Spotlight on....

JS Battye Library of West Australian History

- Your Guide to Knowledge
This is the third issue spotlighting a service by LISWA. Battye Library is the jewel in our crown and I am proud to say that the work performed by the dedicated staff in Battye is world-class. The many confronting issues with digitisation, legal deposit, collection development and maintenance, private archives and oral histories are dealt with efficiently and effectively.

It was pleasing to see the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Library Board of WA and the WA Municipal Association last month. This now makes way for a Framework Agreement to commence, ensuring better ways of working between the two organisations. There will be more on this in the next edition of knowit.

It is getting to that time of year we all reflect back on what a year it has been and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my staff at LISWA for the effort they have made this year. To my senior management team and in particular Chris Coggin and Peter Lambert for acting as CEO while I was on leave, many thanks.

I wish all LISWA staff and Board members a happy and prosperous festive season and hope that the new year brings you all that you wish for yourselves.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Lynn Allen (CEO and State Librarian)

The Battye Library is an exciting place in which to work, but more importantly, it is an exciting place for the people of Western Australia. The Library holds in trust the premier heritage collections of the State for all Western Australians.

Enjoy the insights into those collections and the services we provide in this issue of knowit, and then journey with us into a future which will increase knowledge of the collections and provide better access to their contents.

By visiting the LISWA website at www.liswa.wa.gov.au, and clicking on the ‘Information Gateway’ for Western Australia, you will see a description of the heritage collections. Then if you search by a subject of interest, you will discover a marvellous mixture of sources. There will be details of books, serials, and full runs of Western Australian newspapers since 1830. There are the short-lived documents of everyday life held in our ephemera collection, and we have maps and plans, film and video, and the largest oral history collection in any State Library of Australia. A marvellous collection of private archives provides the stories of individuals, families, churches, trade unions, companies, businesses, and non-government organisations. The Pictorial Collection has images from 1845 to the present.

Every day, new entries about Western Australian material are being added to the online catalogue. If you make regular visits, I promise you will be delighted at what is available. If you do not have a computer at home, there are terminals in your local public library, and 50 access terminals in the Alexander Library Building in Perth. Work is under way to include in the catalogue thousands of photographic images.

There will be text from documents and newspapers, items from the ephemera collection, maps, and oral history transcript extracts which you will be able to see without visiting the Library. Indexes, which include pictorial, maps, songs, poetry, short stories, ships and ephemera, provide access to specific information.

The future will provide even greater insights into the past and the present. Join us in a voyage of discovery.

Ronda Jamieson
Director: J S Battye Library
Focus on... The Battye Library

The Battye Library

The Battye Library are often asked how the Library received its name. There have been occasions when we have received mail addressed to the Battye Library and others where we have been asked for the Battye Library (though why anyone would name a library after the ocular apparatus of a nocturnal flying mammal is beyond me).

The Battye Library is in fact named after James Sykes Battye, who was born at Geelong, Victoria on 20 November 1871, the son of Daniel Battye (a wool-weaver) and his wife Maria. After completing his education at Geelong College and the University of Melbourne in 1894 (graduating in Arts and Law while an assistant at the Public Library of Victoria), he was appointed chief librarian of the Victoria Public Library, as the State Reference Library was then known – it was named after Queen Victoria.

A physically imposing man, Battye was tall and powerful, full-faced, with compelling hazel eyes, although he was to become stooped and heavy set due to the ravages of age, diabetes and crippling arthritis. Initially, his appointment was for three years, thereafter a quorum diu bene de gessent (for so long as he performs well), a provision which he interpreted to mean “for life.” As he had claimed life tenure the newly formed Library Board of Western Australia was attempting to devise terms of retirement which suited all parties when Dr Battye died on 15 July 1954, having carried out the duties of chief librarian for 60 years.

Battye was general secretary of the amalgamated library, museum and art gallery from 1912 until his death in 1954. He was personally responsible for the selection of the original book-stock of the Library, wrote several books on the history of Western Australia, collected material of historical importance to Western Australia, helped to establish the Western Australian Historical Society in 1926, chaired the State Executive of the Centenary Celebrations Committee, helped found the State Archives in 1945, served on the University of Western Australia’s senate for 42 years (and as chancellor for some years) and was active in the Masonic movement in Western Australia.

After Dr Battye’s death the State Librarian, Francis Aubie (Ali) Sharr, reorganised the Public Library of Western Australia along subject lines. The name had been changed from the Victoria Public Library in 1904 to avoid confusion. All Western Australian material was gathered together in the one branch which opened on 14 December 1956 as the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History and State Archives to honour the role played by Dr Battye in the acquisition of the collection.

The State Archives split from the Battye Library in May 1988.

Steve Howell

Preservation of Prichard

The Battye Library houses a large collection of the works of famed WA communist Katharine Susannah Prichard. As well as writing many world renowned novels, she also wrote some small political works published on cheap ‘pulp’ paper which quickly browns and becomes brittle.

Recently LISWA’s Preservation Services unit worked on two of these books (published 1919 and 193-) and aided their survival for the future. The stapled works were stripped to remove rusting staples and to enable each page to be treated then encapsulated. The whole was then bound and boxed to produce a sturdy and attractive book with encapsulated pages.

This is one small example of the expert work carried out in the Preservation Services section of LISWA. We are fortunate in having photographic, micrographic, book and paper conservation staff who help us in the vital task of saving Western Australia’s precious heritage for future generations.

David Whiteford

Midland Workshops (Westrail) History Project

In July this year, a Collaborative Research Agreement was reached between Curtin University, the Labour History Society and the Battye Library to assist in commemorating the Midland Workshops and the people who worked there. The project’s aim is to build an archival collection and house it in the Battye Library as a resource for studying the working life of the Workshops and its role in Western Australian history.

The Project Team held two successful open days at the Midland Workshops site and made contact with many former workers who intend donating their photographs and records. The Team is already busily amassing materials and recording oral histories.

The close cooperation between our staff and the project team over Midland Workshops project will, we hope, lead to the development of a management model that can be employed for other large scale donations of material to the Battye Library.

Jennie Carter
Julie Martin

Clearly, pictorial material can be frustrating and complex but fortunately also endlessly fascinating. The issue of whether Nehru really opened the belltower or not becomes questionable. New issues for curators and archivists of the future!

As we move into the 21st century, digitising technology which allows the manipulation of images to such an extent that their veracity as historical sources are crucial to the interpretation of an image have to be estimated and staff frequently rely on the public to assist with the identification of people and places.

A photograph has no title - rarely are those we receive even properly captioned! It is necessary for staff to create titles and as each viewer sees an image differently, it becomes an art form to describe the content of a pictorial item to everyone’s satisfaction. As pictorial images are not necessarily unique duplicates. However, with 100,000 images in the collection it is impossible at times to ascertain which are already held! In many cases, dates which are unidentified view was of Fortune Street, Narrogin, c1906.

Collections received may consist of one image or be in excess of 5000 images. Pictorial material can be as small as 5 x 4 cms, as long as 2 metres (as are some panoramas) or as high as 1 metre. Items can be donated in albums, can be set in elaborate frames, mounted on board, glued on to sheets of masonite or pieces of linen, rolled up in cylinders or as generally happens, jammed into old suitcases or shoeboxes.

Collections or images invariably need some form of conservation reatment on arrival such as cleaning, steaming, flattening, encapsulation, removal of glues, nails, insects etc. In addition, archival negatives of much of the material in the collection have been produced as a preservation measure. Temperature and light controlled storage areas are necessary as are a myriad of containers and shelving systems to accommodate the varying formats and sizes.

Arguably, the Pictorial Collection would have to be the most complex of all the collections in the Battye Library. It attempts to cover all aspects of the State’s social and industrial history and in doing so, deals with many differing formats. Items in the collection can be postcards, published illustrations, photographic prints (on paper, glass, or tin), photographic negatives (celluloid, or glass), transparencies, drawings, sketches, and now CD-ROMS.

Pictorial material is not only physically challenging, it is intellectually challenging. When collections are accepted donors are required to sign a deed gifting the material to the Library. In many cases, whilst a donor may own the physical item, he/she does not own the intellectual property and/or copyright. Such information needs to be ascertained for every image. The donor may wish special conditions placed on access to collections and in addition there may be cultural issues that need to be resolved before images can be displayed.

The cataloguing record needs to reflect the provenance of images as well as the content of each image and also needs to give information as to content, location, donor’s wishes, copyright and reproduction rights.

As we move into the 21st century, digitising technology which allows the manipulation of images to such an extent that their veracity as historical sources becomes questionable is becoming popular. (Was Nehru really at the opening of the belltower?) New issues for curators and archivists of the future! Clearly, pictorial material can be frustrating and complex but fortunately also endlessly fascinating.

Julie Martin

**The Infolink Database**

Interested in taking up a new hobby or sport? Searching for that elusive government agency? Need some advice or personal support? Want to give your local Member of Parliament your views?

Help is just a mouse click away on the Internet using the Infolink Database (http://henrietta.liswa.wa.gov.au/81/search).

The Infolink Database can provide you with answers to a range of questions and, through the links provided on the database records, give you easy access to other sites of WA information.

The Infolink Database includes comprehensive coverage of State Government agencies and their main regional offices and provides information about State Government programs and services with full contact details. The rich array of community groups in Western Australia is thoroughly represented.

Searching the database is easy. You can search for organisations by name, subject, location or keyword. Each record provides the essential information about the organisation, from contact details to a brief description of purpose. Where groups have an Internet website, the Infolink record provides a link to it. When you click on the Internet link you go directly to the agency’s own homepage and can explore the resources they have available there.

The Infolink Database provides many information records in addition to the records on agencies. These records provide sources of often hard-to-find services from who to contact for the removal of abandoned vehicles to where to acquire a zoo licence. Even if you are just updating your diary you can check the current information about school terms and public holidays in WA.

All the information on the Infolink Database comes from the agencies themselves and is updated regularly throughout the year so you can be sure of its accuracy and reliability.

Brian Stewart
Back to the Future: Motion Pictures as Archives

Gerard Foley

A ‘place’ for us

The very first films came from an urge to reproduce the everyday world and to record and document everyday life. The first cinematographers, such as the Lumiere brothers, were usually men of science and industry, and were fascinated by recording movement. Motion Pictures (also called films) from the very beginning were recognised as being able to depict life as the way the eye saw it, as viewing individuals, objects and ultimately the world in a spatial and temporal environment. Therefore films were quickly realised as being very powerful records, as evidenced by the fact that at the first public screening of motion pictures in Perth, on 21 November 1896, three thousand people witnessed the event. No doubt the crowd was keen to see the novelty of a new technology, but the enthusiasm of attendees recorded in the local newspapers at the time, showed that people were strongly affected by the medium.

Boleslaw Matuzewski, an early Polish cinematographer, showed amazing foresight when, in 1898, he described the new medium of motion pictures as follows:

This simple band of exposed celluloid constitutes not only an historical document but is itself a part of history - a part which has not vanished and has no need of a magician to bring it back to life. It is there, scarcely asleep, and all it requires to walk and relive the hours of darkness is a little light passing through a lens in surrounding darkness.

Motion Pictures are the records of the 20th century. Developed towards the end of the 19th century they are the documents of our age, just as those electronic records being developed now will document the 21st century.

The complexity of motion pictures

The formats of motion pictures are possibly the most complex of all media. The first complication relates to whether they are films,

'Doc, are you trying to tell me you built a time machine out of a DeLorean?' asks Michael J. Fox's character, Marty McFly, in the 1985 Steven Spielberg co-produced film Back to the Future. This fantastic scenario - making a time machine out of a stainless steel sports car - can be seen as a metaphor for the place of motion pictures within the scheme of archives. Some archivists wonder if most motion pictures are archives at all or complain that film archivists are too format oriented. Many film archivists tend to feel a little alienated from a world that they perceive does seem rather too focused on textual, often paper based (usually electronically managed) records.

This paper deals with the challenges of balancing two major concerns for the institutional maintenance of a motion picture archives. These concerns are treated separately. The first is titled ‘A Place for Us’ and concerns the place of the medium of motion pictures within the multiformity of recordkeeping. The second concern is the necessity for an ‘integrated’ approach to managing motion pictures as archives and uses the context of the State Film Archives within the Battye Library and the Library and Information Service of Western Australia as an example.

This paper serves as a discussion point for those that work with non-textual records, especially those that work in areas where various recordkeeping formats are handled. It is presented to begin a dialogue about the place of non-traditional archives media within recordkeeping. It uses the example of the State Film Archives, a format based archive within a library, and shows how the challenges this presents can be met.

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Digital technology is fast becoming a medium for storing and providing access to motion pictures. A digital record represents information as a series of binary coded numbers. This is a very robust electronic storage system as only two pieces of information - 0 and 1 - are ever recorded. These two numbers are represented by high or low levels of magnetic flux, positive or negative voltage, black or white grain of silver, etc. There are no in-between values. Because numbers are being dealt with, copies are basically clones of the original. As far as the length of time digital technology lasts there are already 'robotic' digital archives that self check for errors in the digital coding and if detected will automatically copy the item. This copy, which is now better than the faulty original, is inserted in its place. This sort of system has the potential to last for a very long time.

Archiving motion pictures

A unique feature of film is that the motion picture processes themselves can influence decisions about retention and disposal of the physical items to make up the final product. It is difficult to discover any concrete advice in the literature for film makers, on how to manage their production processes so that valuable material is archived when a production is finished, apart from some brief notes on caring for release prints.

In practice, most film makers tend to keep all the film that is used in a production on the premise that some of it may be revisited in future productions. Film makers do not keep retention and disposal schedules for their motion picture footage. Indeed, some film makers are so attached to every piece of film they have shot or produced that they will dispose or discard nothing. Others discard material as soon as the production is finished. Unless prompted, many do not even think of donating material to a film archives. In Australia, this is mitigated by a little known recommendation of the Gonski Report which urges that all films produced in Australia are placed with relevant film archival institutions, in formats consistent with the context of the production process, in a sort of legal deposit framework.

Film makers create a produced film which could be seen as a 'publication' rather than as a 'record'. The components and offcuts that are

Archives for motion pictures

As has already been illustrated, motion pictures are a very powerful medium as well as an immensely complex one. Although Boleslaw Matuzevski had successfully convinced the 1900 Ethnographic Congress in Paris to include films as 'documents of historic value', it was not until the 1930s, that an impetus for collecting motion pictures as documentary and cultural heritage commenced.

With the advent of the Cinematheque Francaise, the National Film Archive in Britain the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Reichsfilmarchiv in Berlin, motion pictures began to be archived. It was not until after World War Two that serious international attempts were made to archive films with the founding of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAT). Consequently, the majority of silent films, from narrative and documentary to actuality and raw footage, in all parts of the world, have been lost forever, as has a sizeable portion of sound films.

Film archive institutions arose as a response to this lack of action and subsequently have developed their own methodologies and standards for managing motion pictures that they perceive as of continuing value - a perception that, for some, may include all motion pictures.

Different film gauge size also contributes to the complexity of the format. Films come in 8mm, Super 8, 9.5mm, 16mm, 35mm and even 70mm gauges, all of which have different handling characteristics and require special housing and environmental conditions. Film itself is physically fragile and the fact that the word 'film' is derived from 'skin' is probably a good approximation of its physical properties. Like skin, film scratches easily and it can be damaged by chemicals and heat or by prolonged exposure to the sun, cold and high humidity. Therefore the preservation and conservation issues with film are considerable.

Likewise, videotapes occur in various sizes, including 2" and 1" reel tapes, 3/4" Umatic, 1/2" VHF, Super VHF and Beta cassettes. In the 1970s, a broad range of cartridge formats were also developed, most of which disappeared almost as quickly, leading to problems of even finding machines to view them. Videos are also susceptible to heat, cold, sun and damp and their life span is considerably less than that of films.

videos or some sort of optical video disk. Film, which still makes up the vast majority of film archive holdings, whether it is colour or black and white, is the beginning point at which complexities begin. The process of producing film results in various components being produced to make up the finished product. These include:

- the original negative film that the footage is shot onto;
- fine grain positives and duplicating negatives of black and white film;
- interpositives, internegatives, colour reversals for colour film, that is, the intermediate or duplicating components of the film;
- sound components (magnetic or optical);
- the release print (that is, the finished product);
- offcuts which were not used in the final release print.

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Film makers create a produced film which could be seen as a 'publication' rather than as a 'record'. The components and offcuts that are
created in that process could be seen as being similar to the sort of manuscript material that is produced to create a publication. So the film archivist has to be cognisant with the fact that not only is material of a particular format being collected but that the film making process itself needs to be documented to show ever changing film making methods and even the differences between individual film makers.  

Of course, not all motion pictures are ‘produced’ in this way. The State Film Archives has a large collection of personal films and videos which are ‘unpublished’ and are raw, actual footage of people, places and events. This footage constitutes significant historical and cultural material. These motion pictures are deeply contextual and reflective of the lifestyle and culture of the maker, region and time period. They are ‘visual statements that reflect the qualitative aspects of the context of the maker’ and are therefore meaningful ‘artifacts of culture’. Therefore, it is the responsibility of film archivists to ensure that as much as possible of this valuable archival heritage is appropriately preserved.

The State Film Archives of Western Australia’s motion pictures heritage lies with the State Film Archives, part of the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA). LISWA has recently undergone a process of change which has resulted in the fostering of team environments within the organisation. The State Film Archives is part of the Original Materials Team in the J S Battye Library of West Australian History, a Directorate of LISWA, and has had the opportunity to develop and work within a team environment with other Battye Library collections to ensure efficiencies are achieved in planning services, service improvements, organising and developing work practices, monitoring client needs and services, etc.

The State Film Archives of Western Australia

The State Film Archives is a unique collection of Western Australia’s motion picture heritage. It has been built up by committed and dedicated staff and volunteers since the late 1960s. Western Australia’s film making community has been very involved in the development of the State Film Archives from its inception and are amongst its major stakeholders. The main impetus for the creation of the State Film Archives was the accidental destruction of most of an early local film maker’s work in a fire, coupled with the perception that Western Australia’s motion picture heritage should be properly housed and made accessible locally. In 1979, the State Film Archives became part of the Battye Library.

Working as a team

The Library and Information Service of Western Australia has a commitment ‘to provide and promote equitable access to information resources and services which support the intellectual, economic, cultural, social and recreational needs of the people of Western Australia’. This mission, coupled with the fostering of teams has created an atmosphere where qualitative changes can be made to the management of archival material. In short, it has engendered the development, still at an early stage, of an integrated approach to the management of archival materials in the Battye Library.

The Battye Library’s Original Materials and Information Services (OMIS) Team, is made up of several collections. These are the State Film Archives, the Battye Library’s Pictorial Collection, the Oral History Unit, all of which would come under the category of ‘special formats’ in current archives literature, and Private Archives which is responsible for non-government archives. In the past each archival based collection had, in practice, been run independently of each other. Now an atmosphere has been set up where archives and collections act in a more integrated way and where resources are shared more efficiently. One of the spin-offs of working as a team has been the opportunity to look at ways of ensuring some fundamental archival principles such as provenance and original order can be improved and strengthened. It has also allowed for operatives in each collection to be cognisant with what, why and how other collections are acquiring materials.

Each collection complements the other as acquisition no longer occurs in isolation. There is far less opportunity for collection managers to put the stamp of their own personality on a collection. Through regular meetings and communication between each collection, coupled with a strong commitment to the team, a more integrated type of management of all the various types of archival media within the Battye Library has begun. Therefore the format of the records becomes less important than the evidential and informational value of the records. ‘Collection Notes’ are in the process of being devised which have the potential to indicate records in each collection from the same provenance and creating body. Records are housed in each collection and handled according to the best requirements for the particular format. In short, a ‘total archives’ approach can be achieved with regard to these ‘special formats’ without compromising the distinct techniques, specialist systems and format management traditions that must be in existence to ensure that these kind of formats can be the ‘Means of Knowledge’ for the future.

Conclusion

In Back to the Future, Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) goes back thirty years (1955) to the mid-American town of Hill Valley. The first people he meets is his own parents when they were eighteen and the first thing he does is upset their budding relationship, potentially nullifying his own existence. The main tension in the film is how ‘Doc’ Brown (Christopher Lloyd) is going to get Marty McFly ‘back to the future’, in his DeLorean car/time machine before he doesn’t have a future to which he can return.

It’s almost thirty years now, since the State Film Archives started, in embryonic form within the audiovisual section of the WA Education Department, in what was then a small regional city. It has developed into the largest regional film archives in Australia, and operates within the context of the Battye Library. The challenge of ensuring Western
Australia’s motion picture heritage is preserved while maintaining its place within the multiformity of recordkeeping is being met. The necessity for an integrated approach to their management in the context of the Battye Library is being handled best within a team based framework within LISWA. The team structure has created opportunities for archival principles to be reinforced.

The State Film Archives is our time machine, which may seem a little unusual - like a stainless steel sports car, but there is no need to reinvestigate the past, or employ methodologies that may compromise it. To do so may mean we have difficulty getting back to the future. Format based archives, such as Film Archives, which have their own emphases, practices and traditions, have developed over time and for very good reasons. At first examination some of these practices do not necessarily agree with ‘total archives’ approaches to recordkeeping. By working within a team structure and using the opportunities it gives for applying archival principles and methodologies, the ‘total archives’ approach, where differing formats are preserved ‘as an integrated body of related records’ 21, can be achieved. As archivists we have to live with what has been given and, ultimately, we have to live in the real world. We have to realise the flexibility in systems and accommodate differing approaches within our discipline as we, in practice, must do within our workplaces.

Notes
3 The West Australian. 23 November 1896.
4 B. Matuzewski, A new source of history, 1898.
8 J. Ellis, ed., Keeping archives, p.393.
11 H. P. Harrison, ed., ‘History and Organization of Moving Image Archives,’ Audiovisual Archives: a practical reader.
14 D. Gonski, Review of commonwealth assistance to the film industry, Canberra, Department of Communications and the Arts, 1997.
15 G. Foley, Films as archives.
18 Library and Information Service of Western Australia, Information and beyond, p.4.
21 J. Ellis, ed., Keeping archives, p.394.

Biographical Details
Gerard Foley is the Archivist: State Film Archives, one of the collections of original materials in the J S Battye Library of West Australian History, a Directorate of the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA). Gerard has a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in History and Anthropology, from the University of Western Australia and a Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies from Curtin University of Technology. He has held positions of Secretary, Program Co-ordinator and, more recently, Convener of the WA Branch Committee of the Australian Society of Archivists.
The Battye Library holds one of the largest collections of oral history interviews in Australia outside of the National Library. The recording of oral history commenced in the Battye Library in 1961 and in 1975 an oral history program was established, the first in any State Library in Australia.

In 1989 the Oral History Unit was set up and staff continued the interviewing program, actively sought donations of individual interviews and collections from others involved in the field and offered guidance and training for those wishing to carry out interviews. By 1999 it was felt that the training and interviewing roles were no longer appropriate for the Battye Library and is now undertaken by the Oral History Association of Australia (WA Branch). Consequently the Battye Library now acts mainly as a central repository and preservation medium for oral history in Western Australia.

As at the year 2000, the Battye Library holds interviews with approximately 5000 people and has about 11,800 hours of tape. Many of the tapes have either a complete transcript of the interview or a synopsis providing a summary of the content of the tape.

Interviews are with people who are Western Australian by birth or migration. While there are interviews with "important" people, such as politicians, businessmen and woman, scientists etc., the main strength of the collection is the interviews with "ordinary" people from all walks of life, of different ethnic groups, of various occupations and living in various places throughout Western Australia talking about their everyday lives. The collection is an invaluable source of information, not only to the genealogist, but also to the social historian.

All interviews have been catalogued onto LISWA’s Innopac database and can be searched for online by author or subject (www.liswa.wa.gov.au). There are also other oral historical collections in Western Australia such as the collections of organisations, institutions and individuals. Some of these have been placed on the Infolink database and details of them can be located there, such as the number of tapes held, scope of the collection, contact names and numbers etc.

Also available online is the National Library's A national directory: Australia's oral history collections (www.nla.gov.au/ohdir) which contains details of hundreds of oral history collections throughout Australia. Searches can be carried out by subject areas, geographic locations and date ranges. Collections can be updated or added online and links to web sites of related institutional collections or to other oral history sites of interest are provided.

The first oral history taken by Battye Library staff was that of Sir Norman Brearley (1961), who was responsible for establishing Australia’s first airline, Western Australian Airways. Its first regular service began on 4 December 1921 when three planes set out from Geraldton for Derby with mail and passengers, but ended in tragedy when one of the planes crashed killing the pilot and his passenger.

In the early days of flying in Western Australia’s north-west, company pilots had to deal with mechanical problems and dangerous physical conditions, the most serious being the unstability of the landing fields prepared by the new Commonwealth Department of Civil Aviation. The hazardous nature of the industry is evident in Sir Norman’s comment that:

we had a spare plane at Hedland and we had one at Carnarvon, and they were always there, and usually there was one undergoing overhaul in Perth, and if there was a false landing there were other spare planes to go out and take up the running, and if the false landing wasn't too serious the pilot would stand by until the repairs were effected and then he would fly back to where it was most suitable to go.

OH901, Interview with Sir Norman Brearley, p. 16.

Subsequent interviews, such as the one with Sir Charles Latham (1962) in which he describes the clearing of land in the early part of the twentieth century, as well as his life as a politician, reflected the Battye Library’s desire to record the experience of prominent individuals. Similarly, the interview with Alex Sanderson (1967) who worked with C.Y. O’Connor on key engineering projects like the construction of Fremantle harbour, dealt with their association in Western Australia.

The addition of oral histories from prominent citizens has continued to the present day. There are a number of oral histories of politicians in the collection, including extensive interviews with former Premiers Sir David Brand, Frank Wise, John Tonkin, Sir Charles Court and Ray O’Connor in which they discuss their political careers, other politicians and key themes in the history of Western Australia. The collection holds interviews with former Governor and Chief Justice Sir Francis Burt (1994-95) consisting of twenty two cassettes and a 596 page transcript, providing a fascinating insight into his life, career, and opinions. For example, in discussing his role as Governor, Sir Francis deals with the constitutional conventions which underpin the past and recounts his personal experience of it, observing that:

The office was very largely I thought transmitting the wrong message all the time in what people like to think of as an egalitarian Australian society. It was transmitting the wrong message, built on the prestige of royalty and salutes and guns and all this; the things that I regarded rather as rubbish, but other people didn’t. That was one of the things I found hard to reconcile, to come to grips with, and I often felt myself being pushed out as a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan totem pole that people reacted to in a certain way. It was very tribal. I think that’s getting fairly close to what I found unsatisfactory about what was otherwise a pleasant occupation.

OH2629, Interview with Sir Francis Burt, p. 344.

Steve Howell
Leigh Hays
FOCUS ON...The Battye Library

Maps Online...

We’ve all heard of Albany, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie – but have you heard of Kadathinni, Comet Vale or Balagundi? These are just some of the Western Australian townsites included in Battye Library’s collection of historical townsite maps produced by the Department of Lands and Surveys. There are approximately 900 maps in the collection dating from 1884 to the 1970s. In an ongoing project to catalogue the maps onto LISWA’s online catalogue, there are now details of 660 of these maps available online.

The collection is extremely useful to anyone looking at the development of a particular town or area, whether they are local history researchers, genealogists, or students. For some towns we have just one map but for others such as Albany, we have a selection published between 1892 and 1962. As cadastral maps they show land boundaries and land use such as the sites of churches, schools, crown reserves and town and suburban lots. Some of the maps also indicate soil type and vegetation, show names of individual landholders, names of gold mining leases adjacent to townsites and land held by companies such as the Western Australian Land Company.

Some of the pre-1900 maps are hand coloured, for example the map of Narrogin published in 1889. This particular map shows land held by the Church of England and Roman Catholic Church coloured blue, lots sold to individuals coloured green with landholders names, and crown reserves 1831 and 1832 used for the police and court house coloured yellow.

Another example is the townsite map of Darkan published in 1915. This is much plainer to look at but still contains a lot of information including town and suburban lots, crown reserves, a list of town lots and lots open for cultivation available for leasing with the capital value and annual rental, and notes on the type of soil and vegetation.

As with the rest of our map collection, the townsite maps published before 1900 are included in our rare map collection and may be viewed in our researchers’ room but for preservation reasons they can not not be photocopied.

This series of maps is just one of many in the Battye Library map collection available to assist our clients in their research. There are now over 3,500 map records available through LISWA’s online catalogue. Check it out and see what other treasures you can find.

PS - Kadathinni is now known as Three Springs, Comet Vale and Balagundi are former gold mining towns, one near Menzies and the other to the east of Kalgoorlie.

Alison Hocken

What is a Catalogue?

It is intriguing what you can find in the LISWA catalogue. A recent foray led to a series of Boans’ catalogues, and so much more: reminders of a retailing firm that was part of Western Australian life, no matter where you lived. The store was built for Harry and Benjamin Boan in 1895 and the firm of Boans limited (its name from 1912) came to be the largest private employer in Western Australia, with city and suburban stores.

To give you some idea of the material held in the various collections of the Battye Library, you could start with copies of the title deeds and transfers relating to the Wellington Street site on which Boans store was built, including information relating to the site owners. From there you could explore the records of Boans from 1895 until 1977, which include account books, cash books, financial statements, agreements, catalogues, certificates, diaries, ledgers, files, staff memos, minute books of the Social and Sporting Club, and salaries and wages books from 1913-1941. There’s Boan’s family annual and reference book from 1914-1918, photographs, including one of the Murray Street facade in 1912, a mail-order shopping guide for 1950, a 15-page manual issued to staff in 1968, and a history produced in 1986.

Human interest stories come from a collection of letters written by Boans staff and friends during the First World War, the Grapevine, which was a staff magazine, and details of the Boans Book Club.

For those interested in shopping habits of the past, there are Boans grocery price lists for 1930 to 1941, household, hardware and outdoor catalogues, a fashion catalogue from 1939-1972, a video of a 1962 fashion parade, and another of the 1972 Boans sale.

The Battye Library Oral History Collection has a marvellous interview with Ed Benness, who began work at Boans in 1932 as an office boy, moving through the ranks to become Managing Director and Chairman from 1970-1978, and remaining a director until the takeover by Myer in 1984. A copy of the Myer offer is held, and details of the previous Parry’s Department Store takeover bid in 1976. This is represented in a Channel 9 news item and the ‘offer to purchase’ document to shareholders.

A visit to www.liswa.wa.gov.au is well worthwhile. By using the Western Australian Gateway at that site, discover with pleasure the variety of material held on all sorts of topics of interest perhaps about a subject that you hold dear.

Ronda Jamieson
Private Archives

Private Archives are the non-current records of private individuals, families, churches, trade unions, companies, associations and any other non-government organisations. LISWA aims to collect and preserve these original non-government records which reflect the full range of human endeavour in the communities of Western Australia. Original unpublished records in the Battye Library are unique and irreplaceable and, importantly, open to historical interpretation.

The Private Archives collection includes architectural plans, baptismal, marriage and burial records, correspondence, diaries, maps and microforms, manuscripts, newspaper cuttings, station accounts, and unpublished reports.

Some collections indicate the great range of stories that can be told about Western Australia’s past from many different perspectives. Some collections relate to important aspects of the State’s history holding information about organisations and people. Within these collections there are several treasures - collections that are valued for their beauty; the personal papers of Lieutenant Colonel Sir Gerard Smith is one such collection, deposited in the Battye Library by Gerard H. Smith, O.B. E. in June 1961.

Sir Gerard Smith was appointed K.C.M.G. on 22 November 1895, and arrived in Western Australia on 23 December 1895. His appointment coincided with the start of the boom which saw the goldfields at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie grow to become one of the largest producers of gold in the world.

The Gerard Smith collection consists of diaries, illuminated addresses and cartoons. Although all of the material in the collection is historically interesting, the illuminated addresses presented to the Governor at different times during his tenure are of especial significance and beauty.

Illuminated addresses were decorative documents, usually created to express thanks and good wishes at the end of a period of service. A circle of friends or colleagues usually commissioned them. They range in quality from simple calligraphic inscriptions to elaborate illuminations, usually hand painted or drawn. The illuminated addresses presented to Lieutenant Colonel Sir Gerard Smith were commissioned to celebrate important events such as opening of railway branch lines and his tour to the Goldfields.

Sir Gerard Smith’s career as Governor of Western Australia was not without controversy and scandal. In November 1899 the Bank of New South Wales successfully sued Sir Gerard and his co-directors in the Supreme Court for the recovery of large sum of money owed to the Bank from the operations of a Coolgardie hotel, which had gone into liquidation. The bank’s manager had been bribed and a letter from the Governor had been used to inflate the value of the company's shares. Further scandal ensured when the proceedings of the court case were published in the press.

Sir Gerard was also a defendant in a court case brought by a Coolgardie plaintiff, a caterer who successfully sued the Governor for unpaid expenses incurred at a reception. Sir Gerard was invited to return home to England. He left Perth on 22 May 1900 and formally resigned on 30 June 1900.

Michael Price

Account of Aboriginal Customs

The Account of Aboriginal customs in the northwest of Western Australia 1900 is a manuscript by John Slade Durlacher (1859-1918) based on his experiences in the 1870s and 1880s. This priceless record includes twelve pages on vocabularies as well as sixteen pencil drawings illustrating the text which deals with subjects such as the exploitation of Aboriginal workers in the pearling industry, camp life, dances, marriage customs, superstitions, tribal boundaries, burial ceremonies, body markings, hunting, fire-making, corroborees, fishing, war, food, gender relations and language difficulties.

In addition to displaying the prejudice of his time - a colonial worldview justified on racial, religious and pseudo-scientific grounds - Durlacher’s account suggests a deep curiosity and a sympathy for the people he discusses:

In this word picture I will duly describe the daily domestic life of bush natives pure and simple showing the routine of camp life where its rules have not been interfered with by the white man’s masterful spirit and arrogance, which when introduced soon breaks down the native laws and customs which are perhaps nearly as old as the world itself, for who can deny the poor savage of Australia the possession of very ancient laws and customs, despite his low status in the scale of modern civilisation.  

Leigh Hays

1 Acc 3839A, Account of Aboriginal customs in the northwest of Western Australia 1900, p. 19.
This special edition of Battye About Books looks at published work of past and present staff of the Battye Library. As well as the illustrated books, staff have presented many papers at conferences, written many articles for serial publications, and contributed to LISWA and other publications.

David Whiteford

**Western Australian Preserved Locomotives**
*David WHITEFORD, Charles De BRUIN, Lindsay and Neville Watson.*

This book records all preserved railway locomotives in Western Australia as at 1983 and gives a history of each locomotive with illustrations of each type. Western Australian locomotives which were preserved in other states were also included. If you are travelling to Meekatharra, Gwalia, Onslow, Wyndham, Merredin, Bassendean, or Whitman Park this is an important travel companion!


**Charles Court: the early years an autobiography**
*Geoffrey Blainey, Ronda Jamieson.*

Based on a series of Oral History interviews conducted by Ronda Jamieson, Charles Court tells of his childhood and adolescent years growing up in suburban Perth, school days, mucking about in the bush, Depression years, family life and musical career. He gives account of his war service and concludes with his first election to Parliament in 1953.

*Fremantle Arts Centre Press, W.A., 1995.*

**Our Military Ancestors**
*Glenda Oakley*

This guide to sources in the J.S. Battye Library and the State Records Office of W.A. covers military service in Western Australia and by Western Australians from the establishment of the colony in 1829 to Post World War Two. Both archival and published sources are recorded.


**Bassendean: a social history 1829 - 1979**
*Jennie CARTER*

The history of Bassendean is intimately tied up with the history of white settlement in Western Australia. The suburb began life as part of the Guildford township in 1829 but remained a sparsely populated village settlement surrounded by country estates of the gentry until the late 19th century. It took on its own local government identity in 1901 and became (& remains) a strong community within the wider Perth Metropolitan Region.

*Town of Bassendean, 1986.*

**Unfinished Voyages: Western Australian Shipwrecks 1851 - 1880.**
*Graeme and Kandy-Jane Henderson.*

This is the second in a trilogy of books to record shipwrecks throughout Western Australia from the first known one in 1622 to the busy gold rush period in 1900. One hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook discovered the east coast of Australia, Dutch and English vessels were being wrecked on the rocky lee shores of the Western seaboard. This book provides an invaluable guide for anyone interested in maritime and Western Australian history.

*University of Western Australia Press, 1988.*

All of these books can be found in the J S Battye Library