

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

As this is my last 'Message from the Chair', I particularly want to thank Friends for their company and valuable contribution to the Library this year. Through your attendance at events and membership fees, the Friends have funded a Creative Arts Fellowship (\$10,000), a staff Travelling Fellowship (\$10,000) and a \$10,000 gift to mark the Library's fiftieth birthday.

It is impressive that the Friends have directly gifted more than \$250,000 to the NLA. There are many ways in which you, the Friends, support the National Library: when you attend events and exhibitions; volunteer your time to give guided tours or work behind the scenes; shop for gifts in the bookshop or online; make generous donations; or have a morning coffee before your research day begins, you provide benefit to this beloved cultural institution.

I want to thank the Committee for their enthusiasm, commitment and friendship. We have worked hard to raise the profile of the Friends of the National Library and to provide members with interesting and diverse events, and dealt with prosaic, administrative tasks such as the updating of our Committee procedures.

Several members will provide continuity on the 2020 Committee but four have completed their term. I am especially grateful to our treasurer, Jennefer Nicholson, and to our events expert, Ros Welch. We are sorry to lose Malcolm Thurston to a new life in Queensland.

Finally, the Committee is especially grateful to Melanie Olde (Executive Officer), Belinda Jessup (Friends Assistant) and Eleanor Hing Fay (Manager, Partnerships) and other Library staff who willingly gave their time and expertise this year. Thank you.

Lyn Adams | Chair

FROM THE TREASURES GALLERY

World's Greatest Air Race



Viewing the poster *World's Greatest Air Race for MacRobertson Trophy* in the Treasures Gallery (nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn3683728).

This striking poster by Percy Trompf is on display in the Library's Treasures Gallery.

The 'world's greatest air race' in 1934 heralded a new era in aviation, sponsored by Australian confectionary manufacturer Sir Macpherson Robertson! The MacRobertson Trophy, and £15,000 prize money, would be awarded to the winner of the race from England to Melbourne—a distance of 11,300 miles (18,200 kilometres).

The race attracted international attention. There were no limits to aircraft size, power or crew. De Havilland purpose-built three DH 88 Comets; the field also included new-generation, all-metal American airliners, old bombers and a Dutch KLM Douglas DC-2 (to show passenger air travel could be safe and reliable). Twenty aircraft from seven countries set out from RAF Mildenhall on 20 October 1934. Only 11 arrived at Flemington Racecourse. Three planes crashed and two pilots died. The intrepid flyers journeyed across 19 countries and seven seas, choosing their own routes with five compulsory stops—Baghdad, Allahabad, Singapore, Darwin and Charleville.

The speed division winners—Britons C.W. Scott and T.C. Black in a red DH 88 Comet, *Grosvenor House*—reached Melbourne in just under three days, with a total air time of 71 hours.

The event was a unique celebration for the centenary of the founding of Melbourne and a remarkable achievement. Fifteen years earlier, in 1919, the first successful flight to Australia from England in under 30 days had taken 28 days.

The handicap division winner, and second fastest overall, was the KLM's Uiver ('stork'). The Uiver suffered near disaster, becoming lost in a storm near Albury. Residents, alerted by the local radio announcer, sent a Morse code message to advise of the plane's location and used their car headlights to guide the plane down to a makeshift runway at the racecourse. The next day, the plane was dragged out of the mud to continue the race.

Join a tour of the Treasures Gallery at 11.30am daily to see the poster in person or access the poster online on the Library's website.

If you'd like to find out more, read Di Websdale-Morrissey's *On a Wing and a Prayer*.

Kerry Blackburn | Friends Committee member and volunteer

Volunteering for 21 Years

Judith Robertson retired this year after 21 years of guiding and volunteering. Here, she records some of the highlights.



Volunteer guide training for *Mapping Our World* (2013).
Left to right: Robyn Oates, Roger Dobb, Colleen Kinnane, Lyn Adams, Jenny Hadlow, Judith Robertson, Susan Chessell.

After returning to Canberra in April 1998, following a number of years living overseas, I saw an advertisement by the National Library of Australia for their inaugural volunteer exhibition guides program. I thought my training as a teacher and my experience as a volunteer guide at the Smithsonian Museum, Washington D.C., would assist me in that role. Following an information evening, then an interview at the National Library of Australia, I commenced their training program, together with 17 others, in July 1998.

The first guided exhibition was *Paradise Possessed* in 1998, with items drawn from the Library's Rex Nan Kivell Collection. Other memorable exhibitions were *Terre Napoléon* (1999), showing items in connection with the French exploration of Australia; *Cook and Omai* (2001); the blockbuster *Treasures from the World's Great Libraries* (December 2001 to February 2002); *Mapping our World* (2013); and *The Rothschild Prayer Book* (2015). That small book inspired me to research medieval art and how colours were made in that time. During the *Treasures of the World's Great Libraries* exhibition, queues encircled the Library and the free entry tickets were allocated for day and night. These exhibitions, and others, expanded my knowledge of history, mapping, literature and the arts.

In addition to guiding exhibitions, other volunteer work involved assisting staff in various ways, such as research, where I learned about a number of interesting items. One example is discovering

that Edward Lear not only wrote nonsense verse, but was also an artist. *Illustrations of the Family of Psittacidae or Parrots* by Edward Lear (London, 1832) includes Australian parrots and can be viewed at the Library (nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn822367).

In my 21 years as a volunteer at the National Library of Australia, I have met three directors-general, many staff, and volunteers who all work/ed to make the Library an exciting place to research information, enjoy exhibitions and admire its architecture. It's a place that welcomes visitors from all over Australia and the world, and I am grateful for the time that I was a part of the institution.

Judith Robertson | Volunteer guide, retired August 2019

Seymour Lecture: Public Life, Private Man

The Seymour Lecture, supported by Dr John Seymour and Mrs Heather Seymour AO, was this year delivered by political historian Professor Judith Brett, and was titled *Public Life, Private Man: Writing the Biography of Alfred Deakin*.

Professor Brett, who has written biographies on both Deakin and Robert Menzies, analysed their political views and gave insight into how these two men—who both had more than one period in office—coped with the setbacks and unsettling periods in their lives; what they learnt from these times; and how they reinvented themselves. Both had to make compromises, but it seemed that this came easier to Deakin than to Menzies.

The extent of information available to biographers from their personal records differs. Deakin left profuse personal diaries and memoirs, but not so Menzies. Menzies said the ideal on which he modelled himself was Deakin, but in significant ways he differed. To both, the British Empire was important, but each had a different view of it. Menzies clearly thought that the wonderful thing about Australia was that, though far-flung, it was nonetheless a part of the Empire. For Menzies, becoming a leading Empire statesman was the ultimate goal, but he failed to permanently enter the British War Cabinet in 1941, and his remaining political career in Australia must have been to him just consolation. He continued to use the term 'Empire' long after the official change of name to Commonwealth. Deakin had different ideas: he refused a knighthood, and wanted an independent, united Australia, in partnership with the United Kingdom. In other words, even though of a generation before Menzies, his view can be seen as more modern than that of Menzies.

The lecture is on the Library website as a podcast.

Mary Pollard | Newsletter editor, Friends Committee Member.



Dr Marie-Louise Ayres, Dr John and Heather Seymour, Professor Judith Brett.

2019 Friends Travelling Fellowship: Rachael Eddowes

Leaving Canberra as winter set in, I set off to the small village of Egham, where 170 librarians gathered for a two-day conference on user experience (UX) in libraries. Conference papers were wide-ranging, covering topics from providing low-sensory environments for neurodiverse library patrons to improving online discovery of archival collections. I presented a poster outlining user research undertaken recently for the Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) Online Delivery project.

Following the conference, I visited the Wellcome Collection, the Science Museum and the British Library in London before embarking on a mini tour of libraries across the UK, taking in the Bodleian libraries in Oxford, the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, and the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. In all these visits, I chose to explore three key themes: digital discovery, digital engagement and digital groups. I learnt about how the Science Museum is using artificial intelligence to improve discovery of digitised objects in its catalogue, how the Wellcome Collection completely remodeled its approach to web content, adopting a pitch-and-commission model and how digital groups are structured at the national libraries of both Wales and Scotland.

Overall, the trip provided a yardstick of sorts: it demonstrated the Library's unique position in having a large and dynamic Digital Group (formerly IT Division), representing approximately 10 percent of our workforce, while also illuminating some areas in which we can develop as an organisation. Hearing about innovative approaches to user research and design across Europe and North America emphasized the importance of a user-centred approach to all library services, from the way we use physical spaces in our building to how we greet visitors to reading rooms and events, and how we present content online. The trip also felt timely, coinciding with organisational restructure here at the Library, the redesign of Trove and all of its associated digital services, and a formal review of our communications and marketing activities. I give the most hearty thanks to the Friends for providing this wonderful opportunity for professional and personal growth, and for your support of all we do here at the National Library of Australia.

Rachael Eddowes | Business analyst, National Library of Australia

Reciprocal Benefits: State Library of New South Wales

Friends of the National Library of Australia Inc. receive reciprocal privileges at the State Library of New South Wales. Mary Pollard, a Friends Committee Member, recently checked out the benefits while visiting earlier in the year.

The historic Members Room at SLNSW is available for Friends to use from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Please present your National Library Friends membership card to security staff for access to the room, which is the original Mitchell Library Reading Room, opened in 1910. It is located on the ground floor and has recently been refurbished. It features a carpet of Florence Broadhurst design and a unique collection of 1,100 editions of Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which are housed in lead-light cabinets. For your convenience, a self-catering espresso

coffee machine and biscuits are available. Join a free History and Heritage tour at 10.30am or 12pm and visit the Reading Room and the Shakespeare Room, furnished in Tudor style. The Shakespeare Room is also open to the public, free, on Tuesdays.

I received a 10 percent discount at the Library Bookshop— a discount is also available on Friends of State Library events (sl.nsw.gov.au/friends-events). Ring 02 9273 1593 to book and arrange this discount.

Mary Pollard | Newsletter editor, Friends Committee member

RECENT FRIENDS EVENTS



Friends looking at the ruins of Joadja.

Journey to Joadja

At 8am on Saturday 21 September, under a threatening sky, 52 Library Friends and their guests left the National Library by coach for the spring tour of Joadja. Now in ruins, Joadja is a privately owned, state heritage mining town that thrived from the 1870s to 1911. In its heyday, it was the world's largest producer of kerosene shale. There were many other by-products, ranging from tar (which we inspected in the tar pit) to candles.

We arrived to a lovely morning tea with cake and biscuits. Thoroughly refreshed, we were taken around the historical site in an open people-mover and given a very interesting and passionate commentary by Val, the owner of Joadja. First, we were taken to the remains of a thriving town for miners and their families, which even had a school of arts. Later, we were shown where shale was crushed and treated, and finally where kerosene was refined. It was back to a barbecue lunch, followed by a quick look at the whisky and gin distillery, before heading off to the courthouse at Berrima.

Our group was divided into two; the first saw a video on the history of the courthouse while the rest went to the courtroom for a holographic performance of a famous trial. On leaving the courthouse, the rain finally appeared, but apart from having to have afternoon tea in the coach the weather was kind to us.

Our coach driver Shane was amazing, kind and helpful. Great thanks go to Melanie Olde and Ros Welch for the organisation and running of this trip, including the games we played while on the coach (they had prizes too!).

Margo Geering | Friends Committee member

NLA PUBLISHING SPOTLIGHT

This Is What A Feminist Looks Like

by Emily Maguire

When NLA Publishing approached me with the idea of a book recounting the big moments of Australian feminist history, I was instantly excited. I realised I knew a lot about where we're at and what still needs to be done, but almost nothing about how we got here. What a gift it was to be invited to delve into the marvellous women's history collections of the Library and bring some of the stories to a wider audience!

This was in late 2016. Very soon after I began my research, a man who boasted about groping women was elected to the White House. Soon after that, #metoo exploded. For the next two years as I worked on this book, the injustices caused by misogyny and sexism were daily news. I spent my days reading about how bad things were in the past, and then my evenings watching the news, hearing stories and discussions that could have been right out of the archives.

There's a sign you see at feminist rallies, usually held up by an older woman. It says 'I can't believe I still have to protest this stuff.' I really felt the enormous weight of that message as I dug into the history



A photograph from the Papers of Bessie Rischbieth (nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn2655892).

Yes, things are much better. A girl born today will have opportunities unimaginable to her great-grandmother. But there are a shocking number of battles started in the nineteenth century that are still not won: equal pay, reproductive rights and the right to be safe in public and at home, for starters.

This Is What A Feminist Looks Like: The Rise and Rise of Australian Feminism is an attempt to pay tribute to the generations of women who have worked against these injustices and to inspire a new generation to take up the fight. Because if history shows us anything, it's that we can't wait for the remaining injustices to dissolve or assume the wins will remain uncontested. Fortunately, though, we have an incredible history of action to instruct and inspire us as we forge ahead.

Emily Maguire | Author

FRIENDS EVENTS

Bookings: nla.gov.au/whats-on or 02 6262 1698

Legendary Tales: A Tour of the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature

An internationally known research hub, the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature contributed many items to the Library's *Story Time* exhibition. Join us for a guided tour of their archive, filled with fascinating stories, documents and artworks, at the University of Canberra.

Tuesday 11 February | 4.30pm

University of Canberra

Free | Friends members only (max. 20 guests)

Bookings: nla.gov.au/whats-on or 02 6262 1698

Christmas Closure

The Friends office will be closed from 12pm on Friday 20 December until 9am on Monday 13 January. Staff and Committee members wish all Friends a very happy holiday season and look forward to seeing you again in the new year.



Give the Gift of Friendship

Share your love for the National Library with your family and friends this Christmas. As well as standard member benefits, a Friends gift membership includes a welcome pack of National Library merchandise. Please allow at least one week for processing and postage.

Please contact the Friends office for details: 02 6262 1698 or friends@nla.gov.au.

DISCOUNT CODE FOR LIBRARY EVENTS

To claim your 15 per cent discount on ticketed Library events, bookings must be made online at nla.gov.au/whats-on and the discount code SUMEND1920 entered when booking. This code is valid for events between 1 December 2019 to 29 February 2020 and does not apply to Friends events (select the member's ticket option for these) or events that are free of charge.

NATIONAL LIBRARY BOOKSHOP SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRIENDS

Friends will receive a 20% discount on *This Is What a Feminist Looks Like* when purchased between 1 December 2019 and 29 February 2020, online and instore.

To claim your 20% discount on *This Is What a Feminist Looks Like* in the online shop, use the promotional code SUMEND1920 at checkout. You can use this code to also apply the usual Friends 15% discount* to other eligible online purchases.



* Discount does not apply to limited-edition prints, discounted and remaindered stock, newspapers, stamps, copy cards, magazines and vouchers.