



# *APSIG Newsletter*

## *ALIA Asia Pacific Special Interest Group*

### *No. 93, March 2017*

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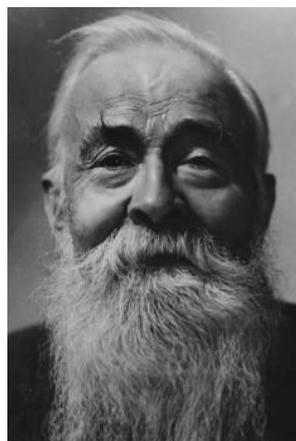
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#### **APSIG lunchtime talk: How a Scandalous Chinese Memoir Came to Australia**

Wednesday 29 March, 12 noon, Conference Room, National Library of Australia.

The NLA houses a rare typed autobiography, completed shortly before his death in Japanese-occupied China, by the eccentric British Sinologist, Sir Edmund Backhouse (1873-1944).

In this lunchtime talk Andrew Gosling will explore how, after considerable difficulties,



the Library succeeded in obtaining the manuscript documenting Backhouse's real or imagined adventures in late Manchu China.

All are welcome.

Backhouse pictured in his old age

#### **Forthcoming APSIG event**

Look out for the National Library of New Zealand's Māori Curator Paul Diamond who will be a speaker at a forthcoming APSIG event mid-year. Paul has won an NLA Fellowship to spend several months at the NLA researching Māori collections. More details of his talk will be announced later.

#### **New Director-General of the National Library of Australia appointed**

Dr Marie-Louise Ayres has been appointed as the Director-General of the National Library of Australia.



She replaces Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, AM, who held the position from 2011-2017. Dr Ayres has worked in research libraries for more than 20 years and in senior management roles at the National Library of Australia since 2002. Her career has spanned development and management of very large archival collections, and development of innovative digital services which provide access to Australia's rich documentary heritage, including AustLit and Music Australia. More recently, Dr Ayres has worked to increase the prominence of the National Library's collection – and the collections of hundreds of other cultural institutions – by leading Trove, the Library's flagship digital service.

### **Publishing and reading in Myanmar: an update**

Publishing is flourishing in Myanmar in the past few years with the relaxation of the political situation and more economic development and open-ness to the West.

Dr Thant Thaw Kaung, Executive Director, Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation and CEO of the Myanmar Book Centre, Yangon addressed an APSIG lunchtime talk on 1 March during a visit to Canberra.

He had impressive statistics: there are now over 1 300 printing presses in Myanmar with 4 000 books published per annum. There are 35 newspapers and about 200 journals published annually. There is a lively internet presence with 80% of the population now having access to the internet. More non-

fiction is being published in the more open climate with political memoirs appearing, including of those jailed by the previous regime and biographies of government officials and cronies. Myanmar now even has its own "yellow press", publishing scandalous revelations and allegations!

Literacy levels are high (90%), with a well-established reading culture in Myanmar which helps publishing.



L to R: Sophie Viravong, Dr Thant Thaw Kaung, Susan Prentice

Dr Thant's company, the Myanmar Book Centre, is now able to distribute widely to overseas clients including the National Library and the Australian National University.

His other interests are book promotion within Myanmar, which is supported very generously by overseas donors. Among the activities that are supported by the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation include book donations to public libraries, with book sales contributing to fundraising efforts. The Foundation provides library staff in the field with training courses and girls are encouraged to use technology in catchy programs such as "Tech Age girls". The Foundation also funds nine mobile libraries which provide 60 000 people in 40 to 50 villages with library services every two weeks.

These important initiatives to improve library services were set in train in the 1990s by Dr Thant's father U Thaw Kaung and John Badgley of Cornell University, whose

book aid project was featured in the APSIG Newsletter some years ago. U Thaw Kaung was University Librarian in Yangon for many years, and has been a guiding light in Burmese librarianship for decades.

Preservation of old books, especially palm leaf manuscripts, is underway with restoration and rehousing vital. Most are held in monasteries which have only limited resources.

The audience very much appreciated Dr Thant's talk which gave us insight into a developing scene, and many stayed after the talk to view a selection of recent additions to the NLA collections.



Further information can be found at :  
[www.MyanmarBookFoundation.org](http://www.MyanmarBookFoundation.org)  
[thantthaw@myanmarbook.com](mailto:thantthaw@myanmarbook.com)

### **Our No. 1 Neighbour: Papua New Guinea exhibition comes to Brisbane**

The arts provide a unique avenue for Australians to engage with and learn more about Papua New Guinea. Many of the works featured in the recent exhibition in the Gallery of Modern Art at the Queensland Art Gallery 'No. 1 Neighbour' shed light on the complex relationship between Papua New Guinea and Australia, its former colonial ruler. Ruth McDougall, the Gallery's Pacific Curator was the driving force behind the exhibition.



Lisa Hilli installing the exhibition

The understanding of Papua New Guinea in Australia is not nuanced and she lamented the mainstream media's often negative and stereotypical portrayal of Papua New Guinea.

Esteemed journalist and long-time PNG commentator Sean Dorney, argued the same in his 2016 Lowy Institute Paper, *The Embarrassed Colonialist*, writing that the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea has deteriorated in the 41 years since independence. Although our countries' colonial pasts still colour the bilateral relationship, we cannot shy away from these kind of complex themes. This may lead to uncomfortable conversations, but will enable a stronger and more honest relationship between our two nations. These dynamics demonstrate the importance of fostering and maintaining strong people-to-people links to ensure a mutual understanding, but in particular understanding of Papua New Guinea in Australia, does not deteriorate in the years ahead.

(Jonathan Pryke, Anna Kirk  
Melanesia Program, Lowy Institute)

### **News from the Asian Library Resources of Australia website**

ALRA's latest newsletter no. 69 (January 2017) is now available at  
<http://alra.org.au/newsletter.html>

Articles include :

China and the West: Pith Paintings at the National Library of Australia - Andrew Gosling

Experience of shared positions at The University of Melbourne and Monash University libraries - Ayako Hatta

Highlights of shared positions at The University of Melbourne library & Monash University library - Xiaoju Liu

Plus lots more updates!

### **PARADISEC a paradise for Pacific languages**

Working together to bring legacy Pacific language recordings to light - PARADISEC, the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures - is a digital archive of materials from endangered cultures from around the world held at the ANU. It has over 1,000 languages represented in its collection.

Julia Miller, Senior Data Manager at the Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, posted a blog that told 'the story of institutional collaboration at its best.' She reported that they were alerted to a list of 78 rpm discs held in the Arthur Capell manuscript collection held by the National Library of Australia which consisted of albums and sound discs, word lists, slides and photographs. The recordings include specimens of native languages of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, speech of Hagen natives, gospel recordings and titles in Fijian, Babatana, Owa Raha, Bilua, Marovo, Dobu, Ungarinyin, Hula, Tavara, Motu, Johore Malay, Western Sumatra Malay, Wedau and Police Motu. Brief typescript word lists are included with the Motu, Hula, Tavara, Dobu and Babatana sound discs.

The National Library and the National Film and Sound Archive agreed to pool their

resources to enable this important content to be successfully digitised and made available. It was agreed that the NLA would make the recordings available, the National Film and Sound Archive would clean and digitise the discs with its specialist equipment and PARADISEC would make the material accessible on its website.

Some 50 disks have been digitised, catalogued, and are now archived with PARADISEC as has the associated textual material.



The NLA's Beth Lonergan, delivering the discs to PARADISEC and the cleaning process begins at the NFSA.

More information at :  
<http://www.paradisec.org.au/>

### **Access to ALA Online Courses for Library Professionals from Developing Countries**

The American Library Association's Library Collections and Technical Services Division is offering a free seat at its online continuing educational course session to librarians and information professionals from developing countries.

The program Online Course Grant for Library Professionals from Developing Countries is intended to help library professionals from developing countries stay current with the latest trends and developments in technical services areas and enhance their professional knowledge and

skills in librarianship and information science. Details are at :

<http://www.ala.org/alcts/awards/grants/onlinegrant>

(Libby Cass)

### Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific

The Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) has a new website at: <http://www.mowcapunesco.org/>

The website has been updated to include the many MOWCAP activities that have been happening in our region over the last few months.

One of these was the official launch of the National Committee of Timor Leste for Memory of the World (MOW) in early December 2016. The launch event was supported by UNESCO through the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Programme (MUCP) in cooperation with the Timor Leste National Commission for UNESCO and the State Secretariat for Art and Culture of Timor Leste and included a two-day capacity building workshop with local stakeholders on 1 and 2 December.



Congratulations to Timorese and Malaysian colleagues on this welcome initiative.

Nominations for new projects for the register close on 31 August 2017.

### RMIT in Vietnam

Clare O'Dwyer, who is the Head of Library Services at RMIT University Vietnam, provided the following update.

RMIT University provides library services to campuses in both Hanoi and Saigon South. Clare was appointed in early 2015. The University library in Vietnam provides access to a collection of around 70,000 English print book titles as well as a shared access to more than 300,000 e-books, scholarly journals, and streaming videos from the Melbourne-based library collection.

The library in Vietnam provides information literacy training, collection development, liaison services, and research support for students, staff, and researchers. The University seeks to provide a quality English-based Australian university experience delivered locally in Vietnam through two campuses, one in Ho Chi Minh (Saigon), Vietnam's largest city located in the southern part of Vietnam, and the other in the capital Hanoi, the second largest city, which is over 1,000 kilometres away in the northern part of Vietnam.

Enjoy the virtual tour below - <https://library.rmit.edu.vn/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/OPAC/Tour>  
Website: [www.rmit.edu.vn](http://www.rmit.edu.vn)

### Iconic Indonesian newspaper digitised

The Embassy of Indonesia in Canberra has funded the digitisation of the *Berita Repoeblik* Indonesia newspaper, which was one of the first publications of the fledgling independent republic in 1945. Amelia McKenzie said the newspaper, held by the National Library of Australia, reported on the support Australia gave to Indonesian independence.

"It represents an important period on the history of both our nations," she said.

She paid tribute to Indonesian scholar Mr Anthony Liem who initially approached the Indonesian Embassy after discovering the paper was not digitised.



"Mr Liem was working on the 2015 exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in Sydney, Armada Hilat (Black Armada), about the remarkable relationship between the two countries post Dutch rule. He used scans from our microfiche copy of the Berita Repoeblik Indonesia, but on discovering it was not available online, he approached the Embassy to request funding so it could be digitised. We would like to thank Mr Liem and the Embassy for making this happen."

Berita Repoeblik Indonesia can be accessed via the National Library's Trove service.

### IFLA: getting libraries included in National Development Plans

IFLA's International Advocacy Programme (IAP) is now fully underway. "50 countries have joined IFLA in this journey, and are already making progress towards promoting and supporting the role libraries can play in the planning and implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals", IFLA President Donna Scheeder reports.

The IAP programme was launched with four Regional Workshops which involved more than 100 participants from library associations and public library

representatives from 50 countries. IFLA President-Elect Glòria Pérez-Salmerón added: "The workshops were exceptionally successful. In only two months, during November and December 2016, IFLA convened participants in Singapore (Asia Oceania), Montevideo, Uruguay (Latin America and the Caribbean), Pretoria, South Africa (Africa), and The Hague, Netherlands (Europe)."

Before the workshops, participants signed an agreement with IFLA to carry out awareness-raising activities, and to meet with policy makers to ensure libraries are recognised as key partners in supporting the United Nations 2030 Agenda. IFLA's Secretary General stressed: "These participants have committed to be strong advocates in their countries to bring libraries into the UN 2030 conversation, and IFLA will be there to support them along the way."

### Asian Studies in Australia - a vision for positive growth?

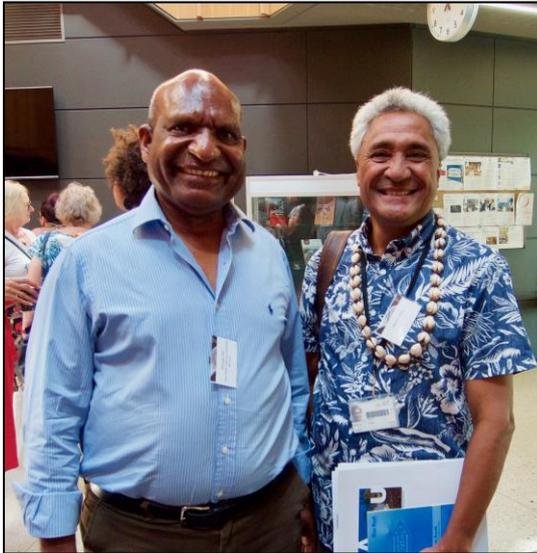
Despite a challenging environment for Asian studies in Australia, Asian Studies Association of Australia President Kent Anderson sees strong grounds for optimism in his article posted on Asian Currents: at *Asian Studies in Australia—a vision for positive growth* at <http://asaa.asn.au/asian-studies-australia-vision-positive-growth/>

### Oceanic Knowledges Conference - past important for the future

The Oceanic Knowledges Conference was held at the ANU on Friday 27 January – Saturday 28 January 2017 and was presented by the ANU Humanities Research Centre in association with the Centre for Collective Biography of Archaeology in the Pacific and ANU Pacific Institute.

The conference brought together specialists from a wide range of Pacific Island cultural institutions including museums, galleries and

archives; as well as Australian Pacific specialists, academics, students and local community members. Expert Pacific Island speakers came from Chuuk, Fiji, Hawaii, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Noumea, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Vanuatu and Yap.



L to R: Michael Mel, Manager, West Pacific Collection, Australian Museum with Deveni Temu, Librarian, ANU

A key theme that emerged during the conference was the importance of the past as a Pacific Island foundation that informs both the present and future. Master navigator Larry Raigetel, who is the Director of Waa'gey Organisation in Lamotrek, Yap, delivered a powerful keynote speech on the first day. Other speakers explored aspects of the constitution, conservation and transmission of knowledge, and the way people of Oceania imagine and experience culture, both in its material and intangible forms. The speakers discussed the challenges and opportunities presented by new media, legacy collections, indigenous interpretations, climate change, the importance of living cultures, digital repatriation and outreach projects. Pacific Islanders proudly claimed their heritage and owned the telling of stories with their own voices.

(Kylie Moloney)

## 2017 is the 'Year of Asia' at Leiden University

Leiden University has dedicated 2017 to Asia (See the program at [www.library.leiden.edu/news/leidenasiayear-program.html](http://www.library.leiden.edu/news/leidenasiayear-program.html)). Throughout the year the University will be organizing symposia, conferences, lectures and exhibitions all on the theme of Asia. This special year will be focused around the opening on 14 September of the new Asia Library, when the new building housing the Asian collections will be dedicated.

Leiden University has had an interest in Asia since the founding of the University in 1575 and the collections contain unique manuscripts, rare printed books and archival material. It also incorporates other collections, such as that of the Royal Tropical Institute and the KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies).

(George Miller)

## APSIG Newsletter

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Issues are mounted on the APSIG homepage at : <https://www.alia.org.au/groups/alia-asia-pacific-special-interest-group>