

## CPP the year in review: back on campus with the collections and loving it!

This year has been an exciting one for the Collections Projects Program (CPP) on several fronts, not least because ‘hands on’ project experiences were back! While the remote projects of the previous two years provided great opportunities for students, it is hard to deny the energy generated by being on campus and working directly with the collections in the spaces they inhabit, surrounded by their history. I have found that something as everyday as a project meeting between student and collections colleague can take an interesting direction purely because a conversation is prompted by walking past a display case – these chance discussions do not happen when meetings are held via Zoom. Similarly, thought-provoking discussions can arise between students and collections staff during morning tea breaks, waiting for the microwave in the kitchen, or simply standing at the photocopier. Yes, it’s good to be back!

More buzz has also been generated by the **MUSE!** Program, with this year’s events able to be offered for the first time in person. Building on last year’s successful remote program and initiatives, it has been a real thrill to host these events on campus (more on this later).

The previous two years of lockdowns have provided a ‘forced’ reset, so that what previously was seen as commonplace, may now be viewed with fresh eyes. Even walks taken many times before across the campus can be appreciated anew. Positive learnings from the past couple of years have been woven into new routines. Whilst borne out of necessity, the CPP has benefited from offering the Program remotely, and now has been able to utilise these new ways of working into the projects. This in turn, has provided students with more opportunities for participation than ever before, resulting in an enhanced Program better positioned to meet the needs of students, collections, and collections staff.

I am always impressed by the enthusiasm students bring to their projects and the collections. Whether a project is sought for a course internship, voluntarily to develop skills and increase employability, or simply to connect with the campus, their engagement is genuine. Through Program participation and the opportunity to ‘discover’ a collection, a student’s campus experience is enriched and a lively dialogue activated, that will continue to resonate during their University days and beyond.

### The projects

Projects offered this year gave participants the opportunity to hone their skills in the areas of cataloguing and documentation, public programs, exhibition and interpretation, research and preventive conservation.

**Curatorial, research and interpretation projects** provide the opportunity to delve into a particular collection and to share that knowledge with a wider audience. Several students discovered the **Rare East Asian Collection** and communicated their findings in various formats. **Krystin Wu** (Executive Master of Arts) and **Xingyi Wu** (Graduate Diploma Psychology) contributed original curatorial research to the upcoming exhibition **文在兹** (*Here lives our cultures*) to be held in the Noel Shaw Gallery in 2023. Krystin’s focus was Chinese literature, especially in the areas of classical drama, fiction, and other forms of popular literature from Imperial China, while Xingyi’s attention was on Chinese arts, including old master painted scrolls, stone rubbings, calligraphy and prints. **Weng Chi Meila Wong** (Bachelor Arts) was also involved with this exhibition and she assisted in the interpretation and translation of text for object labels and wall panels.



Sarah Fang-Ning Lin and Flora Harpley Green, the curators of the University House exhibition

A curatorial research project with the **Baillieu Library Print Collection** was worked on by **Christina Olszewski** (MA Art Curatorship) who researched additional content for *Circa 1520*, an on-line exhibition which will showcase prints, drawings, books and maps drawn from the Special Collections exploring this time of great cultural and social change. **Kimberley Chung’s** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation) project contributed to the on-line exhibition *Meditations on the Shore*. For her project, she reflected on art works in the Print Collection that feature themes of nature and the ocean and connected them to wellbeing. Also delighting in the opportunity to delve into the Print Collection was **Mira Twigg** (Bachelor of Arts, Honours), whose Louis Kahan research project has enabled her to explore archival sources to better contextualise the significance of the prints within the artist’s oeuvre.

A joint curatorial research project co-hosted by the **Rare East Asian Collection** and **Arts West** offered **Kathy Chen** (MA Art Curatorship) and **Shiqiu Liu** (PhD Arts) the opportunity to create a display in the Arts West building that provided insight into a reproduction Chinese scroll held in the collection. A similar semester two project enabled **Yuexuan Wang** (MA Art Curatorship) and **Tianyu Zhou** (MA Art Curatorship) to complete original curatorial research on a selection of rare and engaging items in the collection which will be featured in an online display. The project allowed them to develop their thematic research skills and gain experience in undertaking high quality referenced research for a practical museum application.



MUSE! Program viewing of the Rare Maps Collection

At **University House** a curatorial project that commenced in 2021, provided **Sarah Fang-Ning Lin** (MA Art Curatorship), and **Flora Harpley Green** (MA Screenwriting) a chance to curate an exhibition for the main dining room. *University House: Witness to Progress - Post War Modernism at the University of Melbourne* coincided with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of University House and was opened by the Vice Chancellor in August. Showcasing collection materials from UMA and the UoM's art collection, the exhibition explored the changing physical landscape of the Parkville campus and considered how architecture of the 1950s and 1960s expressed the ideals and identity of the post-war period.

At the **Medical History Museum**, **Emma Goldstone** (MA Art Curatorship) completed her Arts Industry internship on a fascinating research and interpretation project which involved the Savory and Moore Pharmacy. Emma researched and developed content for an on-line journey exploring the Latin names, historic and current uses of the contents of the 120 herb drawers in the Pharmacy. Also based at the Museum and completing her Arts Industry core placement subject, **Anna Grubel's** (MA Art Curatorship) project enabled her to develop a themed display on medical history at the Australian Medical Association (Victoria) headquarters using the collections. Research focused projects at **International House** provided two students the opportunity to explore its fascinating history and collections. **Levy Perrett** (Bachelor Arts) utilised archival sources to research the history of sport at IH, and focused on the 'trike race', an intercollegiate race held from the mid-1960s to 1984. Meanwhile, **Grace Vanderkolk's** (Bachelor Arts) research project investigated the historical and social significance of the Clunies Ross Wing. The wing was opened in 1957 and was the first accommodation building at International House. The **Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (FEIT) collections** continued to provide unique project experiences. **Victoria Poppins'** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation) research and curatorial project with the Biomedical Collections had her assist with photographing collection items from Cochlear Australia, working with a videographer to film content for a prosthetics display and selecting objects for that display.



Yuzhen Cheng cataloguing volumes in the Ryan Room



Students inspecting the Rare Books Collection

**Cataloguing and documentation projects** are a great way for students to develop essential collection management skills and so proved to be popular. During their placement at the **Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum**, **Beatrix Breneman** (Bachelor of Arts) and **Yue Qi** (MA Art Curatorship) worked with the ADOHTA Collection and completed cataloguing and research. Through the project they gained practical experience in a skills set they were both keen to develop. At Burnley Campus, **Teagan Clough** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation) was involved with a cataloguing and digitisation project where she photographed artefacts from the **Burnley Campus Archives** collection and added them to the collection catalogue. Also at **Burnley**, **Adrian Viglietti's** (MA Arts and Cultural Management) cataloguing project focussed on documenting and contextualising past student work. Adrian found it especially interesting to consider the type of information it is important to capture in the catalogue record. At the **Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology**, **Adele Gehling** (Bachelor Science) and **Yijie Cheng** (Bachelor Science), who was completing the project as her Science and Technology Internship subject, partnered with **Rachel Thomson** (recent graduate Bachelor Science) to work on a cataloguing and documentation project with the Pathology collections. In addition to documenting the specimens they also photographed them for the catalogue. The experience developed their cataloguing skills and confidence in handling objects, while also building on their knowledge of pathology. **Yuji Zou's** (BA Art History, Politics and International Studies) documentation project with the **Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (FEIT) collections**, centred on a collection of 500 photographs taken by Paul Mosig that captured Engineering student campus life in the 1960s which were scanned, uploaded and added to the EMu catalogue. The project subsequently evolved when access to diaries and other related publications was granted, and Yuji is currently producing a series of mini essays of important events of 1960s student engineering life to enrich our understanding of this important collection.

At the **Medical History Museum**, **Rhaine Morgan-McGregor** (MA Art Curatorship) worked on a documentation project and audited the information contained within the published catalogues of objects in the **Medical History Museum**, **Harry Brookes Museum of Anatomy and Pathology** and the **Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum** collections, to ensure that data within the Collections Management System was accurate and reflective of the extensive research. Rhaine also researched the medical instruments and practices for the catalogue. Further listing and documenting projects were undertaken by **Isabelle Kane** (MA Arts and Cultural Management) whose **Victorian College of Arts** project commenced in late 2021 and continued into this year. Isabelle assisted in the digital cataloguing and metadata input for the Digital Film and Television Archive and contributed to a co-authored journal article.

**Julia Luby** (Graduate Diploma in Arts) was based with the **Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (FEIT) collections** where she documented, researched and analysed the cultural and historical significance of a small archive of materials (programs, scripts and production details) related to the *Engineer's Revue*. Encompassing productions that date from 1965-1973, the archive includes materials from esteemed Australian playwright and screenwriter David Williamson. In order to better understand the collection, Julia had to research the politics, film references and social mores of the time. **Claire Cummings** (Bachelor of Science), **Jo Lyn Loo** (Bachelor of Science) and **Jessica Marshall** (Bachelor of Science) worked on a cataloguing project at the **Tiegs Zoology Museum**, and recorded previously undocumented objects within the storage areas. As they learnt these new cataloguing skills, they were also able to apply their scientific knowledge honed through their degrees, to the specimens within the Museum.

At the **Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology**, **Yuzhen Cheng** (MA Art Curatorship) catalogued items from the Ryan Room book collection which comprises 19th and 20th centuries publications that relate primarily to the areas of anatomy, medicine, biological sciences and anthropology. A particularly fascinating aspect for Yuzhen's 'adventure with the books' has been the bookplates and inscriptions within the collection. **Maisie McGregor** (English Literature and History) an exchange student from Trinity College, Dublin, assisted Yuzhen on this project to gain practical experience working with special collections.

A discovery and listing project with the **Architecture, Building and Planning Library's Rare Materials Collection** saw **Sophie Antulov** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation) and **Jessica Hayoung You** (MA Art Curatorship) work with the *Cross Section Collection* which comprises 4000 photographs, negatives, correspondence and papers related to the architectural newsletter. Joining them was **Tianchen Xu** (Bachelor of Design, Honours) who as a student in Architectural History, Theory, and Criticism, was especially keen to explore these rare materials to gain insight and individual perspectives of the formative ideas behind architectural and urban developments. At **International House**, **Paige Spurrell** (MA Arts and Cultural Management) assisted on a collections audit and research project and compiled an inventory of objects held in the **International House Collection** (which included building fragments!) and completed research into the provenance of selected objects.

**Preventive conservation projects** give students an opportunity to explore collections from a different perspective and the **Architecture, Building and Planning Library's Rare Materials Collection** presented the ideal project for **Kate McKay** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation) and **Cate White** (Bachelor of Arts). The pair worked with the collection of 100 rare elephant folios dating from 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1970s, where they analysed, documented, rehoused and relocated the collection. They enjoyed working with these huge volumes and exchanging knowledge from their different discipline backgrounds. Having the two C/Kates working on the same project proved to be a little confusing for me on more than one occasion!

At the **Herbarium**, **Kate Nakashima** (MA Urban Horticulture) completed her Science and Technology Internship on a Discovery and Preventive conservation project with specimens from the Victorian School of Forestry Herbarium. For the project, she accessioned items into the collection, checked their taxonomic nomenclature, imaged the specimens and also mounted and repaired them before rehousing in archival quality materials. Further, an online expedition will be prepared and hosted on the *Atlas of Living Australia* DigiVol platform to enable citizen scientists to engage with the collection via transcription of the collection data on the specimen labels.

**Outreach and engagement projects** provide the opportunity for students to gain skills in how to increase awareness and appreciation of the collections to a wider audience. For her project with the **Rare East Asian Collection**, **Jiayi Sun** (MA Arts and Cultural Management) focussed on the on-line exhibition component for the upcoming exhibition *文在兹 (Here lives our cultures)*. This bilingual exhibition will showcase the breadth of the **Rare East Asian Collection** with an emphasis on Chinese culture. Jiayi assisted with on-line content creation for social media to attract new student audiences, and was fortunate to be able to sit in on a Translation Industry class to workshop her ideas. Jiayi commented that translating the curatorial content into simple and engaging language made her feel as though she was 'a bridge between people and the collections' a very poetic way to look at it!

## The MuSE! Program



After a successful pilot in 2021, the **MuSE!** Program was expanded this year, and for the first time offered events in person, on campus – HOORAY! The Program was developed with the dual objectives of encouraging connectivity between students by offering events and networking opportunities with peers and collections colleagues and supporting professional development by providing additional vocational experiences beyond individual projects.



The 2022 **MuSE!** Program was very well received by students and collections colleagues across the campus, and throughout the year presented an engaging and lively 'extras' program. Highlights included behind-the-scenes tours of Special Collections, the Herbarium and the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology Collections displayed in the new Melbourne Connect Building, exhibition viewings and coffee catch ups.

Professional development opportunities included an **Object Handling** training session, and the entertaining **'Collections Sector Speed dating'** event. During this energetic and informative session students were able to quiz collections staff from across the University about the sector. They had just six minutes with each 'date' before a buzzer sounded and they moved on to the next. Feedback from the session was very positive, with one participant commenting they especially appreciated *'...how open and willing to help the professionals in the field are! I was blown away by how kind and approachable they were'*. We are looking forward to building on the success of this year's **MuSE!** Program to further enhance the student experience.

**MuSE!** Program events, clockwise from top l to r: Behind the scenes Rare Books; Object handling training session; Collections sector 'speed dating'; Herbarium tour; More conversations at Collections sector 'speed dating'.



## International Museums and Collections Award update



The IMAC Award offered since 2010, has provided the opportunity for Award recipients from the Universities of Melbourne and Birmingham to travel to the partner university and participate in a month-long placement with the collections and museums housed there. During past placements, students have been expertly guided by curators, collection managers, librarians, archivists and conservators on specially tailored projects that enabled skills building across the sector within an international context. Due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic on global travel, the IMAC Award was again not able to be offered. While unfortunate, this pause is providing the space to review the original objectives of the Award and to reshape this unique professional development experience for the future – so stay tuned!

## Student voices, project insights

In the musings below, students **Kathy Chen** who worked on a project with the **Rare East Asian Collection** and **Arts West**, and **Victoria Poppins** who completed a placement with the **FEIT Cultural Collections** reflect on their time working the collections.

*I am Kathy, a Master of Art Curatorship student. Having always been interested in East-Asian art, I am delighted to have the opportunity to take the placement in the Curatorial Research Project – Display of Chinese Scrolls. I worked on this project together with another participant, Shiqiu Liu, a PhD candidate, under the guidance of Xiaoju Liu (Senior Librarian, Chinese & Asian Studies, Archives and Special Collections), Dr Olivia Meehan (Object-Based Learning Co-ordinator, Arts Teaching Innovation, Faculty of Arts) and Steve Martin Art (Collection Manager, Arts Teaching and Innovation, Faculty of Arts). Our task in this project was doing research for **Layered Mountains and Dense Woods**, a Chinese scroll by Juran, and writing bilingual labels in English and Chinese for display. Working on this project was an enjoyable experience for me. In the process of research, the knowledge of Chinese art history shared by Shiqiu helped us move forward quickly and smoothly. In the process of label writing, we were given much autonomy and trust in designing the way of writing and the format of the labels. We made several individual small labels to explain the inscriptions on the scroll. For the main label, we used the mode of Q&A in order to reach more audiences. We collected questions from our friends and selected two to be answered on the label. Near the end of the project, we were invited to join the de-installation of the previous work exhibited in the cabinet and the installation of the new work. I was excited to see the “backstage scene” before the artwork went on display. It was such a great lesson during which we were given the opportunity to do some practices under guidance. Thanks to the support and guidance from Xiaoju, Olivia and Steve throughout this project. This Chinese scroll is now on display on the fifth floor of Arts West.*

*Through this project, I have a deeper understanding of the Rare East Asian Collection of UoM. From this opportunity, I learned more knowledge about Chinese art history and gained practical skills in writing labels and the display of artworks. What is most valuable for me is the experience of working in a team for the display of an artwork.*

**Kathy Chen**, MA Art Curatorship 2022



Kathy Chen and Shiqiu Liu with the Chinese scroll in Arts West  
Photo taken by Xiaolin Chen



Victoria Poppins display of some of the FEIT Collections

*In April I commenced an internship at the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology with Dr Richard Gillespie. I came from a cultural materials conservation background but was actually interested in pursuing curation as a career and together we designed a project where I could assist Dr Gillespie with a variety of tasks to better understand what a future in the profession might look like. This included working on exhibitions for the Computer-Assisted Rehabilitation Environment (CAREN) Prosthetics and the Cochlear Corporation where I worked on collections management tasks including cleaning and photography, edited text, assisted with the filming of a video for display and got to help install the exhibits. Another day, I climbed through a wind tunnel designed to test turbulence on aircraft to discuss future options for large but incredibly culturally significant objects.*

*As well as gaining skills in using the collection management software EMu, this internship holistically gave me a greater insight into the varied tasks of a curator and gave me the space to explore wider concepts of significance and writing to an audience. Part of this involved working with clients and contractors to consider the best way to use objects to tell the desired story. A particular highlight for me has been discussing the evolutions of museums in Melbourne and learning about the behind-the-scenes choices for recent exhibitions.*

*Working with the varied collections at the FEIT has broadened my worldview and encouraged me to rethink how science and technology augment our everyday human experiences. I have especially enjoyed seeing archival material about students through the decades engaging in the same university I feel connected to and seeing continuities and change in that experience. I'm grateful for the opportunity to tailor this internship to my interests and needs and am sure that the guidance of Dr Gillespie has profoundly shaped my future professional practice.*

**Victoria Poppins**, Masters of Cultural Materials Conservation 2022

## Year's end

It has been wonderful to be back on campus and see the difference that projects make to student participants. It is especially rewarding to hear accounts of how their project experience has not only enabled the development of new skills, but also built their confidence more broadly. Guided by the ongoing mentoring of collections staff, a student's autonomy on their project work encourages growth in their abilities and decision-making skills, which in turn affirms their professional and self worth as they look ahead to a life beyond the University. To all those that helped make this happen through their involvement and support of the projects, a hearty thank you. Very best wishes for the festive season and year ahead.

**Helen Arnoldi**  
Collections Projects Program Coordinator  
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