

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

I do hope that 2016 has begun well for you. It has been good to see so many Friends at the Library enjoying the *Celestial Empire* exhibition and the splendid events connected with it. At our Friends Exclusive Evening, well over 100 Friends enjoyed an excellent lecture from the curator, Dr Nathan Woolley, and then relaxed with evening refreshments and an after-hours stroll through the exhibition.

We share the National Library's current focus on China, so gardeners and historians among us, do mark the autumn date for our joint lecture with the Australian Garden History Society, which will look at Qing dynasty garden history.

Look out for information on our popular White Gloves Evening in April; we are also planning a Coffee with the Curator morning and an exclusive evening with the paintings of S.T. Gill, Australia's great colonial artist.

The recipient of the 2016 Friends Creative Fellowship, Micharne Cloughley, has been working solidly on her new play, which draws on the Hazel de Berg Oral History Collection. Her performance for Friends will be held in the latter part of 2016. Micharne is in New York for a few months, where she is an established young playwright and script writer.

The brand new collection of Friends Benefits includes discounts on selected cultural performances, magazine subscriptions, fitness, dining, shopping and accommodation, as well as reciprocal benefits at other institutions in Australia and overseas. These are all listed on the National Library's website at nla.gov.au/support-us/benefits-of-friends-membership and in the December 2015 newsletter. I do hope you will find many opportunities here that are just right for you. To renew or give a gift membership, call the Friends Office on 02 6262 1551, email friends@nla.gov.au or join online at nla.gov.au/friends/join-the-friends-online.

You may have noticed a bright new voice in the Friends Office. Kelli Turner is our Executive Officer for 2016, while Sharyn O'Brien is A/g Manager, Community Partnerships & Development. Kelli is in the office Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

I wish you the very best for 2016 and look forward to seeing you at the Library.

Robyn Oates

Meet the Volunteer

In this new series of articles, we will be describing the contributions of some of the National Library's volunteers.

Kerry is one of the volunteers conducting guided tours of *Celestial Empire: Life in China, 1644–1911*.

Prior to joining the National Library's volunteer program in 2013, Kerry led the Commemorations program in the Department of Veterans' Affairs before her retirement. She was responsible for policies and programs, Anzac Day events at Gallipoli, key wartime anniversaries, returning to former battlefields with veterans, education resources, documentaries and publications. The National Library's collections were a valuable resource for the program, particularly the many publications by DVA's historians and graphic designers.

Kerry saw becoming a volunteer at the Library as an opportunity to contribute, using her work experience, while expanding her knowledge of the National Library's fascinating history and collections.

For the last four months, she has worked with a small group of volunteers to research and prepare the Guides' Guide, used by the volunteers who take visitor tours through the special exhibitions.

This is no small task. The volunteers working group meets with the exhibition curator three or four months before an exhibition opens to learn the proposed theme, focus and items to be displayed, and discuss how visitors may best be engaged. The subject matter may be new to the volunteers, but this makes involvement both challenging and interesting. Ongoing contact with the curator and exhibitions staff provides further insights.

The working group researches stories behind the exhibition to highlight key items and expand on display captions for visitors. The little-known and quirky can add to the experience of touring an exhibition. 'Then comes the difficult part,' says Kerry, 'how to put all this fascinating material into a format that each guide can use for the 30-minute tours.' Having a Guides' Guide ensures a consistent story while still allowing variations to meet the needs of visitors from diverse backgrounds and with different knowledge bases.



According to Kerry, 'Every tour group and guided tour is different, but the talking points, background material and each volunteer guide's own research enable us to provide interesting tours and answer as many questions as possible. Of course, we can't be experts on all aspects of an exhibition—and we're often learning from our tour participants—so we can follow up or let people know where they can find additional information, on the Library's website or from other avenues'.

'Visitors to the Library are always welcome to browse an exhibition themselves but by doing a tour with a guide, you can learn much more of the story and background to the intriguing and often unique items on display.' Other exhibition tours Kerry has worked on include *Heroes and Villains: Strutt's Australia*; *Keepsakes: Australians and the Great War*; and various iterations of the Treasures Gallery.

Like other volunteers, Kerry also plays a role in other areas of the Library—on the Foyer information desk at weekends, and in proofreading, editing and researching for the Publications team. She sees her volunteer experiences as rewarding and more than meeting her expectations.

FRIENDS NEWS

Friends Enjoy Exclusive Access

So far this year at the National Library, the Qing dynasty has stolen the show. It ruled China for nearly 300 years, and the developments of this period were fundamental to the society and culture of modern China. The population exploded, growing from 150 million in 1700 to around 350 million (estimates vary) in the mid-nineteenth century. Now the Qing have come to Canberra in the form of a joint exhibition between the National Library of Australia and the National Library of China. It is the largest exhibition that the National Library of China has ever staged overseas.

The Friends were offered exclusive access to the splendid *Celestial Empire: Life in China, 1644–1911*. Well over 100 Friends enjoyed a lecture by curator Dr Nathan Woolley as he introduced calligraphy, paintings and cultural relics from the exhibition and told us about their fascinating background. Many of these items have never before left China.

Nathan is a post-doctoral Fellow at the Australian National University. A graduate of ANU, he is conducting research focusing on the period from late imperial China to the present. Prior to this, he worked in Japan and South Korea in the fields of media and translation. Nathan speaks Chinese, Japanese and Korean. With such rich knowledge, he guided us towards a greater understanding of what, to the Western eye, was a complex and mysterious way of life.

The Complete Map of the Everlasting Unity of the Great Qing shows the detailed organisational structure of social administration within the empire. Other maps present China from the European perspective of coastlines and topography. Rich embroideries show that wives of officials wore their husband's rank on their own gowns.

However, this exhibition is about more than what the ruling class was doing. When foreign trade expanded, the European missionaries arrived in increasing numbers. The Library's Chinese Collection houses the London Missionary Society Collection. Missionaries needed to know about the life of the ordinary people and now this historical collection is highly valued. These commonplace materials provide some appreciation of lived experience in the ordinary world. Nathan introduced us to the activities of merchants and everyday life. He explained the reasons for having records written in the diverse scripts of Manchu and Tibetan, in addition to Chinese. Young hopefuls for the public service sat examinations in philosophy, history and poetry. They studied historical figures in order to understand their own actions. They learned to recite complete works of literature and policy. In the exhibition, there is even a sample public examination 'cheat sheet'. Just fancy that!

The combination of personal access to the curator, a leisurely stroll through the exhibition and the opportunity to discuss it all with friends while enjoying drinks and nibbles made for a terrific Friday evening.

Robyn Oates

Harold White Lecture by Hannie Rayson: The Author Is Alive and Well and Coming to a Microphone near You



Author and playwright Hannie Rayson says that Harold White, the National Librarian from 1960 to 1970, was reputedly a great talker. She is right. As the story goes, Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies gave the project the go-ahead to shut him up.

The late Wallace Brown, political correspondent for Brisbane's *The Courier-Mail* at the time, recorded that White, filling the dual roles of Parliamentary Librarian and National Librarian, was known for persistence and 'incessant, unstoppable verbiage'. Brown overheard Menzies telling his Treasurer, Harold Holt, after a late night meeting with White: 'For God's sake, Harold, give him his bloody library and get him off my back'.

On 29 November 2015, Rayson delivered the inaugural Harold White Lecture at the National Library and praised the egalitarian nature of the institution. 'In France, you have to have a post-graduate degree to use the national library,' she told the more than 80 Friends and guests who attended the event.



Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Hannie Rayson and Robyn Oates at the 2015 Harold White Lecture.

'Here, in this National Library, anyone can walk in.'

That is how Rayson likes her libraries. She said she does much of her work in the State Library of Victoria, not for the quietness but because of its democratic character. When the library opens at 10 am each day, a crowd surges in that is as diverse as the city of Melbourne—elderly people, students, the homeless, mothers with prams, eccentrics, people of all ethnicities. The library affords her the opportunity to join in, eavesdrop and watch—all part of writing.

Rayson's lecture provided a fascinating insight into the life of a writer. Since publication in February 2015 of her memoir, *Hello Beautiful!: Scenes from a Life*, she has barely stopped talking. Her tour started in Bermagui in February and ended in Canberra with this lecture. She took issue with French literary critic Roland Barthes, who wrote in his 1967 essay, *The Author Is Dead*, that readers did not need to know about an author and should simply distil meaning from the written work. According to Rayson, if Barthes were writing in Australia now, he would have no choice but to talk, tweet and opine in public.

The Harold White lecture was Rayson's 50th event in front of a microphone in 9 months. Her speaking engagements have taken her all around the country to an astonishing variety of venues: woolsheds, wineries, writers' festivals, cafes, a horse stud, mechanics' institutes and even a women's prison.

For Rayson, writing is all-encompassing. She disagrees with E.L. Doctorow's declaration that, for an author, writing is just the writing. In Doctorow's world, even planning, outlining and research are not part of the writing process. But in the twenty-first century, Rayson argues, writing includes emails, engaging with Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, booking planes, nominating your ten top reads for Christmas and writing 500 words about your favourite vegetable. Add to this procrastinating, false starts, vacuuming, reading and making soup. If a writer can't see that this is all part of the job, he or she 'will go mad and die of starvation'.

Rayson is optimistic about the future for writers. Although theatres are not interested in playwrights, exciting and game-changing opportunities are opening up elsewhere. In particular, she nominated the burgeoning of writers' festivals, which are selling out and can barely cope with public demand. The Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, which offers a home for

books, writing and ideas, promotes events that are frequently sold out. The appetite to hear writers speak on practically any subject is alive and in robust good health. Rayson herself is involved in a 'boutique' writers' festival at Aireys Inlet. Within 10 days, more than 300 weekend passes for the festival were sold, raising about \$60,000.

The author is definitely not dead.

Many in the audience stayed on to enjoy afternoon tea in the Library Foyer where Hannie Rayson signed copies of her book.

A recording of this lecture can be accessed online at nla.gov.au/news/audio.

Kathryn Cole, Deputy Chair, Friends Committee

Birth of the Lake View Book Club

During 2015, the Friends Committee reconsidered its activities, including the events offered by the Friends.

The Committee concluded that these events could be defined in three broad categories:

1. Events and lectures associated with Friends activities
2. Events providing exclusive opportunity for Friends to access the National Library's exhibitions or collections
3. Events in association with other organisations.

The Friends Book Club did not fall within any of these categories and therefore the Committee agreed to the following:

- The Book Club can continue but all involvement of the Friends Office and the Friends Committee will be discontinued.
- If the Book Club continues, it will be promoted through the Friends Newsletter and on the noticeboard in the Friends Lounge. The appropriate information will be sent to the Executive Officer in time for inclusion.
- All future notices should clarify that meetings are not run by the Friends and the club's new name should not include the words 'Friends' or 'National Library'.
- The majority of attending members must be current members of the Friends of the National Library.

The Book Club met in January under the new arrangements and decided to continue to meet as the Lake View Book Club. Books to be discussed in coming months are:

- 29 March: *One Life: My Mother's Story* by Kate Grenville
- 26 April: *The Wife Drought* by Annabel Crabb
- 31 May: *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante
- 28 June: *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr
- 26 July: *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrik Backman
- 30 August: *The Danish Girl* by David Ebershoff

The Lake View Book Club welcomes members of the Friends who would like to join our friendly discussion group. The meetings continue to be held in the Friends Lounge on Level 4 of the Library. They start at 6.15 pm and finish about 7.45 pm.

If you have any questions, please contact Kathryn Cole at kathryncole@grapevine.net.au.

Reading Room Renovations Now Complete

The Library is pleased to announce that the construction works associated with the renovation of the Library's reading rooms and public amenities on Lower Ground 1 are now complete. A new 'quiet zone' in the Main Reading Room, in the space formerly occupied by the Petherick Reading Room, opened just before Christmas, making the entire Ground Floor publicly accessible. The Main Reading Room now houses three works of art by Indigenous Australian artists, and the next time you visit you will be greeted by our new digital communication display, highlighting Library events, exhibitions and services. *Tetsuyas*,

a painting by Jeff Martin of a famous Japanese restaurant in Sydney, now adorns the Special Collections Reading Room on Level 1 and other works of art are coming. The expanded cafe, amenities and locker area on Lower Ground 1 is also finished, with many people now taking advantage of the wi-fi and improved ambience on this level. The Library thanks all users, including our Friends, for tolerating the construction works that have occurred over the last 18 months. We hope you will agree that the end result made it worthwhile.

Aileen Weir, Director, Reader Services

FRIENDS EVENTS

White Gloves Evening—the Prompt Collection

Join us for an exclusive viewing of a selection from the Library's collection of performing arts ephemera, the Prompt Collection. This diverse collection documents the national and international careers of significant Australians like Barry Humphries, Dame Nellie Melba, Kylie Minogue, Nick Cave, Dame Joan Sutherland and Sir Robert Helpmann. It also reveals the performance history of Australian performing arts organisations and companies, such as: Bangarra Dance Theatre, the Tivoli Circuit, the Australian Ballet and Ashton's Circus; individual musicals and plays that toured Australia (*Hair, Annie*); performing arts events and festivals (the National Folk Festival, Brisbane Festival, Adelaide Fringe Festival); and Australian tours of prominent overseas artists and companies (Anna Pavlova, the Ballets Russes, Neil Diamond).

Thursday 14 April, 6 pm

Conference Room & Friends Lounge

\$20 Friends and their guests (includes light refreshments)

Bookings: nla.gov.au/bookings/friends or 02 6262 1698

Friends Discount Code for National Library Events

To claim your 15 per cent discount on ticketed National Library events, bookings must be made online at nla.gov.au/bookings and the discount code CEAUTFR16 entered when booking. This code is valid from 1 March to 31 May 2016.

A Garden for Empire and Nation: The Qing Imperial Mountain Estate in Chengde

In association with the Australian Garden History Society and in conjunction with *Celestial Empire: Life in China, 1644–1911*, the Friends will present a lecture by Dr Stephen Whiteman, Lecturer in Asian Art, University of Sydney. Drawing on objects in the exhibition and other materials, Stephen will speak about the evolution of a Qing imperial garden from 1800 to the present.

Friday 13 May, 6 pm

Theatre

\$15 Friends and members of the AGHS, non-members \$20 (includes light refreshments)

Bookings: nla.gov.au/bookings/friends or 02 6262 1698



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6.30pm Reception
7.00pm Film Screening

NATIONAL LIBRARY BOOKSHOP SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRIENDS

In conjunction with the Library's Bookshop, the Friends are pleased to announce a special offer for members who make a purchase using the National Library's online bookshop.

For any purchase made between 1 March and 31 May 2016, Friends will receive a free copy of *Gostelow Journal: Bogan Lily*. This offer is in addition to the usual Friends discount and any other offers advertised on the Library Bookshop website.

To claim your free copy of *Gostelow Journal: Bogan Lily* and your 15 per cent discount with all online purchases, use the promotional code FR15MAR16 at checkout.

This code is valid from 1 March to 31 May 2016.

