

MCPP the year in review: a mutually beneficial experience

The MCPP was established in 2005 for students, alumni and the wider community to meaningfully engage with the University's museums and cultural collections. A catch phrase of the Program since its earliest inception has been to offer a 'mutually beneficial experience' and this tenet has continued to inform its operations. But what does it mean, and why does it remain as important and relevant today? Clearly, the projects are beneficial for participants - students need the opportunity to cultivate vocational skills that complement their studies, and the MCPP projects provide professional skills development and help prepare graduates for future employment. The University also wants its students to have an enriched study experience and be better connected to the campus, and once again the projects are well placed to foster this connection. How then do the MCPP projects benefit the collections and the staff who invest their time to work with students and volunteers? Through the projects, participants contribute to the long-term management, accessibility, interpretation and appreciation of the University's museums and collections and their presence brings an energy and enthusiasm to this space. Their freshness of approach has a positive influence on collections staff. The most successful projects represent a dynamic sharing of ideas, a two-way learning exchange that can have ongoing resonance. Student and volunteer involvement with the collections creates an environment of optimism and connection and many collections staff continue to be mentors for students, while the students remain enthusiastic ambassadors for the collections – a mutually beneficial experience indeed!



IMAC Award recipients Erin Holder (UoB) and Sakina Nomanbhoy (UoM) met up on campus

And now the projects....

This year many students and volunteers participated in the Museums and Collections Projects Program working on a range of projects that navigated areas of collection management, curatorship and public programs. An introduction to the Program's participants and their projects follows, and while grouped in general project types, most of the assignments involved multiple areas of collections work.

Curatorial and exhibition related projects enabled participants to develop professional skills by contributing to different aspects of the exhibition process. For some this involved researching the collections for future exhibitions, while others participated



Emma Mills and one of the prints featured in her exhibition

in the curatorial process from initial planning stages through to installation and opening. **Yuqin Xie** (MA Art Curatorship, UoM), was based with the **Science Gallery's** exhibition *DISPOSABLE* where she assisted on various collection management tasks related to the development and instalment of the show. **Tanya Brain** (recent graduate MA Production Design for Screen, VCA) contributed to a project with the **School of Chemistry Collection** developing a proposal for a display which will explore the 150th anniversary of the Periodic Table and the recreation of a laboratory space. **Susannah Britt** (graduate MA Art Curatorship, UoM) researched the collections in the **Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum** to be used in the upcoming exhibition *Dentistry: Discovery, Education and Innovation* which celebrates 135 years of the Victorian Odontological Society. At the **Ian Potter Museum of Art**, **Shiqui Liu** (PhD Art History, UoM) and **Nell Fraser** (BA Art History, ANU) researched, gathered relevant materials and wrote brief texts on selected works from the University Art Collection contributing to an exhibition scheduled for late 2020

at the Museum. At the **Print Collection**, **Mary Henkel** (BA Hons. Art History, UoM) assisted with research for *Horizon Lines*, an exhibition currently on display in the Noel Shaw Gallery. Over at the Burnley campus, **Meg Hibbert** (graduate MA Cultural Heritage, Deakin) used the **Burnley Campus Archives** to co-curate *The Roots of Burnley*, an exhibition which offers visitors an insight into the unique history of the site. Two curatorial projects were undertaken at **University House** - **Mona Mi** (MA Art Curatorship, UoM) curated *Life in a Floating World: Japanese Ukiyo-e* at the Woodward Centre, and **Emma Mills** (BA Hons. Art History/Ancient World Studies, UoM) curated *Imagined Horizons – expansion, enchantment and exploitation: Dutch Golden Age maps and prints in the University of Melbourne's Cultural Collections* an exhibition in the Main Dining Room.

Cataloguing is a key area of collection management, and these projects again were a popular choice. At the **Tiegs Zoology Museum**, **Gabrielle Callan** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) and **Alicia Doddy** (BSc. Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, UoM) catalogued specimens (which first they had to identify!), recorded their labels and then rehoused them. **Justin Croft** (MA Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies, Deakin) catalogued items in the **Survey and Geomatics Engineering Collection**. Working at the **Medical History Museum**, **Sophie Ellis** (graduate MA Arts Management, RMIT and UoM alumni), **Sophia Booij** (BA Ancient World Studies and History, UoM), **Julia Catania** (BA and Dip. languages, UoM), **Marita Hanrahan** (Diploma Museum Studies, Deakin) and **Maddie Moustakis** (MA Art Curatorship, UoM) catalogued a selection of recently gifted items to the Museum.

At the **Grainger Museum**, **Ying-Ti Lee** (graduate MA Gallery Studies/Critical Thinking, Uni. Of Essex, U.K) catalogued Percy Grainger's published music cover designs. She found it a fascinating experience as it gave insight into Grainger's creative process from concept through to completed design. **Lia Sumichan** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) continued her cataloguing and rehousing project with the **School of Chemistry Collection** with a focus on the supplementary materials. At the **Ian Potter Museum of Art**, **Katherine Topp** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) catalogued the Yvonne Aitkin Collection which comprises of preparatory sketches and watercolours of landscapes, flora and fauna. She documented the condition of the artworks, photographed and then updated them on EMu and enjoyed being able to inspect the beautiful works close hand!

Preventative conservation projects are important as they support the long-term preservation of the collections. At the **Herbarium**, **Gael**



Emma Dacey and Sunita Lewis rehousing the Zimmer Collection

Campbell-Young (Botanist) rehoused, documented and updated the botanical nomenclature of the specimens in the Zimmer Collection on to the catalogue. **Emma Dacey** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) and **Sunita Lewis'** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) project with the **Rare Books Collection** saw them rehouse and list the Jenny Zimmer files of Australian art ephemera. At the **Grainger Museum**, **Catherine Gill** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM), **Lisa Mansfield** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM), **Kate Ritchie** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM), **Daniel Schwartz** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) and **Katrina Watson** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) participated in a REORG project, where they applied this recognised methodology to improve the management of the collection storage areas. The end result enabled available space to be better utilised while the collection was stored to the highest conservation standards. Also at the **Grainger Museum**, **Gadis Fitriana Putri** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) assisted with a conservation survey project that analysed the modern synthetic polymers in the textile collections. Meanwhile **Sharon Wong** (PhD Arts, Conservation, UoM) continued rehousing the hat collection where she documented, condition reported and made supports for these vulnerable collection items. **Constantina Iacovou** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) worked on a rehousing and inventory project with the **Property and Campus Services Photographic Collection**. She

documented the collection, removed the photographic prints from their original housings and transferred them to archival quality sleeves. Constantina found her project professionally rewarding for it enabled her to build confidence in managing a large rehousing project - useful skills to develop as she approached the end of her degree.

Communications, public programs and audience development projects provide participants with the opportunity to develop vocational skills in this highly marketable area of collections work. **Victor Tang** (MA Marketing Communications, UoM) was placed with the **Science Gallery** where he focussed on the digital marketing of the *DISPOSABLE* exhibition. His tasks included social media content creation and event promotion, and through the project Victor gained insight into the issues involved in marketing a high-profile exhibition. **Ana Jacobson** (MA Creative Writing, UoM) researched and wrote posts for the **Special Collections** and **Grainger Museum** blog. These blogs explored interesting aspects of the collections and promoted them to wider audiences. **Jenna Schroder** (MA Arts and Cultural Management, UoM) concentrated on audience development and she explored ways to attract new audiences to the exhibitions, programs and activities of the **Grainger Museum**. **Heting Huang** (MA Art Curatorship, UoM) continued with her web enhancement project with the **Property and Campus Services Photographic Collection**.

Research and interpretation projects enable students and volunteers to explore the cultural collections in greater depth and then circulate their discoveries to audiences through blogposts, exhibitions, displays, catalogue entries and public programs. **Imogen Colton** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM) was involved in a fascinating research project with the **Old Quad** where she documented the key research findings that had surfaced from the recent architectural restoration of the building and the conservation of its heritage furniture. This research will contribute to the reading of this historically significant building. **Jaye Cooke** (MA Urban and Cultural Heritage, UoM) also delved into the history of the Old Quad and investigated its cultural history which will contribute to future interpretation of the building. **Si Chen** (BSc Mechatronics Systems, UoM) worked closely with the collection of 19th century kinematic models from the **Mechanical Engineering Collection**. The models have been cleaned and repaired to working order so the function of each machine can be better understood. Further research will be carried out to discover how they were previously used in Engineering classes and this will aid interpretation of the objects for future display.



Imogen Colton with the historic council chamber furniture in Old Quad

Sorcha Delahunty (MA Arts and Cultural Management, UoM) recently commenced with the **Print Collection** and will investigate a 17th century drawing and her research findings will be added to the EMu catalogue. Also at the **Print Collection**, **Rachel Grand** (BA Art History - Study Abroad Program from Bryn Mawr College, PA USA) studied a 17th century drawing of the *Adoration*. Through her research she explored the attribution of the work and whether it was a preparatory drawing for a large-scale oil painting. **Jasmine Penman** (MA Art Curatorship, UoM) also worked on a **Print Collection** project and identified, researched and wrote labels for Harold Wright's glass lantern slides in preparation for the *Horizon Lines* exhibition; the slides were then digitised and used in a restaging of a Harold Wright lecture. At **University House**, **Charles French** (graduate MA Art Curatorship, UoM) researched the **Matthaei Glass Collection** and his findings will contribute to an upcoming brochure on the collection. **Gabby Grech** (BA Law/Arts, Monash) completed research on some of the more significant items in the **Law Rare Books Collection** increasing knowledge on these volumes and informing a management plan eg. which items to prioritise for conservation treatments. Also working with the Law Collection, **Roxane Leguen** (Librarian) completed research into the significance of the volumes in the Malcolm Fraser Collection which will be used for interpretation and promotion of the collection. **Frances Robson** (MA Museums and Heritage Studies, UoS) researched and documented an early 20th century photographic album in the **Electrical Engineering Collection**. She also identified the UoM Engineering students featured in



Conservation student Constantina Iacovou examines works in the PCS Photographic Collection

the album and commenced preliminary research into the first female graduate from the Department of Engineering to be used in a future exhibition. At the **Harry Brookes Allen Museum of Anatomy and Pathology**, **Katharina Stracke** (PhD Walter and Eliza Hall Institute) studied and identified a selection of fossilised skeletal specimens from the Frederic Wood Jones comparative anatomy collection. At the **Grainger Museum**, **Regitze Pihl** (MA Educational Sociology, Denmark) utilised her Danish language skills to explore, assess and translate materials in the Karen Holten Correspondence archive. **Conna Speelmann** (graduate BA Hons, UoM) assisted in an inventory of the materials in the Garrett Collection in the **East Asian Rare Book Collection**. The recent gift comprises of more than 300 books, magazines, ceramic figurines, films and posters that relate to the Cultural Revolution in China, and Conna's project will aid in the long-term management of this unique and important collection. **Maria Costa** (MA Arts and Cultural Management, UoM) continued her research into the **Burnley Campus Archives** which comprises of materials that date back to the 19th century including the College's official records, photographs, maps, plans, films and artefacts. Her research will help inform a significance assessment.

Archival documentation, inventory and digitisation projects contribute to the discoverability of and access to the collections.

Michael Adams (Grad. Dip. Museums Studies, Deakin) and **Kate Finn** (Dip. Library and Information Studies, Swinburne) were based with **University of Melbourne Archives** where they developed on-line subject guides for a selection of the collections which included the Antarctic polar exploration, literary, film, medicine and peace movement. Once available the new, dynamic guides will become an accessible and user-friendly entry point for researchers into the vast collections of the UMA. **Meenah Harrison** (BA Lib. Corp. Info Management, Curtin) also at the **UMA**, continued her archival project working with the audio-visual material in the Susan Hawthorne and Paul Ormonde Archive. **Emily Bramich** (MA Cultural Materials Conservation, UoM), **Ella Rohde-Condon** (Senior Collection Librarian, Latrobe University) and **Coral Guan** (BA Art History, UoM) worked on an inventory project with the Parkes Postcard Collection within the **Rare Materials Collection** of the **Architecture, Building and Planning Library**. The Parkes Collection comprises of several thousand black and white postcards of European architecture and their project work will contribute to the eventual digitisation of the postcards. At the **Harry Brookes Allen Museum**, **Tian Du** (BSc. Neuroscience, UoM), **Deeksha Verma** (BSc. Human Structure and Function, UoM), **Lea Haralabopoulos** (Dr of Medicine, UoM) and **Theoni Haralabopoulos** (Dr of Medicine, UoM) have assisted with an audit of the museum's storage areas. This project will help facilitate access to the collection and assist in its ongoing preservation. At the **VCA's School of Film and Television Digital Archive**, **Max Kenyon** (BA Applied Science, RMIT) and **Mitchell King** (BA Philosophy and Politics, UoM) have contributed to the Digital Archive project that is documenting the School's archive of student film prints, tapes and materials. At the **Law Rare Books Collection**, **Sally Malamas** (recent graduate MA Art Curatorship, UoM) continued her project with the George Paton Collection where she created a bibliography and identified titles of significance and those eligible for digitisation.

International Museums and Collections Award - comings and goings

The IMAC Award this year enabled two student recipients, one from UoM and one from UoB, to participate in this unique development opportunity where they travelled to the other side of the globe and worked on projects with the host university's museums and collections. Earlier in the year **Sakina Nomanbhoy**, completing her Honours in Art History, journeyed to the University of Birmingham and spent a month working with their cultural collections. In July, Melbourne hosted **Erin Holder** a History student from the University of Birmingham. Through their specially tailored programs they worked on a variety of projects across collection types and developed new skills, built on existing areas of interest and extended their professional networks. In the extracts below, Sakina and Erin reflect on their respective Award experiences.

Reflections on a month at the University of Birmingham

As I sit and reflect on my time in Birmingham, I am still puzzled by how quickly it all came and went. Each day introduced me to something new and exciting. At Winterbourne House and Garden I thoroughly enjoyed being amongst the museum's living collection. I was tasked with cataloguing and researching information [and] I was given the opportunity to sit on a project development meeting where I learnt how Winterbourne was making changes to become more relevant. My learning continued during my placement with the Cadbury Research Library, which took me on an exploration of the vast archives and collections. I got the opportunity to study and handle books from the Mingana Collection, which comprises of 3,000 Middle Eastern manuscripts. It was truly incredible reading through and deciphering numerous Arabic tomes, each uniquely different from the next. The manuscripts were not only distinct in content but also in physicality with some having traditional book bindings and others existing as scrolls.



Sakina Nomanbhoy working with the collections at University of Birmingham

My placement with the Barber Institute of Fine Art saw the continuation of my learning and development. I learnt how to conduct LUX and UV tests, ensuring that the temperature and humidity of the galleries were perfect. I also improved my research and art handling skills ... I was tasked with creating a proposal for an upcoming exhibition, one, which focused on the words in artworks. Whilst the brainstorming stage of this project was extremely exciting, I learnt an immense amount when studying old exhibition proposals. It gave me some insight into the requirements of these proposals and helped guide my thought process. [At] the Research and Cultural Collections I helped in condition checks, art handling, painting walls, cataloguing and photographing objects, the facilitation of workshops as well as the de-installation and installation of exhibitions. Although they were all equally remarkable, my contribution to the installation of the exhibition, "Moonstrip Empire News" Eduardo Paolozzi was my favourite. It involved electrifying colours and unique wall hangings, mannequins made of plaster and letters from the artist. ...I enthusiastically engaged in painting walls pink, raptly listened to the curatorial plan and very eagerly helped in the eventual hanging of over 100 Paolozzi prints.

The experiences gave me the opportunity to think and reflect, helping me reaffirm my love for art and even igniting an interest in contemporary art. It made me think about the future and about where I wanted to be. The internship was a wondrous exploration into a fascinating new world, one that was a mix of contemporary art, tinkling laughs, warm chats, lots of colour and an irreplaceable uniqueness. I learnt an enormous amount...the skills that I developed, the interests that I piqued and the people that I met are memories that are irreplaceable.

Sakina Nomanbhoy, April 2019

Musings on the University of Melbourne experience

I applied for the Universitas 21 International Museums and Collections Award, because it offered the opportunity to participate in different facets of the cultural collections and collections management at the University of Melbourne. [It] seemed especially valuable as I would be able to link them up with my previous experiences and the very real impact the work has on visitor experience. Furthermore, I applied in order to gain an international point of view and for the opportunities U21 gives for networking both among students and professionals in the field.



UoB student Erin Holder with the Print Collection

I completed four different projects during my time at the University of Melbourne, each in a different area of the collections of the University; Baillieu Print Library – cataloguing a collection of Louis Kahan Prints and Drawings as well as writing a blog post about an element of the Horizon Lines Exhibition; University of Melbourne Archives – cataloguing part of the Archives' holdings of George Tibbits' Papers; Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation – an introduction to Conservation. I spent a week in each of the laboratories (objects, paintings and works on paper) and then in the last week worked a little in each of them; Grainger Museum - organising the personal library of Percy Grainger by the Dewey Decimal System and helping a researcher with examining the clothing collection of Percy Grainger. From each I was able to gain an invaluable insight into a different area of collections management as well as learning about a different set of histories and stories from the fascinating and diverse collections of the University. It was also very satisfying to finish each project as I was able to see a tangible end result and to recommend the impact that my projects would have on the collections of the University and the users of the Archives in the future.

Working with the collections allowed me to learn something about many different aspects of collections management and about a different set of histories/new stories. I also learnt collections management skills as well as deepening my knowledge of the sector including issues that are currently affecting it. These included

the definition of best practice, funding concerns, the role of object-based-learning in universities today and the issue of decolonising collections. These will all be invaluable in the future as I hope to eventually follow a career in collections management and the heritage sector.

Erin Holder, October 2019

Year's end

As the year starts to wind down and thoughts turn to summer holidays, it is a good time to acknowledge the achievements of Program participants and the collections staff who have supported them on their projects. This positive partnership creates a vibrant and lively environment which contributes to learning, enriches the campus experience and champions the University's museums and collections. Thank you to all who have been involved with the collections and projects this year. Best wishes for the festive season and year ahead.

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