training for staff. The Plan incorporated a range of strategies for LISWA regarding sensitivity towards ATSI people, the provision of services in consultation with ATSI people, increasing employment, increasing collections, and partnerships to assist in the collection, management and access to relevant materials.<sup>311</sup>

The Battye Library released its 'Collection Development Policy and Infolink Database Policy' in 2001 in which it noted that for the private archives collection '[s]pecial emphasis will be given to acquiring documentary materials from Western Australia's Aboriginal people and ethnic groups'.<sup>312</sup> It noted that the pictorial collection already held 'a good collection of images significant for

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310 LISWA, *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia from The JS Battye Library of Western Australia and The State Reference Library*, Perth: The Library Board of Western Australia, 1997. The 1997-1998 Annual Report noted that Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples delivered by LISWA had been published. The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1997-98 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1998, p.8. slwa\_b3407723\_2

311 LISWA, *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia from The JS Battye Library of Western Australia and The State Reference Library*, Perth: The Library Board of Western Australia, 1997, pp.1-2, 4-10.

312 JS Battye Library of West Australian History, 'Collection Development Policy and Infolink Database Policy', February 2001, p.12 in Western Australian Documentary Heritage Services – Policy – Collection Development Policy, CIU BA/06/017.

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research into the experiences of the State's Aboriginal peoples,<sup>313</sup> and that access to collection materials could be restricted if they were culturally sensitive.<sup>314</sup>

By the time the State Library produced its next collection policy, *Developing our Collections: Collection Development Policy Framework* in 2009, there was an emphasis on collecting published and unpublished Aboriginal material, as well as working 'towards repatriating Western Australian Indigenous documentary material to the community of origin in the most appropriate format.'<sup>315</sup>

The reports and policies discussed above led to a number of changes in library practices. For Aboriginal heritage collections, the key elements were broadening collections and library practices to better represent Aboriginal perspectives; employing Aboriginal staff; better access to collections; using the collections to tell a more nuanced narrative about Western Australia's history; and repatriation to individuals and communities. This work commenced in the 1990s and continues today. It is worth noting that in 2022 the State Library released a *Collection Strategy and Collection Interpretation Strategy* each with a targeted approach to Aboriginal collections being guided by Aboriginal communities.

### **Growing use of records by Aboriginal people in 1990s**

From the early 1990s, there is growing evidence of Aboriginal people using the records at the State Library. For example, in 1990 personal files about Aboriginal people from the Department of Native Welfare were used by staff of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody,<sup>316</sup> and in 1991 staff from the Aboriginal Wheatbelt Corporation 'spent several months extracting

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313 Ibid.

314 Ibid

315 State Library of Western Australia, *Developing our Collections: Collection Development Policy Framework*, April 2009, with corrections in 2013, p.7. <http://slwa.wa.gov.au/explore-discover/collecting-wa/collecting-future>

316 LISWA, Report 1989-90 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1990, p.23. slwa\_b3125288\_11.

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genealogical data from Native Welfare files and entering the information into a data base.<sup>317</sup> In 1997, Department of Aboriginal Affairs' staff worked with the Public Records Office to identify Aboriginal reserves.<sup>318</sup>

Recognising both the interest in these files, and the privacy issues for individuals discussed, in 1981, the Department of Community Welfare restricted access to its records.<sup>319</sup> In 1982, the Annual Report followed up with more information:

Following protracted negotiations with the responsible departments, a working arrangement has been formulated in regard to access to records of the Department for Community Welfare and the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority. Most records in this category are now open for research at thirty years or fifty years, and plans are in hand by the departments to extend the range of material available at thirty years.<sup>320</sup>

Reflecting a reoccurring theme in this report on the history of Aboriginal collections at the Library, it was only in hindsight that the value of historical collections for Aboriginal people began to be recognised. For example, archivist, Margaret Metcalf recalled that in the early 1970s staff considered it important to preserve the large quantity of Native Welfare case files for their anthropological interest, but she was later grateful they had done so because of their significance for members of the Stolen Generations in tracing family history. In an oral history recorded in 2000 she reflected:

Case files were something that were always very difficult to decide about, such as personal files or individual files that there would be masses of the same sort of file. In the main, case files you were advised not to keep. I can remember one victory, I suppose, was when the Department of Native Welfare was wanting to get rid of a huge quantity of files which were applications from Aboriginal people for welfare or blankets

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317 LISWA, Annual Report 1990-91 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1991, p.26. slwa\_b3125288\_12.

318 LISWA, Annual Report 1996-97 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1997, p.21. slwa\_b3125288\_1000.

319 LISWA, Annual Report 1980-81 of the Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1981, p.9. slwa\_b3125288\_2.

320 LISWA, Annual Report 1981-82 of the Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1982, p.11. slwa\_b3125288\_3.

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or rations or what have you in letters sent to the department. These were a great series of case files and they wanted to get rid of them. We said, “Well no, they might be of use anthropologically” ... it was agreed that they would be microfilmed and the negative of that microfilm was lodged here. I hope it is still here. The positive was to be retained in the department for reference purposes, and the files were destroyed. I was most gratified only a couple of years ago when I was at a talk being given by Sandra Hill who is an Aboriginal artist and she was talking about research she had done into the background of her family and she was projecting some of the documents. I could see the sprocket holes down the side of them and I knew they were from that microfilm and I was so gratified because with all this Stolen Generation and all the things that have happened now wouldn't it have been absolutely terrible if those files had been destroyed? That was one of the most gratifying things in my career.<sup>321</sup>

In the 1990s, large numbers of oral histories were also being recorded with Aboriginal people, offering an Aboriginal perspective on our history in direct contrast to many of the early Library records.

Books written by Indigenous authors, or books co-authored with Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, also increased in this period. Examples include *When the Pelican Laughed* (1992), an account of Alice Nannup's life told by Alice together with Stephen Kinnane and Lauren Marsh.<sup>322</sup> Also in 1992, the Mogumber Heritage Committee, part of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation, produced a published photograph collection of the Moore River Native Settlement from 1917 to 1965.<sup>323</sup> In 1994, Rosemary van den Berg wrote her father's story about being at Moore River Native Settlement in *No Options, No Choice!: The Moore River Experience: My Father, Thomas*

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321 Margaret Medcalf, transcript of an interview recorded by Leigh Hays for State Library of Western Australia – Oral History Collection on 18 August and 1, 4 and 8 September 2000, OH3255, pp.22-3. More recently, DAA files have been used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous historians to uncover Nyungar letters in the archive in the ARC project led by Anna Haebich, *Ancestors Words: Nyungar writing in government archives, 1860-1960*.

322 Nannup, Alice, *When the Pelican Laughed*, with Stephen Kinnane and Lauren Marsh, South Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1992.

323 Mogumber Heritage Committee, part of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Corporation proudly presents a pictorial collection of the Moore River Native Settlement, 1917 to 1965, Mogumber Heritage Committee, 1992, .

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*Corbett, An Aboriginal Half-Caste.*<sup>324</sup>

### **Collecting Aboriginal perspectives**

The first major collection in the Library that was gathered and curated by an Aboriginal person was the Badjaling/Winmar collection of photographs. In 1993, the Library copied 305 photographs from Ralph Winmar, which is now known as the Badjaling/Winmar collection. The photos were mainly taken by Aboriginal people and depicted their lives and experiences at Badjaling Mission near Quairading east of Perth. Mr Winmar was paid \$300 for his time identifying the photographs, with funding provided by the Friends of Battye Library.<sup>325</sup> In an article for the Friends of Battye in 1993, Pictorial Librarian, Joanna Sassoon, highlighted the importance of the photos having been taken by Aboriginal people in comparison with the vast majority of photos in the collection which had been taken by non-Aboriginal people:

There are thousands of photographs of Aboriginal people in the Pictorial Collection, taken for different reasons and collected from a variety of sources. Most of these photographs have been taken and preserved by Europeans - by government departments or missionaries as a record of what Aboriginal people looked like; by the monks to demonstrate their success in the process of civilising the Aboriginal people; or by those in many regions who wanted to record how the country was being colonised. This is aside from the publicly sanctioned images of Aboriginal people on postcards. Because most images in the Battye Library Pictorial Collection have been taken and preserved by Europeans they show an outsider's version of the Aboriginal experience - they often display Aboriginal people as objects and thinly disguise the prevailing attitudes of Europeans towards Aboriginal people - as either 'noble savages' or 'passive victims.'<sup>326</sup>

Since then, a number of collections of photographs by Aboriginal photographers have been

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324 van den Berg, Rosemary, *No Options, No Choice!: The Moore River Experience: My Father, Thomas Corbett, An Aboriginal Half-Caste*, Broome, Magabala Books, 1994.

325 Joanna Sassoon, memo to Friends of Battye Library, 21 April 1993, BA/PC/00/784; The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1992-93 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1993, p.28. slwa\_b3125288\_14.

326 Joanna Sassoon, 'Winmar Collection', Friends of Battye Library Newsletter, 1993, p.10.

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received in the Library, including the Joe Mallard collection from the Midwest region.<sup>327</sup> Other emphases on collecting Aboriginal perspectives included support for workshops to train WA interviewers for the National Library of Australia's *Bringing Them Home* oral history project.<sup>328</sup> Also in 2000, the State Film Archivist worked with Elders from the West Kimberley to identify and edit films to remove culturally restricted material from public access.<sup>329</sup> In 2003, Rhonda Winmar deposited Bibbulmun poet and playwright, Eddie Bennell's papers with the Library.<sup>330</sup>

### **Making collections accessible**

In 1994 Library staff undertook training on 'Public library services for Aboriginal people', and tours of the Library and talks were provided to a range of clients including 'several Aboriginal groups'.<sup>331</sup> In 1997-98 the Library held a workshop promoting the Battye Library and received feedback from Noongar Elders, and staff from the University of Western Australia's Centre for Indigenous History and the Aboriginal Affairs Department.<sup>332</sup> Noting the requirement that Public Records Office (PRO) family history material needed to be more accessible to those researching their Aboriginal ancestors, in 1997-98 the PRO produced a brochure 'Family History Services for Aboriginal People at the Public Records Office' and began an index of the 1500 files of the Chief Protector of Aborigines between 1898 and 1908.<sup>333</sup> In 1999-2000, LISWA's new website contained a gateway to information for Aboriginal people about the collections, services, information on Indigenous topics and links to relevant websites.<sup>334</sup>

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327 State Library of Western Australia, Annual Report of the State Library of Western Australia 2012-2013, p.23. [http://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLWA\\_Annual\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLWA_Annual_report_2013.pdf).

328 LISWA, Annual Report 1999-2000 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 2000, p.21. slwa\_b3407723\_4.

329 Ibid., p.14. slwa\_b3407723\_4.

330 Eddie Bennell's papers, (ACC5989A).

331 LISWA, Annual Report 1993-94 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1994, p.19-22. slwa\_b3125288\_15.

332 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1997-98 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 1998, p.16. slwa\_b3407723\_2.

333 Ibid., p.22-23, 38

334 The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 1999-2000 of The Library Board of Western Australia. Perth, 2000, p.14. slwa\_b3407723\_4.

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In 1993, Ronald Richards had compiled *A Guide to Sources for the history of South Western Australia*, which included a small section on 'Aborigines'.<sup>335</sup> Richards' guide was not specifically for Aboriginal users of Library records, and in 2002, the Library used funds from the Friends of Battye Library and the Maude Sholl Bequest to produce *Katitjin: A Guide to the Aboriginal Records of the Battye Library*.<sup>336</sup> This is a useful guide for researchers, and to some extent for Aboriginal family members. It contains detailed overviews of relevant Battye Library collections and finding aids, as well as long lists of published and unpublished references for a wide range of topics. As well as offering extensive advice on how and where to research Aboriginal topics, the listings provide useful leads to sources that might otherwise have been overlooked. In discussing photographs, *Katitjin* raises the issue that most photographs of Aboriginal people are unidentified noting that in describing individual photos, the caption *unidentified Aboriginal* is of little use. In addressing this, the Library has changed from describing individual photos to describing collections so that the context may assist in identifying people in the photos.<sup>337</sup>

## Repatriation

Following the colonial critique directed at museums and collecting institutions more broadly, the digital repatriation of collections has become a strong focus for libraries. In 2000-2001, the State Library received a large donation of photographs from the Schenk family, who had been missionaries at Warburton and Mt Margaret Missions. The collection was digitised, and copies were sent to the Goldfields Land and Sea Council for native title and local community use,<sup>338</sup> as

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335 Ronald Richards, *A Guide to Sources for the history of South Western Australia*, Crawley, UWAP, 1993.

336 *Katitjin: A Guide to Indigenous Records in the Battye Library*. Compiled by Heather Campbell. (Perth: Compiled with the assistance of the Friends of Battye Library with funding from the Mollie Sholl Bequest, 2003); The Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Annual Report 2001-2002 of The Library Board of Western Australia. 50th Annual Report of the Board, Perth, WA, 2002, p.17.

337 *Ibid.*, 13-14.

338 LISWA, Annual Report 2001-2002 of The Library Board of Western Australia. 50th Annual Report of the Board, Perth, WA, 2002, p.18; Brian Stewart, Team Leader, Battye Published Collections, 'Friends of Battye Library Project to Digitise Schenk Family Collection', in CIU BA/PC/00/830 Western Australian Documentary Heritage Services - Donations - Pictorial Collection - Morgan - Ms Margaret (Schenk Collection); Ronda Jamieson to Bryan Wyatt, Goldfields Land and Sea Council, 28 January 2003, CIU BA/PC/00/830.

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well as to Bega Garnbirringu for a Mt Margaret Mission reunion in 2004,<sup>339</sup> and the Kalgoorlie Public Library.<sup>340</sup> No longer were the collections just for researchers at the library; they were to be returned to community as well. After considerable internal debate on the merits of the project, in 2012, the State Library collaborated with the Kadjina Aboriginal Community to digitise the Walmajarri Language Stories Collection, returning the originals and copies to the community. The stories are available online; in 2013 they were the largest collection of free, interactive Aboriginal language stories in Australia.<sup>341</sup>

An important milestone in the digital repatriation of photographs and other collections was the establishment of the Storylines Project in 2012. It is described as follows in the Annual Report for that year:

To date, the Ara Irititja software has been implemented in-house and is being used to digitally repatriate Aboriginal heritage materials in a culturally appropriate way, whilst also enabling Aboriginal people to connect digitally with the Library's vast collections relating to Aboriginal history and culture in Western Australia. Called Storylines, it will include heritage materials from all over Western Australia. In its pilot phase, over 600 images have been added to the system, and this will continue to grow in the year ahead. To help guide the Library in its development of this project, an Aboriginal Reference Group has been established and a partnership with the Northern Territory Library Service to develop training documents and guidelines for staff and community members.<sup>342</sup>

Launched in August 2013, within its first year Storylines had enabled photographs to be digitally repatriated to descendants and provided a forum for Elders to identify previously unknown people. A community-controlled database known as *Wuman Storylines* was also installed at Mowanjum

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339 Brian Stewart, Manager, Battye Published Collections to Andrew Hughes, Link-Up Project, Kalgoorlie, 28/9/2004, CIU BA/PC/00/830.

340 David Whiteford, email to Debra Hodges, City Librarian, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 10 February 2009, CIU BA/PC/00/830.

341 The stories are available on <http://catalogue.slwa.wa.gov.au/record=b3303747>. State Library of Western Australia, Annual Report of the State Library of Western Australia 2012-2013. [http://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLWA\\_Annual\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLWA_Annual_report_2013.pdf)

342 State Library of Western Australia, Annual Report of the State Library of Western Australia 2012-2013, p.35. [http://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLWA\\_Annual\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://slwa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/SLWA_Annual_report_2013.pdf).

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Community near Derby as well as a community-controlled instance at Yawuru Community in Broome known as *Mangara Yawuru Storylines*.<sup>343</sup> The central Storylines platform continues to grow and evolve in collaboration with Aboriginal communities around the State. This is an important example of the way SLWA has addressed the historical link between archives and trauma for Aboriginal people.

## 1.5 Current Issues and Recommendations

Despite progress in working respectfully with and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Library, the 2018 'Preserve, Strengthen and Renew in Community Workshop' identified a number of issues for Aboriginal people accessing state and Commonwealth archives.<sup>344</sup> Building on the work of previous decades, the report offers pointers for developing more nuanced and respectful policies which could be usefully discussed at SLWA. Issues raised included the importance of archives focusing on and supporting the priorities identified by communities.<sup>345</sup> Another problem was the difficulty in identifying relevant collections across organisations since metadata can be labelled in different ways, for example by donor or by content.<sup>346</sup> Participants recommended that archiving and adding metadata would be better undertaken by Aboriginal people who have a better understanding of cultural issues and the collections. Doing so would offer cross-cultural training for other staff and help diversify the skills of Aboriginal staff.<sup>347</sup> Institutions also need to recognise that they are not impartial and to be open to community members correcting information contained in collections.<sup>348</sup> There are also tensions between Australian copyright law and Aboriginal cultural rules and law.<sup>349</sup>

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343 The State Library of Western Australia, Annual Report 2013-14, p.5.

344 'Preserve, Strengthen and Renew in Community Workshop Report', Draft, 2018

345 Ibid., p. 12.

346 Ibid.

347 Ibid., p. 14.

348 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

349 Ibid., p. 28.

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For example, donor restrictions can stop Indigenous people accessing information about their own family, and sometimes copyright goes to the person who made a recording even if they did so unethically.<sup>350</sup>

Wangka Maya commissioned Terri Janke, an Aboriginal solicitor:

to develop a copyright agreement which means that the person recording material gives the knowledge holder the copyright and the person recording is granted a licence to use the product for certain things.<sup>351</sup>

This also raised the question of who has the right to decide what may be done with material in archives or copies that may be returned to communities.<sup>352</sup>

The most recent SLWA collection strategy states that ‘Collecting practices will be aligned with the ATSLIRN protocols for libraries, archives and information services. Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols will be embedded with the workflow of collection acquisition, including communities as the key decision makers’.<sup>353</sup>

## Recommendations

1. As the authors of this report are non-Indigenous historians, our first recommendation is the establishment of an Aboriginal reference group for SLWA – including decision making around access to secret/sacred and historically derogatory material.
2. Develop a policy on management of Aboriginal collections to clarify the role of descendants in ongoing curation and control of access.
3. Enable oral history projects with Aboriginal people (loan of equipment, training) with deposits

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350 Ibid., pp. 16-17

351 Ibid., pp.17-18.

352 Ibid., pp. 19-20.

353 State Library of Western Australia, Collection Strategy, 2022. SLWA Collection Strategy.pdf

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of recordings in the collection.

4. Make the history of collecting visible by documenting provenance – the history of the collection, the date and reason for acquisition – and integrate that into the catalogue record, making it publicly available.
5. A renewed emphasis on staffing that includes a program to develop front of house Aboriginal staff, genealogy specialists, and a team of Aboriginal librarians. These recommendations were made in *Bringing them Home, Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. Commonwealth of Australia, 1997.  
<https://bth.human-rights.gov.au/the-report/bringing-them-home-report>
6. Relating to the above, we recommend the SLWA revisit their plan, developed in 1997, and improve upon its implementation, especially around collection management and public access: *A Plan to Deliver Library Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Western Australia from The JS Battye Library of Western Australia and The State Reference Library*.
7. An additional SLWA Fellowship, specifically for Indigenous researchers working with Aboriginal communities/people to document pictorial records.
8. Update *Katitjin: A Guide to the Aboriginal Records of the Battye Library* to ensure all public and private archival records that contain references to Aboriginal People are indexed, so as to make that content known and accessible to Aboriginal people and members of the public, subject to any advice from the Aboriginal Reference Group.
9. Consider publishing on the Library's website, some short histories of specific items discussed in this report, including the history of their collection and uses to which they have been put. This will highlight key items in the collection and make them better known.

## Appendix: Case Studies

### Case Study: George Fletcher Moore, *A Descriptive Vocabulary*, 1842<sup>354</sup>

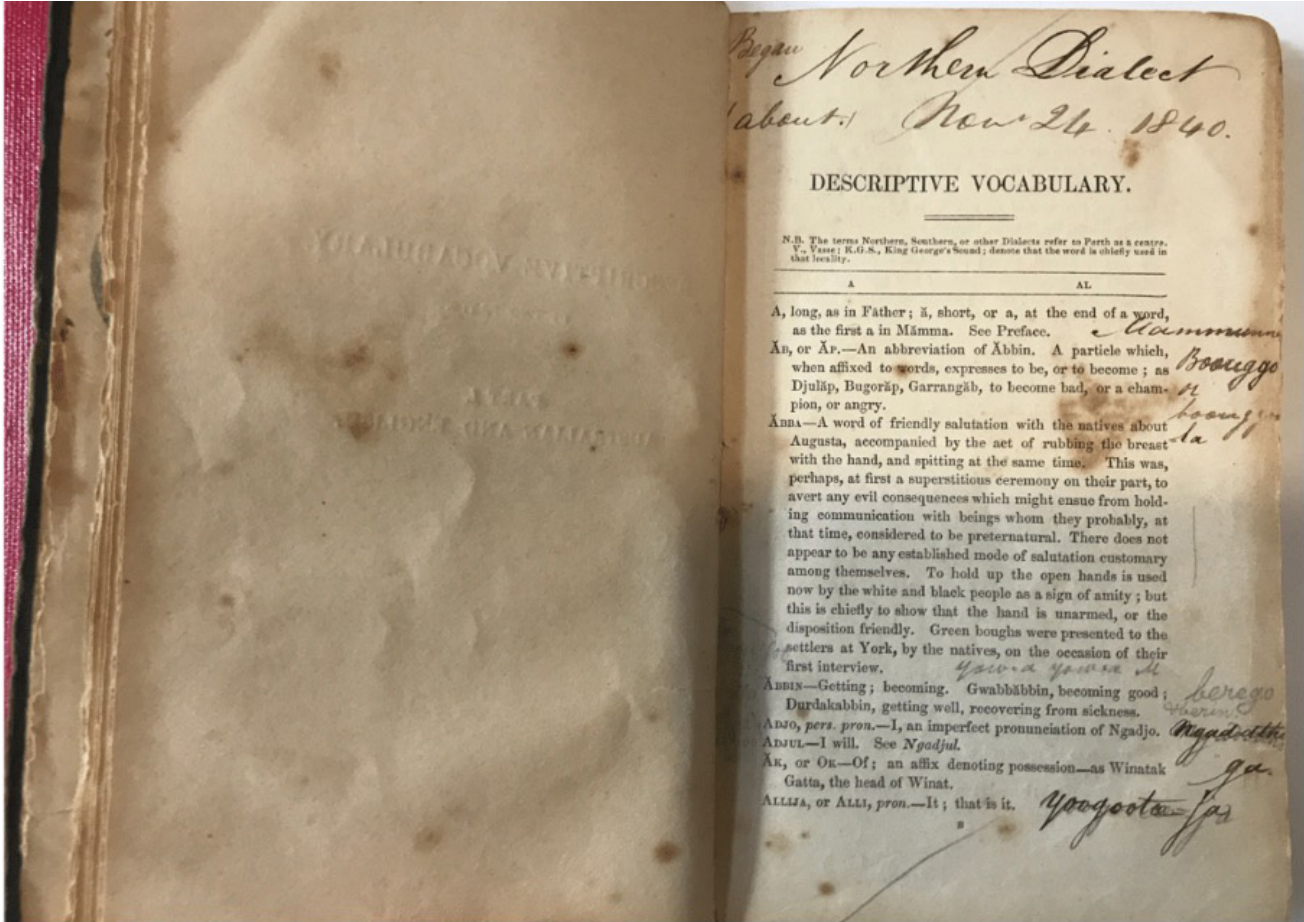


Figure 11: Page 1 of Moore's *Descriptive Vocabulary*, showing the added 'Northern Dialect' of Francis Fraser Armstrong, annotated throughout, (State Library of Western Australia, Rare Books 000054).

This Noongar – English vocabulary is one of the first items in the SLWA collection which has as its focus, Aboriginal people of Western Australia. It was collated by George Fletcher Moore, Judge-Advocate General of Western Australia, and published in London in 1842. The first copy came into the SLWA collection in 1904 and the Library now has six copies.

354 George Fletcher Moore, *A Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language in Common Use Amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia; with Copious Meanings, Embodying Much Interesting Information Regarding the Habits, Manners, and Customs of the Natives, and the Natural History of the Country*, London, Wm S Orr and Co, Paternoster Row, 1842.

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The *Vocabulary* comprises 171 pages of listings of language, mostly from Nyungar to English, with a shorter section translating from English to Nyungar. In the Preface, Moore acknowledged that it is based on George Grey's *Vocabulary of the Dialects spoken by the Aboriginal races of S.W. Australia* (1839), but much expanded as a result of Moore's own longer residence in the colony and greater experience with the language. Moore also drew on the work of Charles Symmons, Protector of Aborigines, Francis Fraser Armstrong, Interpreter to the Natives and an unnamed friend.<sup>355</sup>

Moore's stated reasons for writing the *Descriptive Vocabulary* were to allow those with relatives in the colony to understand something of the people and place; to give information to help immigrants; to assist settlers in communicating with Nyungar people in order to have greater influence and frequently to gain important information regarding the localities and resources of the country; to introduce a new way of speaking for people interested in languages; to introduce philosophers to a new "uncivilised" people; and to assist missionaries in "enlightening and converting".<sup>356</sup> As mentioned previously, there was also strong imperial interest in philology as an ethnographic science in this era, and it was believed that the study of comparative languages held the key to migration histories about how the world was populated. As noted earlier in this report, Moore's personal library was auctioned in January 1852. In the list of books were 'grammars, dictionaries and other works in twelve different languages viz. – English, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, Italian, Portuguese, German, Chinese, Irish Gaelic, and Australian'.<sup>357</sup>

The State Library has six copies of this book and there is also correspondence about a special loan of the book in 1947. The first book was acquired via donation from James Morrison Esq. on 26 May 1904, the 75th Anniversary of the colony. Morrison donated three books at the same time:

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355 Ibid., Preface, p.vi.

356 Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

357 'Mr Moore's Library', *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 16 January 1852, p.4

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the 1842 *Vocabulary* by George Fletcher Moore (valued at 11 shillings in the SLWA Stock Book), Moore's 1834 *Extracts from his Letters and Journals* and J Cross, *Journals of Several Expeditions made in WA during the years 1829, 1830-32 and 1834*.<sup>358</sup> This copy of the *Vocabulary* now has a new cover and there is no indication that it came from Morrison, but the Stock Book number 23008 is written in ink on the title page linking it back to him.<sup>359</sup> James Morrison was born in 1846 in London and migrated to Guildford in Western Australia from Victoria in 1868. He had pastoral interests in WA, was a businessman and was the director of several companies, including AMP. Morrison was a member of the Legislative Council from 1887 to 1894.<sup>360</sup> It is not known why he donated these three books in 1904, but perhaps his interest in Moore came from his settlement in Guildford, near to where Moore had also lived.

In January 1906, the SLWA purchased a second copy of Moore's *Vocabulary* from the Agent General of WA.<sup>361</sup> The Agent General, H.B. Lefroy, was based in London from 1891 to promote the sale of Western Australian produce overseas, purchase equipment needed for the state, and to assist migrants.<sup>362</sup> The book has the following inscription on one of the inside cover pages "The Right Hon-ble. Francis Blackburne with the compliments and best wishes of G.F. Moore". Blackburne was an eminent, conservative Irish lawyer who in the early and mid-nineteenth century filled the posts of Attorney-General for Ireland, Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, and Lord Chancellor of Ireland.<sup>363</sup> Moore was also an Irish lawyer and he personally gave the book to Blackburne. Blackburne died in 1867 and it is not known what happened to the book for the next

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358 See Stock Book Cons 2640, 4, Acc. 23008, 23009, 23010. Moore's 1834 *Extracts from his Letters and Journals* was valued at 12 shillings, and Cross, *Journals of Several Expeditions made in WA during the years 1829, 1830-32 and 1834* was valued at 10 shillings and sixpence.

359 Stock Book, Cons 2640, 4, Acc. 23008.

360 'James Morrison', in Rica Erickson (comp.), *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre 1829-1888*, Volume III, p.2241.

361 Stock Book, Cons 2650 04, Acc. 27389. The book was listed in the Stock Book on 10 January 1906.

362 AU WA A1165, Office of the Agent-General, State Records Office of WA. <https://archive.sro.wa.gov.au/index.php/office-of-the-agent-general-au-wa-a1165>

363 George Barnett Smith, 'Francis Blackburne (1782-1867)', *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900*, vol. 5, ed. Leslie Stephen. (London: Elder Smith and Co, 1886). [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary\\_of\\_National\\_Biography,\\_1885-1900/Blackburne,\\_Francis\\_\(1782-1867\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Blackburne,_Francis_(1782-1867))

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forty years. It has “15/-” written in pencil on one of the inside pages, suggesting that it might have been sold secondhand. It is also valued at 15 shillings in the Stock Book, so it may have been one of the secondhand books purchased by the Agent General in London for the Library.<sup>364</sup>

It is not known when the next three copies were received by the Library. One has been stamped “Sold by the authority of the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales [signed] Principal Librarian”.<sup>365</sup> This copy is extensively annotated in a range of languages, for example Hebrew, Arabic, Italian, Danish and Greek. The translations into other languages are written next to the Nyungar words. There is no identification in the front of the book, but it does have the annotation ‘A/18.M’. This book is currently located in the Heritage Review Stack, suggesting that it might be under consideration for a change in status. The annotations render this copy an important indicator of language knowledge. A second book has no identifying marks. The third unknown copy has its original cover and is the Rare books access copy. The book is marked “Presented to the Library Board by Education Department”, which suggests a later donation date.<sup>366</sup>

The final, and arguably most significant, donation of the book occurred at the ceremony to inaugurate the Alexander Library Building on 30 November 1979.<sup>367</sup> This particular copy belonged to Francis Fraser Armstrong, who had been Interpreter to the Natives. Armstrong, Moore acknowledged, was an important contributor to the book, writing in the preface that<sup>368</sup> :

Mr Francis Armstrong, who had bestowed much attention on the aborigines, and who spoke the language with a fluency nearly equal to their own, was appointed to the office of interpreter, and was thenceforth generally employed as a recognised medium

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364 Agent General, ‘Early Records and Settlement of Western Australia’, AU WA S2838, Cons 1150, 0563. The book is stamped “Public Library/ Received/10 Jan. 1906” and has the stock book number 27389.

365 Stock Book, Cons 2650 08, Acc. 64048. ASLIB45710465B. The second book from this period is Stock Book, Cons 2650 08, Acc. 64906. ASLIB45706549B. It is not distinguished by any markings. Both these books are in new covers.

366 Stock Book, Cons 2650 10, Acc. 81287. No ASLIB number.

367 Robert Sharman, State Librarian to Principal Librarian, 1 April 1981. Held with book ASLIB45706530B.

368 Moore, “Preface,” *A Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language in Common Use Amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia*, p.vi.

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of mutual communication in all public matters, whether of explanation, negotiation, examination, or prosecution.”<sup>369</sup>

Armstrong’s copy of Moore’s book is heavily annotated. At the beginning of the vocabulary on p.1, Armstrong has written in ink script, ‘Northern Dialect. Began (about) Nov 24 1840’, suggesting that his annotations are in fact another vocabulary of the Nyungar dialect to the north of Swan River.<sup>370</sup>

Throughout the book, Armstrong adds northern Nyungar words alongside Moore’s. In addition, the blank spaces at the front and end of the book have also been filled with notes. Written in faded ink on the endpaper inside the front cover is ‘Frs F. Armstrong/Inspector to the Aborigines/Swan River’ and on the Preface page ‘Frs F Armstrong/Interpreter’. Inside the front is written ‘Owned successively by Adam William Armstrong (son of) Francis Fraser, Elizabeth Catherine Wells (daughter of above), William James Wells (son of above), Ian Murray Wells (son of above)’. This neat chronology of ownership is slightly modified by a 1936 letter to the editor of the West Australian about Armstrong’s copy of the *Vocabulary* by his granddaughter J Wells of Mundaring. She wrote:

The facts are that the late Mr Adam William Armstrong, of East Fremantle ... son of Mr Francis Fraser Armstrong, gave the book to this daughter some years before he died, and it was in Sydney some time before and after his death. She in turn gave it to her elder sister [the writer of the letter] (Mrs Wells) about five years ago. I have been given to understand it was always Mr Armstrong’s wish that it should not leave the family.<sup>371</sup>

Correspondence preserved with the book states that it was presented to the Library by Lieutenant Colonel Ian Wells on behalf of the Armstrong family at the ceremony to inaugurate the Alexander

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369 Ibid., pp. iv-v.

370 This is Rare Book 000054, ASLIB 45706530B.

371 Wells, Mundaring, letter to the editor, ‘King Winjan’, West Australian 8 April 1936, p.22. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article25139790>.

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Library Building on 30 November 1979.<sup>372</sup> Robert Sharman, State Librarian, held on to the book for a year and a half after it was presented to the Library then passed it to Principal Librarian Margaret Medcalf to be preserved in the Battye Library collection.<sup>373</sup> In 1981, Medcalf wrote a memo to Sharr stating 'we are pleased to receive the volume from you and will treat it as a rare and particularly significant item'.<sup>374</sup> This book is in the Rare book collection but without any indication in the catalogue regarding its connection to Armstrong, or that it records a northern Nyungar dialect.

There was consistent interest in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century in knowing more about Aboriginal languages and several requests to the Library indicate that it was seen as a source of this information. The Library also collected Aboriginal language books as noted above, such as those by George Grey, Rev. John Brady and Rosendo Salvado. The Library's role in consulting vocabularies to answer such queries is highlighted in the response to a 1929 request from Kathleen Walsh from Sydney. Walsh wrote to the Library asking for information about the meaning of the Aboriginal word Koolanooka, the name of the farming district where her late brother had recently resided and which they wished to use to name their house in New South Wales.<sup>375</sup> Battye's reply stated that 'I can find no reference whatever to the name in any of our vocabularies of aboriginal dialect'.<sup>376</sup> Many other queries were answered, for example providing meanings of town names and indicating which names were Aboriginal words to Bertha Hanks in 1930.<sup>377</sup> Sam Furphy argues that Australians have appropriated Aboriginal words in

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372 Robert Sharman, State Librarian to Principal Librarian, 1 April 1981. Held with book ASLIB45706530B

373 Robert Sharman, State Librarian to Principal Librarian, 1 April 1981; Margaret Medcalf, Principal Librarian to State Librarian, 2 April 1981.

374 Medcalf to Sharr, Library Board of Western Australia Memorandum, re. George Fletcher Moore's Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language in common use amongst the Aborigines of Western Australia, 2/4/1981

375 Kathleen Walsh, Sydney to Librarian, Public Library, June 1929. 'Meaning of native name "Koolanooka"', AU WA S3326, Cons 1198, 3094

376 General Secretary, Library to Kathleen Walsh, Sydney, 10 June 1929. 'Meaning of native name "Koolanooka"' AU WA S3326, Cons 1198, 3094.

377 Letters in 'Miss B Hanks, Perth, Native names of towns, July 1930', AU WA S3326, Cons 1198, 1328.

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developing a distinctive national identity since the earliest colonial times.<sup>378</sup> Rex Ingamells, in his 1955 publication *Australian Aboriginal Words*, suggested that as Aboriginal language had passed out of usage, these words could be used to 'lend colour to our transplanted European life in this country'.<sup>379</sup> While this was obviously not the case, it reflects the contemporary colonial attitude towards Aboriginal languages.

A copy of the Moore *Vocabulary* was loaned to Ernest C Mitchell in 1947. Mitchell had been Superintendent of Moore River Native Settlement from 1918 to 1921 then Superintendent at Carrolup Native Settlement until it closed in 1922.<sup>380</sup> After leaving Carrolup, Mitchell returned to his farm Boo-in-garra at Benjaberring near Northam where he became a local Protector of Aborigines. In 1926 Mitchell became Inspector of Aborigines for Western Australia until the position was abolished as a cost-cutting measure in 1930.<sup>381</sup> His knowledge of Aboriginal languages was described as follows in 1930:

No one in this State has the knowledge and understanding of aboriginal dialects and customs that he has acquired through long association with natives up and down and all through the West, from Eucla and the coast to Wyndham and the Kimberleys, and hundreds of miles inland.<sup>382</sup>

Ernest C Mitchell had an extensive correspondence with Battye about Aboriginal place names and languages between about 1944 and 1950.<sup>383</sup> In 1944 Mitchell was looking for a copy of Moore's *Vocabulary* and Battye told him that they had a copy in the Library but that it was kept under lock

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378 Sam Furphy, 'Aboriginal House Names and Settler Australian Identity', *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. 72 (2002), pp.59, 65. doi: 10.1080/14443050209387738.

379 Rex Ingamells, *Australian Aboriginal Words* (Melbourne: Hallcraft Publishing Company, 1955), cited in Sam Furphy, 'Aboriginal House Names and Settler Australian Identity', *Journal of Australian Studies* 26, no. 72 (2002), 61. Doi: 10.1080/14443050209387738.

380 Anna Haebich, *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia, 1900-1940* (Nedlands: UWA Press, 1988), pp.170-1, 192, 196.

381 EC Mitchell to Mosely Royal Commission, cited in Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, p.203.

382 'Aborigines' Friend. Chief Inspector Retired', *Daily News* 18 October 1930, p.11. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article79470052>.

383 See 'Mitchell EC Benjaberring 1947-50', AU WA S3326, Cons 1198/1995.

and key and only available by application to himself.<sup>384</sup> Actually, the Stock Book records indicate that the SLWA had two copies by then. In 1947 Battye agreed to lend Mitchell their copy of the book subject to Mitchell paying the registered postage both ways and guaranteeing to replace the extremely rare book if it was lost or damaged.<sup>385</sup> In fact, Mitchell borrowed the book three times over several months in 1947, writing '[t]he more I am permitted to study this priceless work, the greater my admiration of the Author grows. It is so thorough, and is eloquent of painstaking, persistent, loving personal enquiry'.<sup>386</sup>

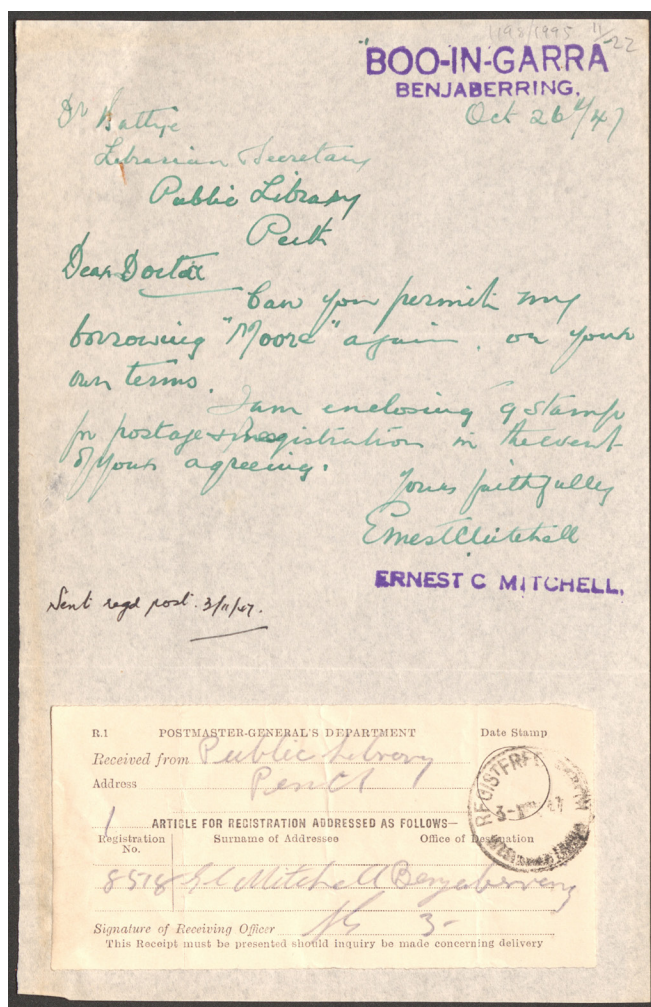


Figure 12: Ernest Mitchell to J.S. Battye, 26 October 1947, (AU WA S3326, CONS 1198/1995)

384 JS Battye letter to EC Mitchell, 'Bo-in-garra', Benjaberring, 9 November 1944. AU WA S3326, Cons 1198/1995, 3. Folios 1 and 2 are missing from the file.

385 JS Battye letter to EC Mitchell, 'Bo-in-garra', Benjaberring, 12 May 1947. AU WA S3326, Cons 1198/1995, fol. 5.

386 Ernest Mitchell to Public Librarian, 6 December 1947. AU WA S3326, Cons 1198/1995, fol. 13.

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Nearly all of the Library's copies of Moore's *Descriptive Vocabulary* have interesting histories. It is also an important record of early colonial interest in, and attitudes towards, Aboriginal languages and it has been in the collections since the earliest days of the Library. The lack of information in the Library catalogue indicates a concerning disparity between significant items in the collection and their accessibility for users.

## Recommendations

1. Digitise the Francis Fraser Armstrong's copy of George Fletcher Moore, *A Descriptive Vocabulary*, 1842. This is Rare Book 000054, ASLIB45706530B
2. Digitise the copy of George Fletcher Moore, *A Descriptive Vocabulary*, 1842 with translations of the Nyungar words. This is ASLIB45710465B.
3. Two books have been separated into the Heritage Review Stack. As an early record of Nyungar language in the colony these books should be kept but possibly not all copies need to be in the rare room.
4. It is important to keep books with relevant historical annotations. If unsure of the provenance of the book, keep the annotated copy.
5. The copy in the best condition may not have the most relevant provenance. Consider this when discarding books.
6. The catalogue should indicate when items were purchased or donated, including the Stock Book number to facilitate research into the provenance.
7. The catalogue should indicate any annotations in the book or associations with particular people.
8. The catalogue should reference the Nyungar informants who taught Moore and Armstrong their language – Weeip, for example. This could acknowledge that this book was co-produced by Nyungar informants.

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## Case Study: Ethel Creek recordings

The Ethel Creek recordings are a series of messages that were recorded between February and November 1963.<sup>387</sup> They are from Aboriginal people living on, or connected with, Ethel Creek Station, north east of what is now Newman in the Pilbara in WA's north west. The station owners, George and Teresa Anderson, had purchased a Philips Transistor reel-to-reel recorder in about November 1962. They encouraged their Aboriginal employees to record messages in language to family and other workers who were absent from the main station. No reason is given as to why they did this but in explaining the first recording in a letter to Mollie Lukis, Mrs Teresa Anderson described the recipients' pleasure at the communication:

To my knowledge the first message taped from native to native was by us here, with the Ethel Creek staff sending their greeting and singing a song to the native pensioners who live on Mt. Newman, (our outstation – about 50 miles away). A little colony of old people are living their lives out happily at Mt. Newman on the pension and are cared for and get their provisions from Ethel Creek – they are J[a?]ckie Forrest and his wife Kitty, Painkiller and at that time Mikalong was alive and living there, and a man named Carlo. These old fellows were amazed – they thought it was a radio and then of course they enjoyed the joke and sent all sorts of messages to the fellows at Ethel and sang them a song.<sup>388</sup>

Unfortunately, these recordings were later wiped from the tape, so they were not sent to the Library.

In preparing the tapes to send to Mollie Lukis at the Library, Teresa Anderson also recorded extensive explanations about who was speaking and the context for the recording. When she had extra tape to fill, she also chatted, sharing information about her experiences and what was happening around her. In addition to the tapes, there are a number of letters between Lukis and Anderson, in which Lukis asked for more context and information, which was provided by Anderson. Copies of these letters are provided to Library visitors accessing the recordings.

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387 Recording of Ethel Creek Aborigines and played to McKay Range Aborigines 1963] [sound recording], OH50.

388 Mrs Terry Anderson letter to Miss Mollie Lukis, 14 November 1963, OH50 notes.

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The correspondence between Lukis and Anderson discusses the difficulties the Library was having listening to the tapes due to their being in a format different from the recorder used by the Library. The recordings were originally made on a Philips Transistor reel-to-reel tape recorder which played at 1 7/8 to the inch.<sup>389</sup> The Library borrowed the tapes for copying but could not play them on their equipment, so had to take them to Phillips to have them transferred to another tape at the right speed to play.<sup>390</sup> Later, the Library dubbed the recordings to cassette, and more recently has had them digitised. At some point, the Library has created a summary of the contents.<sup>391</sup>

The recordings are in three sections corresponding more or less to the digital tracks:<sup>392</sup>

#### **February 1963 slwa\_b1808006\_1.mp3**

1. Messages from people at Ethel Creek station to Mikalong, an elderly Aboriginal woman who was in Perth to have cataracts removed from her eyes. Recorded by a man, probably Mr Anderson.
2. Mikalong's reply, with questions and comments by Mrs Anderson. Recorded by Mrs Anderson.
3. Explanation by Mrs Anderson about who Mikalong was, and why the messages were sent. She also recounts some of Mikalong's history.

#### **End of June 1963 and 17 September 1963 slwa\_b1808006\_2.mp3**

4. Messages from Aboriginal people at Bulloo Downs Station to Aboriginal people at Ethel Creek Station describing the recent muster at Bulloo Downs. These were recorded by Mr Snell, a government dogger and copied by Mrs Anderson.
5. Replies from Rabbity [?], Larribun [?] and a girl Naybee [?] from Ethel Creek Station. Recorded by Mrs Anderson.

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389 Mrs Anderson to Miss Lukis, 7 November 1963, OH50 notes.

390 These were tapes 43, 43B and 44. Mollie Lukis to Mrs T Anderson, 25 October 1963, OH50 notes.

391 Transcripts of these recordings have also been made by Denise Cook and given to SLWA as part of this research.

392 These descriptions expand on the catalogue record.

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### 9 and 10 November 1963 slwa\_b1808006\_3.mp3

6. Messages recorded by Toby, his wife Theathea [?], Pansy and Margaret (whose tribal name is Wildiba) to desert Aboriginal people. Recorded by Mrs Anderson?
7. Reply by 'Old Charlie' from the McKay Range. Recorded by Mr George [?] Anderson.

As listed above, the first messages on the Library's tape were to Mikalong, an elderly Aboriginal woman flown down to Perth to have cataracts removed from her eyes. They are mostly people talking in language, with lots of laughter, possibly reflecting the novelty of using the recorder. The group also sings, with a tapping or drum accompaniment. At the end a man, possibly Mr Anderson, says 'Do you want to say goodbye and see you when you get back. Come on Rabbity, say goodbye and see you when you get back'. Another man, presumably Rabbity, speaks in language.<sup>393</sup>

The second part of this recording was at Bennett House in East Perth, where Mikalong was staying. Bennett House was a temporary accommodation facility for Aboriginal women sent to Perth for medical treatment, education, or for transfer to a mission or workplace. On this recording, after Mrs Anderson says 'Start talking. Right oh Mikalong, go ahead', Mikalong speaks for a couple of minutes in language. After this, Mrs Anderson asks a few questions, which Mikalong mostly answers in language, for example, 'Did you say hello to Kitty and Painkiller and ...' Mikalong replies 'Yeah', then speaks in language. Mrs Anderson also asks a series of questions about Mikalong's flight and being in Perth, which she answers in English. At one point, Mrs Anderson indicates her difficulty in learning the language, commenting 'Koonjanin [?] Better? I'll learn soon'. Particularly poignant is Mikalong's question 'I'll soon come back?' Mrs Anderson says that she will and to tell them that, which she does in language.<sup>394</sup>

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393 OH50, slwa\_b1808006\_1.mp3

394 OH50, slwa\_b1808006\_1.mp3.

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Mrs Anderson recorded the third part of this section herself, reflecting on the recordings and explaining to Lukis the background to the preceding messages to and from Mikalong. She goes into detail about Mikalong's background, saying she was known as the 'tragedy queen of the north' after an incident in 1925 of attempted poisoning of the station manager and arson of the station buildings by the 'oriental' cook on the station over his love for the young Mikalong.<sup>395</sup> Mrs Anderson attempted to verify the Mikalong story when the local policeman visited the homestead but was told that the police records before 1952 were lost when the building caught fire.<sup>396</sup>

Reflecting the changes brought about by the new medium of the tape recording, Mrs Anderson says:

Since her return from Perth, unfortunately this dear old girl died and is now buried quite close to the Ethel Creek homestead. ... As Mikalong is now deceased, I can never play this recording of hers here because of course one must never mention the name of a person who has died. And while it would never before have been possible for them to hear the voice of somebody that is dead of their own people, I will not ever want this tape back.<sup>397</sup>

Anderson also alluded to the process of preparing this and the second recording for the Library:

... so if you like to keep the first part which is an original and that was Mikalong and this message from the Bulloo boys has been taped by me off another tape recorder so that it will be all on the one tape for you Miss Lukis. I will now put the Bulloo message on.<sup>398</sup>

At the time of the recordings, an American company was proving the iron-ore leases at Mt Newman so as well as tourists visiting in the season, there was considerable activity in the locality

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395 Mrs Terry Anderson, OH50, slwa\_b1808006\_1.mp3.

396 Mrs Terry Anderson to Miss Lukis, 7 November 1963, OH50 notes.

397 Mrs Terry Anderson, OH50, slwa\_b1808006\_1.mp3.

398 Mrs Terry Anderson, OH50, slwa\_b1808006\_1.mp3

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drilling, and building roads and an airport.<sup>399</sup> The author Len Beadell, who was working with the Gun Barrel Construction Company, also spent time at the homestead typing up his book *Too Long in the Bush*.<sup>400</sup> Beadell has written a number of books on a similar theme, which may add more information to this story. The catalogue record for this oral history also references a book by Len Beadell, *End of an Era*.

Regarding the second section of the recordings, Mrs Anderson wrote to Lukis:

About February 1963 I heard that Mr. Snell who is with the Vermin Branch of the Dept. Agriculture and hunts dingoes somewhere in this area – c/- Meekatharra would probably be his address, had a tape recorder and was taping corrobrees [sic] at the big holiday camp 30 miles from Ethel Creek homestead. He sent the tape from the natives at Bulloo Downs to our staff here – the one I re-recorded for you May-June 1963. The Bulloo fellows were all on pink-i here and would have told him we have a tape recorder here. These are the only messages that I know of that have been taped in this area until last Saturday 9th. When the party were getting their food and swags ready for the trip to the McKay ranges, the natives asked to have a message taped and taken out to the wild ones in the desert. This was done and three or four of them spoke to their kin, explaining who they were and who their daddy and mummy were. This was played to the desert natives and replied to by the old chap they met – he nearly crawled into the machine in his wonderment! I will tape this off and send it on the mail for you as this I think would be quite unique – it is only short but will send it along.<sup>401</sup>

In another letter, Mrs Anderson gave more information about the last recording:

As promised in my last letter am enclosing herewith the fragment of greetings from the Ethel Creek natives to their friends and relations out in the McKay Ranges. Toby and his wife Theathea (these have been in and gone out again and come in again, Pansy – has been in some 20 odd years, and Margaret (Wildeba) was brought in by her mother when she was about 2 years. Her daddy old Wilbur is still alive and is a very old man – has

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399 Mrs Terry Anderson to Miss Lukis, 7 November 1963, OH50 notes.

400 Terry Anderson to Mollie Lukis, 14 November 1953, OH50 notes. Len Beadell, *Too Long in the Bush* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1965).

401 Mrs Terry Anderson to Miss Lukis, 14 November 1963, OH50 notes.

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had five wives altogether – 4 still living. Long Bob and Old Peter went out with the party and were chatting to desert Charlie. All the natives out there have been long aware of civilization and also of course have seen the mobs of cattle going down the Canning Stock Route and may have been named by the drovers.<sup>402</sup>

In 1963, Lukis actively sought this donation for the Library by writing to Mrs Teresa Anderson, of Ethel Creek Station. She wrote that having heard from Mr HL McGuigan about her ‘interesting experiences with the natives and the tape recorder’, the Library ‘considered the record of this incident to be of historical value’ and asked if they could borrow and copy the tape.<sup>403</sup> HL McGuigan is probably Harry Lester McGuigan who was Commissioner of Kwinana from its inception in 1953 until a locally-elected Road Board was established in 1961.<sup>404</sup>

After listening to the first tape, Lukis wrote that ‘it was most interesting to hear’ and that they were grateful to be allowed to have it at the Library ‘for its historical value’. She also appreciated getting Mrs Anderson’s comments saying ‘it is most useful to have the details which you supplied’.<sup>405</sup>

She added that the Library wanted to issue a press release about the recording and asked when approximately Aboriginal people had begun to use tapes and how they had become aware of them. In the Library’s Annual Report for that year, the recording received the following detailed coverage:

Western Australian aboriginals are now using tape recorders to send messages from one group to another. A tape containing a number of such messages between groups of natives in the Pilbara, including a recording of a corroboree at Bulloo Downs sent to the aborigines at Ethel Creek, was lent to the library together with her own explanatory

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402 Mrs Terry Anderson to Miss Mollie Lukis, 19 November 1963, OH50 notes.

403 OH50 Mollie Lukis, Librarian, Battye Library to Mrs T Anderson, Ethel Creek Station, 10 September 1963, SLWA OH50 dup correspondence.

404 City of Kwinana, ‘Harry McGuigan Park’, inHerit: Our Heritage Places, last updated 1 January 2017. <http://inherit.stateheritage.wa.gov.au/Public/Inventory/PrintSingleRecord/5a999e7b-1ddf-44ce-b1b5-9a9236c214b6>.

405 Mollie Lukis, Librarian, Battye Library to Mrs T Anderson, Ethel Creek Station, 12 November 1963, SLWA OH50 dup correspondence.

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comments by Mrs. T. Anderson of Ethel Creek Station. The recording was transferred on to tape suitable for the library's recorder and will be permanently preserved. It is both an interesting and a valuable record of the aboriginal people. It can never be played again by the people who made it because one of the speakers has since died and tribal custom forbids the reproduction of the voice of a dead person.<sup>406</sup>

Despite Mrs Anderson's sensitivity to the practice of not referring to a person after they have died, there is no indication that the people whose voices were recorded gave permission for the recordings to be placed in the Library. Additionally, one of the recordings contains the voice of an Aboriginal man who had not previously had contact with non-Aboriginal people, and whose comments were recorded without his knowledge. This was done after Mrs Anderson asked some of the young women who worked on their station to record messages to this man. After they were played to him, Mr Anderson recorded his responses without his knowledge, and they are included on the recording sent to the Library.<sup>407</sup> The recordings are currently open access.

## Recommendations

1. That copies of these recordings be returned to the descendants or communities.
2. That permissions be sought regarding what access the Library may provide to the recordings.
3. That Section 3: slwa\_b1808006\_3.mp3 is transcribed.

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406 LISWA, The Library Board of Western Australia, 1963-1964: Twelfth Annual Report of the Board. Perth, 1964. slwa\_b3125287\_1. This is now OH 50, available on open access.

407 OH 50, track 3, slwa\_b1808006\_3.mp3.

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## Case Study: Carrolup artworks

An important donation in 1984 was a collection of artworks from Carrolup Native Settlement near Katanning in the southwest of the state.<sup>408</sup> Carrolup was an Aboriginal settlement established in 1915 where Aboriginal children were separated from their families and educated for unskilled work. In 1946 a new teacher, Noel White, encouraged the children to draw what they saw on walks in the bush and they produced a remarkable series of drawings between 1947 and 1951.<sup>409</sup> One of the champions of the children's work was Mrs Florence Rutter, an Englishwoman who visited Carrolup in 1949 and 1950 and bought artworks from the school there. Rutter travelled through Australia and New Zealand at that time, holding meetings to establish Soroptomist clubs, a women's version of Rotary International for the advancement of women and girls. As she travelled, she also exhibited and sold the Carrolup art, gathering donations and taking orders for more art. Once back in the United Kingdom, and also on a visit to her daughter Margaret in the Netherlands, Rutter organised more formal exhibitions to sell the paintings. In each case, the proceeds were intended to be used to purchase art materials to be sent back to the children. Some materials were in fact brought to the children when Rutter visited Carrolup for a second time in early 1950.<sup>410</sup>

However, after her return to the UK, Rutter lost all her money to a con man, including that in trust for the children. As a result, in 1958 she sold her remaining Carrolup art to American broadcaster Herbert Mayer in New York. In 1966, Mayer gifted the artwork as part of a large art collection to his old university, Colgate University in New York. From there it was not rediscovered until 2004, when it was loaned and subsequently gifted to Curtin University.<sup>411</sup> The Berndt Museum of

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408 The paintings were originally in the private archives collection as 3302A but were later transferred to the pictorial collection as BA 726/42. See MN 1067. [https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C\\_Rb1862570](https://encore.slwa.wa.gov.au/iii/encore/record/C_Rb1862570).

409 David Clark, "Connection," *The Carrolup Story*, 2018. <https://www.carrolup.info/connection/>.

410 "Carrolup Settlement," MN 1067, SLWA; John Stanton, Adjunct Professor, School of Social Sciences, UWA, email to Denise Cook, 24 March 2021; David Clark, "Florence," *The Carrolup Story*, 2018. <https://www.carrolup.info/florence/>

411 David Clark, "Shattered," *The Carrolup Story*, 2018 <https://www.carrolup.info/shattered/>; John Stanton, "The 'Lost' Florence Rutter Carrolup Collection," *The Carrolup Story*, 2018. <https://www.carrolup.info/the-lost-florence-rutter-carrolup-collection/>.

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Anthropology also has a large collection of Carrolup art donated by Stan, Melvie and Gael Phillips in the early 1990s. This had been gathered by Bunbury art teacher Stan Phillips in the 1950s and early 1960s, who had been fascinated with the work of the Carrolup artists as he travelled around the south west supporting art teachers.<sup>412</sup>

The collection of Carrolup art at the State Library came from Mrs Doris Flatt, one of Mrs Rutter's daughters. In December 1984, Mrs Flatt presented these artworks together with her mother's 1950s Carrolup-related correspondence, newspaper cuttings, reports and publications in what is now called the Carrolup Settlement Collection.<sup>413</sup> The artwork donation to the State Library comprised 24 original crayon drawings in mounts, 16 photographs of original crayon drawings, all but two of which were in mounts, and one photomechanical print of a crayon drawing, with a printed caption, probably made by a printing press. Also, while not included in the original listing, the current accession has added one original crayon drawing in a wooden frame.<sup>414</sup> It is not known whether this was added later or simply missed out originally because of its different format. This image was not included in the photocopies in the BA and P photograph books either.

The artists in the collection include Revel Cooper (3 black and white photographs of original crayon/ pencil drawings, one colour photomechanical print and 2 original crayon drawings). Parnell Dempster, Reynold Hunt and Milton Jackson are each represented by one black and white photograph of a crayon drawing. Ross Jones has black and white photographs of a crayon drawing and a French pastel drawing. Keith Morgan is represented by the framed original crayon drawing, which was added later to the collection. However, most of the artworks are not attributed to any artist. The entire collection was originally accepted into the Archives collection as 3302A.<sup>415</sup>

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412 John Stanton, "Berndt Museum Exhibition 'Carrolup Revisited' Opens," *The Carrolup Story*, 2019. <https://www.carrolup.info/berndt-museum-exhibition-carrolup-revisited-opens/>.

413 See MN 1067, Acc 3302A. [https://slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/mn/mn1001\\_1500/mn1067.pdf](https://slwa.wa.gov.au/pdf/mn/mn1001_1500/mn1067.pdf); CIU file BA/OM/13/0363; Private Archives Accession Register 1A-3361A, p.247.

414 BA 726/42 [https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa\\_b1862570\\_50](https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b1862570_50).

415 Private Archives Accession Register 1A-3361A, p.247.

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In 1986, the artwork was removed from the archives to the pictorial collections and entered in the Pictorial Day Book.<sup>416</sup> The artwork was processed in 1988 and registered as BA726/1-41.

In 1989 the Pictorial Collection Check Sheet notes that transparency copies were made, and the original artwork retained by Conservation to make a box.<sup>417</sup> At that time, photocopies were also made of each artwork and photograph. These were mostly briefly captioned and placed in the BA (photograph) and P (copy print) books for public access. However, indicating a lack of cultural awareness about the importance of the original artists, none of the captions indicated which artist had done the work.

The artworks with the most information are the photographic copies. These have information such as 'Down to drink by Parnell Dempster (13 years). In lovely blue and orange colouring (crayon). Exhibited by Pastel Society. 45th Annual Exhibition. Jan 1951.' As they are black and white photographs it makes sense that someone has recorded the original colours, but it was also important to include the information about the artist and history of the drawing.

More recently, digitised copies of the 25 original crayon drawings have been uploaded to the State Library website. While more details have been included in the captions, including the artist's name (where known), unfortunately editing has in at least one case changed the meaning. For example, the caption for BA726/42 has been slightly changed as follows: According to the listing with the Pictorial Check Sheet, it has the following written on the reverse: 'Reflections. A crayon drawing by Keith Morgan, a little Aboriginal boy of 10 years of age. Brought from Carrolup Settlement via Katanning – West Australia in February 1950. Florence Rutter 32 Woodside Ave. London N12.' This indicates that Florence bought the drawing when she visited Carrolup for the second time in February 1950. It was probably written to identify the artwork before she displayed it after

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416 Pictorial Archives Day Book, p.22/35, 17 September 1986.

417 The copies were 86881P-86921P. Pictorial Collection Check Sheet, BA726/1-41, P86881P-86921P, donor Mrs Doris Flatt.

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her return to the UK. Unfortunately, by changing the words “from Carrolup” to “to Carrolup” this information has been reshaped into a caption which suggests that Keith was brought to Carrolup in 1950: ‘BA726/42: Reflections by Keith Morgan. Crayon drawing by 10 year old Keith Morgan brought to Carrolup Settlement via Katanning in February 1950’.<sup>418</sup>

We have a little more information about this collection. In 2006, John Stanton, then Director of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia visited Mrs Flatt, who was over 100 years old, in Somerset in England. There he recorded a video interview about Mrs Flatt and her mother’s involvement with the Carrolup children and their art. Extracts from this oral history are accessible through The Carrolup Story website.<sup>419</sup> John Stanton has also assisted in the research on this collection for this report.

## Recommendations

4. Ensure every effort is made to include all relevant information in catalogue entries and with copies such as those in the photocopy books.
5. That catalogue entries be compared with original documentation by someone familiar with the topic to reduce the likelihood of mistakes.
6. That if any items are added to an accession number, the process is fully documented to enable future tracking of the source and reasons for the addition.
7. Update the CIU file for this collection as it currently contains only a donor card.

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418 BA 726/42 [https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa\\_b1862570\\_50](https://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b1862570_50).

419 John Stanton, “Interview with Doris Flatt: Part 1 and Part 2, The Carrolup Story 2019. <https://www.carrolup.info/interview-with-doris-flatt-part-1/>; <https://www.carrolup.info/interview-with-doris-flatt-part-2/>.

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## Case Study: Sister Kate's collection

This is a large and varied collection comprising many files about Sister Kate's child residents, staff, property, management, education, fundraising, excursions and donations; as well as correspondence, diary, booklets, financial and tax records, journals, reports and leaflets.<sup>420</sup> Some of the files are restricted access. The first files were received in December 1985 (after more than a year of negotiations and processing),<sup>421</sup> then May 1991,<sup>422</sup> March 1995 and December 1996.<sup>423</sup>

In addition, SLWA received 19 boxes of records from Manguri, Sister Kate's successor Aboriginal-controlled organisation, when it closed in 2003.<sup>424</sup> Among them were sensitive case files with information about the housing of Aboriginal families, the situation of the parents and the condition of the children. At the time of donation, the donor nominated that these files should be restricted for seven years. However, due to the sensitivity of the contents, SLWA thought it appropriate to restrict them for longer. Once Manguri had closed, however, attempts to identify who might change this restriction were fruitless. Consequently, Jean Chetkovich in SLWA's Collection acquisition team decided to restrict access for 30 years from 2003 when Manguri closed.<sup>425</sup>

Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home was established by the Anglican nun, Kate Clutterbuck, in Mosman Park<sup>426</sup> in 1933, then moved to Queens Park in Perth in 1934. It was managed by the Presbyterian, later the Uniting Church, from 1955. In 1980, Sister Kate's amalgamated with the Methodist Training Centre at Mogumber and was renamed Sister Kate's Child and Family

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420 MN 957.

421 In December 1985, Barry Preece, Administrator for Sister Kates' Child and Family Services in Queens Park deposited the first papers (Acc 3179A). The work of sorting and listing the files had begun on 20 May 1985. See file note on CIU BA/PA/01/0472.

422 The Uniting Church in Pier St, Perth also deposited papers on 3 May 1991 (Acc 4188A).

423 The Uniting Church office also deposited papers on 27 March 1995 (4931A) and 16 December 1996 (4956A).

424 Letter David Whiteford, Archivist: Private Archive, Battye Library to Cheryle Taylor, Manguri, 15 September 2003, in CIU BA/PA/02/0094 "Western Australian Documentary Heritage Services - Collection Management - Private Archives - Manguri.

425 Jean Chetkovich, file note, "Manguri BA/PA/02/0094: Restriction of Records," December 2012, in CIU BA/PA/02/0094 - Manguri.

426 Known as Buckland Hill.

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Services.<sup>427</sup> By 1984, when this collection came to the Library, it was managed by the Uniting Church.

Sister Kate's operated within the era of racist assimilation policies. They took in Aboriginal children who were light-skinned, referred to in racist derogatory terms as "quarter-caste" with the intention of raising them to assimilate into the non-Aboriginal population.<sup>428</sup>

In August 1984, the year of Sister Kate's fiftieth anniversary, Mr Preece, the administrator of Sister Kate's Children's Home, wrote to the senior archivist at the Battye Library asking for advice about preserving old records from Sister Kate's and Mogumber Methodist Training Centre. He wrote:

There is a large collection of old records in boxes stored on the mezzanine ceiling in the store shed. Having had no experience in this field before, I was wondering what type of records are the most valuable to be kept, and how we should proceed with the sorting out of 50 years' data.

Two staff members visited in September 1984 and noted that it was a large collection, which the administrator was keen to have sorted and listed. The collection was to come to the Library, with the Library organising a librarian or library student to sort and list the collection, as well as supplying boxes, document envelopes and labels. It was estimated to cost \$3,500 to get this work done but it appears to have been done through the CEP [Community Employment Programme?]. Julie Tabain was employed to do this work with the Library noting that her 'listing is very thorough and her employment to process the records was of immense value'.<sup>429</sup> In the mid-1990s, some children's personal files were returned to Uniting Church archives and the State Library was given

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427 "Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home", Find and Connect. <https://findandconnect.gov.au/guide/wa/WE00684>

428 Commissioner for Native Affairs, Annual Report 1944, p.12, cited in "Sister Kate's Children's Cottage Home", Find and Connect. <https://findandconnect.gov.au/guide/wa/WE00684>.

429 Margaret Medcalf, Principal Librarian, Battye Library, letter to B Preece, Administrator, Sister Kate's Children's Home, 30 December 1985. In CIU file BA/PA/01/0472.

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copies.<sup>430</sup>

## **Recommendations**

1. Ensure that at the time of donation, adequate information is recorded about who can make future decisions about the collection.

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