eNews

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On Assignment in Perth ...

June marked the conclusion of MPSA's biggest inventory project to date. The mammoth task of documenting over 5,000 objects in storage for the National Trust of Australia (WA) took a team of six, nine months to complete.

MPSA contractor Cath Barton at work in the Documentation Project Office, Perth, June 2005

The objective of the project was to prepare an inventory and assess the significance of the objects that the Trust holds in storage. The purpose behind this was to allow the Trust to make informed decisions about the future of the collection. In the first instance it is anticipated to result in an active deaccessioning program and a more manageable and well-utilised collection store. It will also assist the Trust in examining its collection's strengths and weaknesses, to be more strategic with future acquisitions and to guide future updates of the Collections Policy.

To manage the task of photographing, assessing and entering the collection onto the MOSAiC collection database, an office was established on site and a Perth-based documentation team

Two out of five thousand objects photographed as part of the National Trust Documentation Project, Perth, June 2005

The elaborate National Trust (WA) storage system at Midland Railway Workshops, Perth, June 2005

appointed. Regular trips to Perth ensured the efficiency of the team and 'ironed out' any challenges along the way. Hayley Johnson worked as the project manager and co-ordinated all aspects of the work, from staff recruitment to contract administration.

MPSA would like to thank our employees in Perth whose dedication and enthusiasm made this seemingly never-ending project a success!

Two Steps Forward

The towns of Tamworth and Walgett in northwestern NSW have both recently benefited from the implementation of MOSAiC to manage two important historical collections.

MPSA installed the collection management software at Tamworth Powerstation Museum and Walgett Historical Society in March and June this year.

An important component of the project was to familiarise staff and volunteers with the 'significance assessment' process. This was followed by a 'hands-on' approach to MOSAiC database training, in which participants were taught the steps of object accessioning.

The training was received very positively by all involved; a step in the right direction towards preserving our regional heritage ...

Talking Tenterfield ...

The production of new library signage commemorating the life of local identity George Woolnough (grandfather of the legendary Peter Allen) was overseen by MPSA. This exercise was part of a broader commitment by the Tenterfield Shire to maximise the value of the Peter Allen link and the famous *Tenterfield Saddler* song:

"The late George Woolnough ...
who lived without sin...
... They are building a library for him"

The next project planned for the Tenterfield is a permanent exhibition on the history of theatre and entertainment at the School of Arts with a particular focus on the Cannon family, who were much loved circus entertainers from the area.

One of the new library signs at The Sir Henry Parkes School of Arts, Tenterfield, April 2005

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TAFE Recollections

Project Officer Hayley Johnson has been working for the last 12 months with staff from the Sydney Institute of TAFE to collect and present key artefacts and documents associated with over 100 years of teaching.

The new collection storage facility at TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute, Ultimo December 2004

Not only is the collection now in ship shape condition and available for inspection, but an innovative computer interactive has been created and installed using Testimony Software (for details visit www.turtlelane.com.au and follow the links).

Wool display cases from the former School of Sheep & Wool, TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute, January 2005

Part of the East Sydney TAFE collection on display at Sydney Institute, January 2005

The interactive features images and oral histories that have been combined to recall memories of the "old [technical] school yard".

Exhibition in the Muse (Building C) at TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute

Trust in the Trust

MPSA Director, Richard Wesley has recently been contracted by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) to fill the position of Director, Museums and Properties on a part time basis. The Department has responsibility for thirty-seven properties across the state and employs some sixty staff to co ordinate their management and presentation to the public. His work has focussed on developing initiatives to generate additional income and to review the deployment of staff.

Museums Australia Conference

New Models for Managing Heritage and Museum Facilities in a Regional Context was the topic of a paper jointly presented by MPSA Director Richard Wesley and Tenterfield's Cultural Services Manager Robin Riley, at this year's Museums Australia National Conference.

Richard has been the Museum Advisory Service Consultant for Tenterfield Shire Council for three years and has seen first hand the benefits of co-locating the cultural facilities in regional centres. A recipient of several cultural awards, the revitalised Sir Henry Parkes Memorial School of Arts serves as a combined theatre, library and museum complex for the Tenterfield community. According to Robin Riley, it stands as a fine example of what can be achieved through a 'holistic management approach, …cooperation and downright dogged determination.'

A copy of Richard's paper can be found at www.museumplanning.com.au/publications.html

Avoiding Disaster …

MPSA and lead consultant Antiquities Conservation recently worked together in the preparation of Disaster Plans for the five collecting institutions in the City of Bathurst. Having completed a similar study for Parramatta Park Trust in mid-2004, Project Officer Hayley Johnson has become extremely familiar with the SOP (standard operating procedures) associated with protecting cultural institutions from the risk of fire, flood and poor collection management practices.

Presenting Tragedy in Museums

Senior Associate Dr Jeffrey Cohen was recently in the United States chairing a number of sessions at the *Annual Meeting of Holocaust Museum Directors*, which was held in Richmond, Virginia. In reflecting on the outcome of this event, Jeffrey explained, "a key issue for all museums who are involved with presenting tragedy is to strike a balance between emotionally overwhelming the visitor, with the power of the event in question and encouraging attitudinal change based on a rational understanding of the forces at work." Personal testimonies, he argued, must remain at the core of any presentation, whether it is dealing with the Holocaust of last century or the tragedy in Darfur in 2005.