

Strategic
Direction
Four

Develop and Maximise the Value of Our Heritage Collections

Performance Overview

- /// Museum Victoria researchers produced 106 refereed journal papers, reports, books and other publications, and presented 152 lectures and talks.
- /// During the year, Museum Victoria continued to implement its research strategy (2005–10), which provides a five-year focus for research, and collection strategy (2004–14), a 10-year plan for the state collection.
- /// Museum Victoria was involved with six successful Australian Research Council (ARC) grants announced in October 2006: four Discovery Grants and two Linkage Grants.
- /// Museum Victoria was also listed as a partner organisation in four successful ARC Linkage Grants announced in June 2007, in the areas of Sciences, Indigenous Cultures, and Information Multimedia and Technology. This is an impressive result given the prestigious and highly competitive nature of ARC grants.
- /// In 2006–07, Museum Victoria researchers received funding support from a variety of sources, including the ARC; Australian Biological Resources Study; CSIRO; Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Department of the Environment and Water Resources; Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts; Department for Victorian Communities; the University of Melbourne; and the Ian Potter Foundation.
- /// Student supervision included three Honours, eight Masters and 27 PhD students. Four scholarships were awarded in the 2007 round of the Museum Victoria 1854 Scholarship Scheme.
- /// A collection emergency response strategy was produced, encompassing prevention, preparedness, response and recovery actions for potential disasters posed to collections at each venue.
- /// In April 2007, a project manager was appointed to oversee the implementation of a digital asset management (DAM) system, which will enhance management of and access to current and future digital assets.
- /// The Arts Agencies' Collection Working Group, led by Museum Victoria, held the first cross-agency workshop on collections disaster response.

History and Technology

Through the History and Technology department, Museum Victoria conducts research and develops collections that document Victoria's history in a national and international context. It strives to deepen the community's understanding of the past and its engagement with issues affecting the future.

Research Highlights

Curators undertook a wide range of research projects, most of which will lead to publications and exhibitions. They include research into the history of Melbourne; sustainable water practices; Australian childhood in the 1950s; women in agriculture; women and cycling in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; 19th-century Victorian exhibitions; glory boxes, memory, migration and material culture; immigrant shipping; war and public memory; history of telegraphy; history of computing in Victoria; the Royal Exhibition Building; early collectors of Indigenous material in Victoria; and drought, risk and rural endurance.

Several projects have been undertaken that will contribute to a new exhibition on the history of Melbourne, due to open in March 2008. These include major restoration projects for a Cobb and Co. coach and Luna Park Big Dipper carriage, community-based collecting of historic images of Melbourne life and oral histories with suburban 'pioneers' of the 1950s and 1960s.

The ARC awarded a Linkage Grant for a project entitled 'Childhood, Tradition and Change: A National Study of the Historical and Contemporary Practices and Significance of Australian Children's Playlore'. Museum Victoria is working with the University of Melbourne and National Library of Australia to research and document contemporary children's playlore, extending the museum's existing Australian Children's Folklore Collection.

The Hon. Joan Kirner launched a new website for Women on Farms Gathering (WoFG) at its 18th annual gathering, held in Shepparton in May 2007. The website allows women from across Victoria to access the WoFG collection, held by the museum, and to contribute their own stories and memories.

Museum Victoria received a grant from the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination to develop a website based on the *Spirit of the Games* exhibition and to catalogue and document the newly acquired Spirit of the Games collection. The latter documents the creation of the opening ceremony for the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Restoration of a Cowley steam roller was completed in the Scienceworks workshop and operated at the Lake Goldsmith Steam Rally in May 2007. Manufactured by Cowley's Eureka Ironworks at Ballarat in 1939, the roller is believed to be the last steam roller made in Australia.

Three projects were undertaken to improve catalogue data and images for the military medals, image collections and joint collection with the Italian Historical Society. The military medals project unearthed a rare Suffragette Medal, awarded to Myra Sadd Brown following her imprisonment in Holloway Prison, London, in 1912, and subsequent force-feeding.

Acquisitions

Important acquisitions during the year included:

- /// A Cobb and Co. coach built in Geelong in about 1870 for the Western Stage Coach Company;
- /// A representative collection of Apple computers from the 1980s to the present, developed in collaboration with iMug, the Internet Macintosh Users Group;
- /// An early steam-powered winding engine, a unique survivor from Melbourne's gold-rush era of the 1850s, and the only known surviving example from dozens of similar 'donkey engines' that once lined Melbourne's wharves and piers (purchased with the assistance of the National Cultural Heritage Account and a private benefactor);
- /// An applique quilt made in 1843 by Martha Bergin in Athlone, Ireland, and brought to Victoria when she migrated with her husband in 1851;
- /// Two diaries kept by Irish and Scottish migrants in the 1850s and 1870s, documenting their voyages to Melbourne and their early social, cultural and working lives here;
- /// Posters, itineraries, postcards, pamphlets and other ephemera relating to the Chandris Lines, a major Greek shipping line on the postwar Europe–Australia route;
- /// A watercolour sketch by George Grant for a banner for the Victorian Operative Bootmakers Society, c.1890–1900; this rare sketch is by the artist who painted the Tramways Union banner in the collection (donation);
- /// An 1870s Customs House counter from either the Melbourne or Williamstown Customs House;
- /// A rare 19th-century street ballad lamenting the fall of 'Marvellous Melbourne' during the 1890s Depression; and
- /// A collection of early 20th-century kimonos and recently crafted traditional Shimotske paper dolls (from Japanese migrant and Noh theatre performer Masumi Hiraga Jackson).

Indigenous Cultures

Through the Indigenous Cultures department, Museum Victoria works with Indigenous peoples in Australia and the South Pacific to improve understanding of Indigenous people and cultures.

Research Highlights

Fieldwork was undertaken throughout the year in support of an ARC Linkage Grant project, Oral Tradition, Memory and Social Change: Indigenous Participation in the Curation and Use of Museum Collections. This project, in partnership with the University of Queensland, Deakin University and Lamalama people of the Cape York Peninsula, investigates how museums respond to Indigenous community aspirations and how heritage collections contribute to the reinvigoration of Indigenous peoples' identity.

Curatorial staff were also successful in their bid for a third consecutive ARC Linkage Grant for the project, Conciliation Narratives and the Historical Imagination in British Pacific Rim Settler Societies. Partners are the University of Melbourne, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the National Museum of Australia. This project will historicise and explore forms of conciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in British settler colonies of the Pacific Rim, including Van Dieman's Land, Victoria, New South Wales, New Zealand and Canada, using museum artefacts as the vehicle for investigation.

Research in support of a data enhancement project focusing on the Fijian and western Melanesian components of the Pacific Ethnographic Collection was conducted, with assistance from colleagues in Tasmania and South Australia.

The Donald Thomson Collection Administration Committee continued to support research and management initiatives on the Donald Thomson Collection. In particular, the committee supported a successful funding application to the University of Melbourne to digitise the Donald Thomson map collection.

Significant progress was made towards completion of a publication of Donald Thomson's photographs, focusing on his trips to Central Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. The Miegunyah Press will publish this book in 2008.

Work in the Indigenous collections focused on registration and data management. Significant progress was made in registering elements of the Ethnohistory Collection (images and manuscripts, both state and Thomson collections), and the Ancestral Remains Database was transferred into the museum's EMu database.

Staff completed a final report on an ICOM-supported project focused on the Fiji Museum's collections. In 2004, ICOM established an assistance program for Pacific Island museums, which subsequently evolved into the ICOM Australia Museum Partnerships Program (IAMPP). The report made detailed recommendations about design, construction and fit-out of a proposed new collection store for the Fiji Museum.

Indigenous Cultures staff continued to provide extensive assistance to the Moveable Cultural Heritage Unit of the Department of the Environment and Heritage, by helping assess requests for the export of significant cultural artefacts.

Acquisitions

Important acquisitions during the year included:

- /// A boomerang from Yarrowonga and a decorated spear-thrower from southwestern Victoria, dating from the mid to late 19th century (purchased with financial support from the Department for Victorian Communities, through Aboriginal Affairs Victoria);
- /// Two drawings by Tommy McRae dating to the 1890s (purchased with the financial support of the Department for Victorian Communities, through Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, and with the assistance of the Australian Government through the National Cultural Heritage Account);
- /// A Marrakulu bark painting and painted hollow log by emerging artist Ralwurrandji Wanambi;
- /// One of the canoes used in the Rolf de Heer film, *10 Canoes*; and
- /// A limited-edition print portfolio entitled *Kunwarde Bim: The Injalak Hill Suite*, containing 12 prints by a number of western Arnhem Land artists; the prints have a strong affinity with ancient rock drawings from the western Arnhem Land escarpment.

Repatriation

Museum Victoria continued its participation in the Return of Indigenous Cultural Property Program, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. Ancestral remains were either repatriated or ownership officially transferred to traditional owners at Ord River in the Kimberley, Western Australia (November 2006), Ngarrindjeri traditional owners in South Australia (November 2006) and Tasmanian traditional owners via the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Tasmania (February 2007). Secret-sacred objects were returned to various traditional owner groups in the Kimberley via the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, Western Australia (November 2006). Negotiations are continuing with Indigenous communities from across Victoria, and from Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. Museum Victoria also received a collection of ancestral remains from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, and continued to receive ancestral remains referred by the State Coroner's Office.

Following announcements in the 2007 Federal Budget that repatriation will continue to receive significant financial support over the next four years, Museum Victoria will negotiate new funding agreements with the Victorian and Australian Governments that will allow this important work to continue. Museum Victoria has actively led a consortium of Australian museum interests working in this area to ensure that their repatriation efforts are coordinated and that unnecessary impacts on Indigenous communities are minimised.

Sciences

Museum Victoria aims to promote an understanding of the natural sciences, the human mind and body, and science communication.

Research Highlights

Sciences staff, working with university collaborators, were awarded a record number of ARC research grants, totalling nearly \$3 million. Four ARC Discovery Grants were awarded for research in the field of herpetology, venom studies and early vertebrate evolution. These projects will tackle subjects as diverse as climate change and reptile populations, how animals arm themselves with venom systems and how the vertebrate head evolved, using latest computer tomography scan technology. Three major ARC Linkage Grants were awarded to focus on deep-sea exploration of Australia's coast, digging up dinosaurs from Alaska to compare with Victorian polar species, and the study of art produced by people affected by mental illness.

Museum Victoria is participating in one of the Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF) research hubs. The Marine Biodiversity Hub will provide new tools to support the identification, assessment, conservation and sustainable use of Australia's marine assets. The museum received seed funding from the National Oceans Office (Department of the Environment and Water Resources) to develop the *Fishes of Australia Online* website, which will be a first port of call for people seeking information on Australian fishes.

Terrestrial zoology staff continued to develop the Pests and Diseases Image Library (PaDIL), now one of the key diagnostic databases used to build plant health bio-security in Australia. Publications have been completed that revise the relationships between various groups of Halictine sweatbees in Africa and Madagascar, and examine the biodiversity of Victorian stream communities using life-history information for two species of caddis flies that had accumulated for approximately seven generations each.

Museum Victoria's molecular laboratory continues to underpin the organisation's competitiveness in attracting highly prized research grants worth more than \$3 million in the last five years. A strategic report has been produced looking at future directions for the laboratory.

Museum Victoria marine scientists participated in research voyages with CSIRO Marine Research, aimed at characterising the benthic bio-geography of the deep continental shelf and slope in northwestern Australia and on Tasmanian seamounts. Staff were also involved in a coastal diving survey from Geraldton to Albany, Western Australia, collecting octopuses and squids for a cephalopod toxins project. The museum has received logistical support from the Australian Antarctic Division to enable an investigation of venoms in Antarctic marine life.

Geosciences staff have conducted research into possible links between climate variation and the formation of secondary uranium minerals in south-eastern Australia, with continuing funding from the Ian Potter Foundation. A major PhD thesis on the formation and crystal structure of minerals from the Broken Hill ore body in New South Wales was completed. In palaeontology, the initial phase of a joint project between Museum Victoria and the North University of Alaska occurred, involving cutting a tunnel into permafrost on the North Slope of Alaska for the purpose of obtaining polar dinosaurs to compare with those known from Victoria.

Science communication staff edited a major Museum Victoria publication on Melbourne's wildlife and coordinated the 18th International Planetarium Conference, held at the Melbourne Planetarium.

Museum Victoria was represented nationally and internationally on several major scientific panels. Dr Gary Poore participated on two international committees associated with the Census of Marine Life. Dr Robin Wilson was elected to the Australian Biological Resources Survey Committee. Dr Martin Gomon was appointed deputy chair for the Australian Fishes Barcode of Life project.

Acquisitions

Significant acquisitions for the year were targeted at rare minerals to enhance Museum Victoria's reference and research collections. These included a suite of 80 rare minerals from countries that were formerly part of the USSR, a large collection of unusual Victorian minerals and two gold nuggets.

Collections

Collection Management

Museum Victoria continued to make significant gains in major projects identified in the collection strategy (2004–14). Work continues in transferring collection databases into EMu, maintaining and improving the functionality of EMu and providing training to users. Collection staff also assist in developing procedures for delivering collection information to the web.

During 2006–07, the Collection Registration project recorded 78,800 objects and specimens. The project has provided considerable gains in registering the museum's collection, including the full registration of some major sub-collections of exceptionally high research and exhibition value. This enables the museum to know and manage its collections to levels higher than previously possible.

The Collection Location Systems team exceeded its annual targets with more than 13,000 objects individually barcoded, bringing the total of objects barcoded to more than 100,000. An additional 115,300 new location records were created, facilitating broader implementation of this location infrastructure across all Museum Victoria collections.

Collections were managed in line with legislative requirements. Procedures to deal with hazardous substances in collections were developed to facilitate appropriate management of such substances and mitigate potential risks to staff and external contractors. Training in identifying and monitoring the activity-level of radioactive objects and specimens was delivered, leading to a collection audit to identify such items. Exhibition site safety procedures were developed to provide exhibition installation teams – museum staff and external contractors – with a clear set of operational procedures for installing and de-installing museum exhibitions. These procedures take into account existing occupational health and safety, exhibition management, operational, collection management and conservation guidelines and policies.

Conservation

Museum Victoria's Manager, Conservation participated in the course, Preventive Conservation: Reducing Risks to Collections (Ottawa, Canada, October 2006), organised by the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property and the Canadian Conservation Institute. The course focused on applying risk management concepts, principles and practices to the related fields of preventive conservation and collections preservation.

Planning is underway on a collections – wide risk assessment and management program, beginning with pilot projects on discrete collections in the next financial year. The preparation will involve a detailed analysis of results from ten years of integrated pest-management monitoring in collections at all sites.

Conservation staff conducted a comprehensive audit of the museum's extensive image and audio-visual heritage collections to gain data that will inform the development of a preservation strategy for these collections, which have diverse and unique requirements for access as well as inherent deterioration issues.

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Case Study:
Biggest Family
Album





Family photographs are something just about all of us can relate to. Whether they are in shoeboxes under the bed, in albums on bookshelves, or hanging proudly on walls, most of us have them and treasure them dearly.

But what many people don't realise is how important they are in documenting a broader history. More than just records of individual family life, family photographs are a wonderful resource for exploring the history of communities, places and events. They show how people lived and played, how they celebrated and mourned, and how they marked significant events in their lives.

*John Brock and his father
Vincent in the backyard
of their family home on a
hot day in October 1968,
Melbourne.*

– Russell Beedles
– Museum Victoria

Surprisingly, family photographs are not well represented in public collections, which tend to have many more photos of official events, major buildings and stately homes than they do of children playing or families at the beach. Even when family photos do enter public collections, they often do so only when donated by later generations, and many of the associated stories are lost.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Museum Victoria undertook a project to collect copies of family photos from rural and regional Victoria. The Biggest Family Album project was very successful, resulting in a collection of more than 9,000 photos from the 1880s to the 1940s. This collection continues to be widely used by researchers and students alike. The Biggest Family Album concept is based around the copying of images rather than the donation of originals, meaning that families retain their precious photos while archival copies are held at the museum, along with the relevant information about the images.

In 2006, Museum Victoria initiated a new project to copy family photographs relating to Melbourne's history. Through this project – Melbourne's Biggest Family Album – almost 1,200 family photographs were selected and copied for the collection. These wonderful photographs have opened up many new perspectives on Melbourne's history and provide personal insights into life in our city from the 1880s to the 1980s.

The newly collected photographs feature more than 150 different suburbs and many different environments, such as homes, workplaces, schools, streets, fun parks, beaches, rivers, the bay and even farm land. They depict people in a diverse range of activities including home life, work, leisure, travel, celebrations, eating, childcare, religious rituals, education, public events and shopping. They also capture people in spaces that are traditionally hidden from public view or not well documented, such as people travelling on public transport, browsing inside shops, sleeping in their bedrooms and washing in the bathroom.

The project was conducted in partnership with four public libraries, located in Beaumaris, Broadmeadows, Box Hill and Footscray. Library staff and local council officers supported and promoted the project, while ABC Radio, the *Age* and community newspapers assisted with publicity. More than 120 contributors responded enthusiastically to the invitation to share their photographs. Contributors often came along with a family member who could help with accurately documenting the photographs. They brought not just photographs and stories, but emotions and a passion about their place in history. More than a few tears were shed as anecdotes were remembered and recounted to museum staff.

Collecting days at the libraries and Melbourne Museum were carefully planned operations, involving the innovative use of digital technologies. After selections were made from a person's family photos, copying was done in digital format using a high-resolution digital camera. While the copies were made, museum staff recorded information on laptop computers about the content of photographs, including people and places depicted, dates and the underlying stories for each image. Basic family trees were also documented, as most contributors provided photographs across several generations. Back at the museum, information technology staff devised a way to migrate images and data into the museum's collection management database, EMu.

What happens to the photos now? Many of the photos will feature in a new exhibition on the history of Melbourne that will open at Melbourne Museum in 2008. Some are already on display in the Welcome Map in the Melbourne Museum foyer. In the future all 1,200 photos will be accessible on Museum Victoria's website and on the national image website, *Picture Australia*. They will be a resource for the entire community, appearing in education programs, history books, exhibitions, student projects and community displays.

Melbourne's Biggest Family Album will continue to grow, with more collecting days planned in 2008. Just as importantly, the project has developed an innovative methodology that can be applied in other contexts, such as community festivals at the Immigration Museum and partnerships with specific community groups.

Patricia Von Sonnewald holding her first child, Rebecca in the kitchen of her family home, Elwood, 1950.
 -- Henrick Von Sonnewald
 -- Patricia Morgan



John and Dave Symons and friends, in the backyard of their family home, Strathmore, February or March 1981.
 -- Judy Archer
 (John and Dave Symons' mother)
 -- Museum Victoria



Denise Clarke in her aqua bridal gown, her husband, Michael Clarke, groomsman Allan Field and bridesmaid Vicky Walde at Noble Park, 23 January 1965.
 -- Photographer unknown
 -- Denise Clakre



Kathy McDonald and her children Michael, Jenny and Debbie in Carlton, circa 1970.
 -- Photographer unknown
 -- Donna Matthews

