

2005–2006

Annual Report

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies



AIATSIS
Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

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Front cover photos: Brewarrina community
members inspect images from the After 200
Years project during a visit to the town by
AIATSIS Community Access Staff.
[Middle] Audiovisual trainees Michael Weir
and Adam Ship working at the audio desk.

Photos of AIATSIS Chairperson, Principal and
remaining Councillors, David Coltman, AIATSIS.

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The Institute logo is taken from
a Gu:na:ni (Kunjen) shield from
the Mitchell River region, Gulf
of Carpentaria. The shield was
purchased by Ursula McConnel
in the early 1930s on behalf of the Australian
National Research Council and is now part of
the AIATSIS Collection.



AIATSIS
Australian Institute of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Executive
Fax: 02 6261 4286

Worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present

8 September 2006

The Hon. Julie Bishop, MP
Minister for Education, Science and Training
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

In accordance with the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997, I am pleased to submit the annual report on the operations of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for 2005–06.

Councillors are responsible, under Section 9 of the above Act, for the preparation of this report. The report is made in accordance with a resolution of the Councillors.

Prof. Michael Dodson, AM
Chairperson of Council

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report continues the direction taken in the last two years' reports, in reflecting outputs as they relate to our goals across the organisation, rather than by an individual program area. The goals are listed in the overview chapter, which identifies the main program areas that implement them.

The Chairperson's and Principal's contributions together provide a snapshot of the Institute's achievements and challenges throughout the year under review.

Some of the appendices found in previous annual reports can now be viewed instead on the AIATSIS website. We would welcome your feedback on this year's annual report. Please contact:

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CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Prof. Mick Dodson, AM



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are a precious part of Australia's national heritage. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, through its research, its publications and its collections, plays a pivotal role in the preservation of these cultures, and in sharing them with the nation and with the world. Looking back on the year under review I am indeed proud of the achievements of the AIATSIS community: its Council members, staff, Institute members, contributors, donors and the very many groups who have enhanced its endeavours during the year.

There have been important changes on our Council. The terms of Professor Larissa Behrendt and Professor Martin Nakata finished and they did not seek a further term. A new member, Professor John Maynard, joined the Council. Emeritus Professor Bob Tonkinson, Mr Michael Williams and I were re-elected. I thank the retiring members for their very valuable contributions to the work of AIATSIS and congratulate Professor Maynard and my fellow re-elected members.

Ours is a skills Council, one to which people are appointed or elected on the basis of their contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies rather than as representatives of particular constituencies. AIATSIS has benefited greatly from the skill and dedication of its individual Council members over the years.

Once again I acknowledge an exceptional effort by the staff of AIATSIS. Their professionalism and the high quality of their output are greatly valued by the Council and they have continued to maintain and enhance the reputation of the Institute. We are very fortunate to have such talented staff, and our investment in them will continue to pay dividends down the track.

There are challenges ahead. The major injection of funds for our digitisation program has meant over 20 new staff have joined the Institute, but it has also led to increased demand on our services. Resource challenges will need to be met. While digitisation significantly increases our ability to meet the access needs of our stakeholders, particularly our Indigenous stakeholders, the challenge is to secure ongoing support for this work, which will grow as the Institute continues to acquire more cultural property. The current three-year

program will see the digitisation of only a portion of the present collection. To remain relevant to our communities, we need to ensure that this work can continue well into the future.

In the longer term we will need to address the issue of space for our collections and for our ongoing research, dissemination and curatorial work.

The increased demand for our services in part has taken the form of demands for partnerships with other organisations, including the private sector. At the same time the changing policy and administrative environment in which we work has increased the demand from our stakeholders for AIATSIS to provide leadership in public policy development. We are able to make a contribution in this area through our research, and in particular through our research grants program. The Council has strongly supported our efforts in encouraging and nurturing Indigenous initiatives in research.

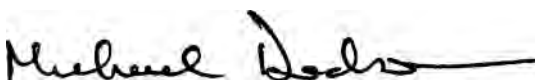
I have mentioned the continuing growth in our collections, and this year we had some notable acquisitions. These included the papers of Aboriginal playwright, the late Jack Davis, including drafts of his plays, and a copy of *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes*, the historic illustrated account of the Baudin expedition to the Pacific in 1800. Dr Betty Meehan deposited a collection of over 2,000 photographs from the personal archives of the late Emeritus Professor Rhys Jones, including images from archaeological sites and Indigenous communities where Professor Jones worked over three decades.

These and the many other valuable donations and acquisitions received over the years make ours an exceptional collection.

Another development of note has been the increased distribution and publicity achieved by the publishing arm of AIATSIS, Aboriginal Studies Press, resulting in a significant increase in revenue from sales.

I wish to pay tribute to our Minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, and to the Department of Education, Science and Training for their support during the year. We enjoy very good relations with the Minister and her advisers, and between our officers and the senior staff of the Department.

In conclusion I wish to say that it is a great honour to be Chair and to serve on the Council of AIATSIS, and a privilege to have the level of support that I, and my fellow Council members, receive.



Professor Michael Dodson, AM
Chairperson

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Mr Steve Larkin



The clear message emerging from the pages of this report, in my view, is that the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is punching well above its weight. We need to, because the tasks we are undertaking are potentially immense, and are growing in scope.

The output of AIATSIS during the past year has been remarkable. We have continued, and indeed have built on, a level of quality performance and resource management of which our relatively small agency can be proud. This has been achieved across the board—in our extensive research activities; in our publishing, both academic and cultural; in our corporate governance; and in the development, conservation and utilisation of our extensive collections for the benefit of our far-flung stakeholder communities.

We remain Australia's premier research institution and cultural resource collection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, our very success has resulted in pressures that are straining our existing resources. We must ensure that as demand for our products and services continues to increase, our level of output remains sustainable. Our commercialisation policy is an important element of this strategy.

The AIATSIS Digitisation Program (ADP) was officially launched during the year. For institutions such as ours, digitisation is the way of the future, and in the past year we have laid the foundations for sustained activity in that direction. While generous, the three-year funding we have received for this project will enable us to finalise digital copies of less than half our present collections. And those collections are growing rapidly.

At the same time our involvement and output in this field has drawn the interest of other collecting institutions, which are keen to participate in the project. We are negotiating memorandums of understanding with several peer organisations to ensure that their interest in and access to our collections can be facilitated without adverse budgetary implications for us. We value the interest and collaboration of these important national institutions and look forward to continued cooperation with them.

The challenge now is to ensure ongoing support for these vital tasks. The government's investment in the digitisation program can only be fully realised if ongoing funding is assured well into the future.

Digitisation allows us to fulfil our important role of returning our collections to the communities to which they belong. It ensures that while fragile original images, recordings and cultural artefacts are kept in safe custody, their content is available to the descendants of the original owners, often for use in their own country.

Another key aspect of this project is the training opportunities it provides. This year, seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees have been given an opportunity to acquire the technical and administrative skills associated with the digitisation program. This education will pay dividends in making cultural materials more widely available to our communities in decades to come.

Our trainees also represent the future of the Institute as potential leaders in their field. This is particularly the case in these technical areas, where there has been a dearth of suitably qualified Indigenous people.

The AIATSIS research program has completed another highly productive year, advancing or completing a large range of projects of vital importance to the core work of the Institute and to the interests of our stakeholders. A positive report by the National Research Priorities Standing Committee in February 2006 commended our research program and noted that the primary focus of research funded by AIATSIS is, and should be, research that promotes the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.

There was a gratifyingly high level of successful Indigenous participation in the competitive Research Grants Program, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers involved in well over half of all applications and in the funding awarded, which totalled \$680,000.

Among our many notable research achievements was the completion of Dr Jane Anderson's major draft report, *Intellectual property and Indigenous knowledge: access, ownership and control of cultural materials*. In addition to a significant research report, the project produced guidelines on the legal implications of intellectual property (IP) for cultural institutions and a framework for protocols for IP and Indigenous communities.

The Native Title Research Unit's (NTRU) Indigenous Facilitation and Mediation Project completed a highly successful three-year program of research and activities. The NTRU joined with the Northern Land Council in staging the annual Native Title Conference, this year in Darwin. The conference attracted record registrations and sponsorship.

Negotiations are under way on a number of important agreements with academic institutions. Examples include a memorandum of understanding with the Australian National University (ANU), which will facilitate information

exchange, collaboration on projects and postgraduate supervision between AIATSIS and the ANU; and an action plan being negotiated with Charles Darwin University for collaboration on several areas of research, including governance, intellectual property and education.

My sincere thanks are extended to the Chair and members of the AIATSIS Council, to our staff and to the many other communities and individuals who contributed to an exceptional year of achievement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Larkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "L".

Mr Steve Larkin
Principal

OVERVIEW



AIATSIS at a glance

- the world's leading research, collecting and publishing institution in the field of Australian Indigenous Studies
- a network comprising a Council and committees, members, staff and other stakeholders in urban, regional and remote areas throughout Australia, and abroad
- a community working in partnership with Indigenous Australians to carry out tasks that acknowledge, affirm and raise awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories, in all their richness and diversity
- a team with a vision of worldwide knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous cultures, past and present
- a staff of over 120 people, headed by the Principal, engaged in a range of endeavours of interest to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, scholars and the Australian and international public
- a research team conducting high-quality research and administering research grants for significant projects approved by Council
- a prestigious publisher, Aboriginal Studies Press, producing an extensive array of books, CDs, films, videos, reports and the Institute's journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*
- a Library and Audiovisual Archive managing the world's most extensive collections of printed, audio and visual materials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and societies
- an accessible source of abundant information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, retrievable by Internet, mail, telephone or email, or by arranging to visit the headquarters on Acton Peninsula in Canberra.

The Council



Professor Mick Dodson, AM (Chair) is a prominent advocate on issues affecting Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as other Indigenous peoples around the world. He was Australia's first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. He is currently the Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at the Australian National University, the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and a Director of Dodson, Bauman & Associates Pty Ltd, legal and anthropological consultants. He holds a Bachelor of Jurisprudence and a Bachelor of Laws from Monash University, an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Technology and an honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University of New South Wales.

Emeritus Professor Robert Tonkinson (Deputy Chair) held the Chair of Anthropology at the University of Western Australia until his retirement in 2003. He is well known internationally in his field of social anthropology for his contributions to the Aboriginal Australian and Melanesian literature. He has worked with Aboriginal people since 1962 and he has published extensively, especially on Western Desert society and culture. His closest links are with the Martu people in the eastern Pilbara, with whom he has been involved for forty years. A Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, he holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) and a Master of Arts from the University of Western Australia and a PhD in Anthropology from the University of British Columbia.





Mr Eric Bedford has strong family and cultural links throughout the Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. He was previously the Chairman of the Malarabah Regional Council and Executive Director of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre. He has been active in developing concepts and models for regional autonomy for Aboriginal people to enable communities to exercise their right to self-determination, and in promoting economic development projects in the Fitzroy Valley.

Ms Jackie Huggins, AM is Deputy Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland, a Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and a Director of the Telstra Foundation. Her work spans university, government and community activities. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Queensland, and a Diploma of Education and honours degree in history and women's studies from Flinders University.



Ms Natascha McNamara, AM, MBE has had a distinguished career in Aboriginal education. She is extensively involved across a broad spectrum of public life in both the Aboriginal and mainstream communities, with many and varied interests including the media and the international domain. She holds a Bachelor of Business Studies, a Diploma in Teaching and a Diploma in Business Administration.

Ms Raymattja Marika is the Teacher Linguist at the Yirkala Community Education Centre, and is on the Board of Directors of Reconciliation Australia. She has a long involvement with issues relating to Aboriginal education and is the author of some twenty papers covering a range of topics in the areas of education, history and ethnobotany. She is a Rirratjingu woman and speaks Rirratjingu, Gumatj and English. She holds a Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training from the University of Melbourne, and an Advanced Diploma of Teaching (Primary) and a Certificate of Literacy Attainment from Batchelor College, Northern Territory.





Professor John Maynard is Chair of Aboriginal Studies and Head of Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle. His traditional roots lie with the Worimi people of Port Stephens, New South Wales. He has held several important fellowships including the Aboriginal History Stanner Fellowship for 1996 at the Australian National University and the New South Wales Premier's Indigenous History Fellowship for 2003–04.

He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Australian Historical Association 2000–02 and has worked with and within many urban, rural and remote Aboriginal communities. He is the author of four books, including *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf*. He holds a Diploma of Aboriginal Studies from the University of Newcastle, a Bachelor of Arts from the University of South Australia and a PhD from the University of Newcastle.

Mr Michael Williams is the Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit at the University of Queensland. He is a member of the Goorang Goorang Aboriginal community from south-east Queensland. He has been involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for over thirty years. For the greater part of his career, he has worked in the tertiary education sector, lecturing in mainstream history and maintaining a close involvement with programs that provide support for Indigenous Australian students. His academic interests include Indigenous language use, cross-cultural communication and the field of Indigenous knowledge. He has served on the Board of the Special Broadcasting Service, and numerous other government, academic and community boards concerned with Indigenous and non-Indigenous issues. He holds an MPhil (Qual) from Griffith University.



Table 1 sets out the Council meetings held during the financial year and the number of meetings attended by each councillor. Information about the term of each Council member is provided in Chapter 4.

Table 1: Attendance at council meetings

Name	Meetings eligible to attend	Meetings attended
Professor M Dodson, AM	4	4
Emer. Prof. R Tonkinson	4	3
Mr E Bedford	4	4
Professor L Behrendt*	3	1
Ms J Huggins, AM	4	3
Ms R Marika	4	4
Ms N McNamara, AM, MBE	4	4
Professor John Maynard	1	1
Professor M Nakata*	1	0
Mr M Williams	4	4

* Professors Behrendt and Nakata finished their terms on the Council and did not seek a further term.

Functions

The functions of the Institute, as set out in Part 3, Section 5, of the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989* are:

- to undertake and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- to publish the results of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to assist in the publication of the results of such studies
- to conduct research in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and to encourage other people or bodies to conduct such research
- to assist in training people, particularly Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, as research workers in fields relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- to establish and maintain a cultural resource collection consisting of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- to encourage understanding, in the general community, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies
- such other functions as are conferred on the Institute by this Act, and
- to do anything else that is incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the preceding functions.

Corporate goals

To carry out its functions as defined in the Act, the Institute has adopted the following goals:

1. to provide leadership and excellence in promoting, facilitating and undertaking high-quality research in Australian Indigenous Studies
2. to maximise the role of Australian Indigenous peoples in the activities and services of the Institute
3. to develop, maintain and preserve well-documented archives and collections, and to maximise access to these, particularly by Indigenous peoples, in keeping with appropriate cultural and ethical practices
4. to create, develop and disseminate a diverse range of publications and services about Australian Indigenous cultures
5. to develop and maintain strategic alliances that add value to our activities
6. to manage efficiently and effectively in a transparent, accountable and supportive manner
7. to promote and market the products, services and capacity of AIATSIS.

Corporate goals 2, 5 and 7 are implemented by all program areas of AIATSIS. Goal 1 is specific to the Research Program, goal 3 to the Library and Audiovisual programs, goal 4 relates primarily to the dissemination program (Aboriginal Studies Press), and goal 6 to Corporate Services.

Outcome and outputs structure

There has been no change to the Institute's outcome and output structure during 2005–06.

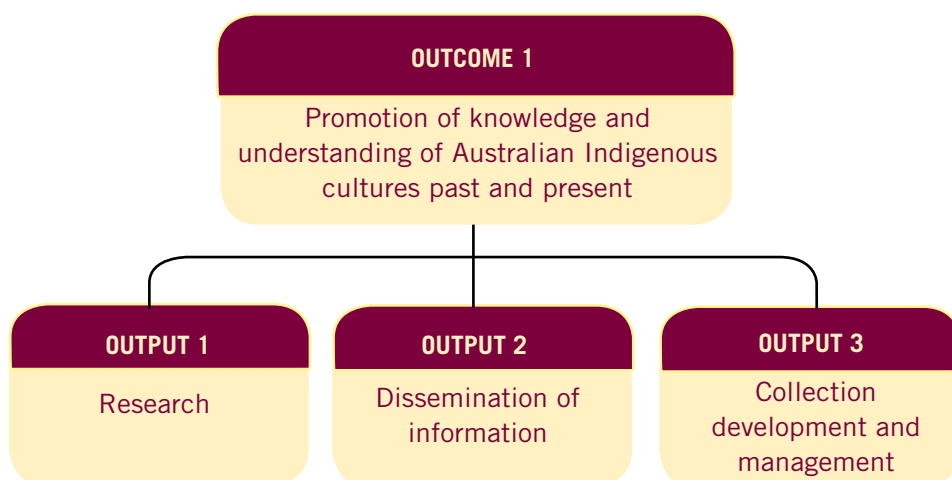


Figure 1: Outcome and output structure

Organisational structure

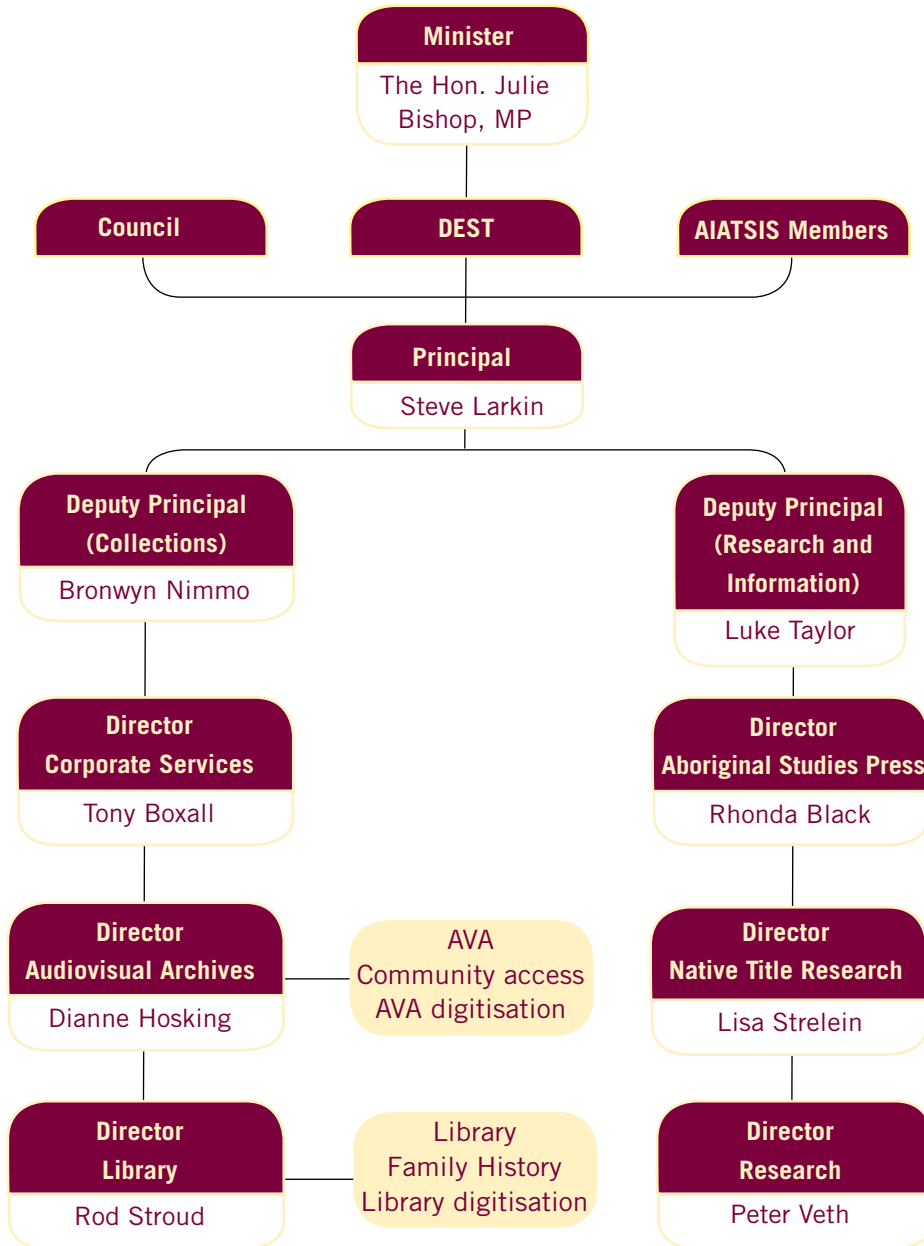


Figure 2: AIATSIS Organisational structure

The Executive ensures the smooth transition of Council directives through to the business plans of AIATSIS programs. The Council-appointed Principal is responsible for the organisation's performance and advises Council on all operational matters. The Principal is assisted by the Deputy Principal, Collections, and Deputy Principal, Research and Information. These senior executive staff are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all Council's policy and budget directives are implemented. They are also responsible for maintaining high-level relationships with the organisation's stakeholders and for program directors' performance. Executive staff assist Council and its committee meetings, liaise with the AIATSIS members, develop the organisation's media profile, and facilitate senior AIATSIS staff meetings, including those of the Executive Board of Management.

The Research Program undertakes multi-disciplinary research, sometimes collaboratively, in diverse areas of Australian Indigenous Studies. It also contributes to policy formulation in priority areas. In addition, the Research Program supports Australian Indigenous Studies, teaching and trainee researchers, and publishes widely in print and via the AIATSIS website. It holds seminars, workshops and conferences and has established a comprehensive set of ethical research protocols. The Native Title Research Unit addresses specific needs arising from the recognition of native title. The Research Program administers the Institute's research grants program and supports the Institute in providing training, facilities and support for Indigenous trainee researchers and visiting and honorary scholars.

Corporate Services supports other programs by providing financial, personnel, information technology and building management services. It is also responsible for ensuring that good practices in risk management and business planning are followed by the Institute.

The Library contains one of the most comprehensive collections of print materials on Australian Indigenous Studies in the world. Through the AIATSIS website, remote users can access the Library's catalogue, online exhibitions and electronic documents. The Library also provides document delivery, interlibrary loans and reference services to all. The Family History Unit can assist any Indigenous Australians with their family history research.

The Audiovisual Archive holds almost one million items comprising photographic images, works of art, artefacts, audio, film and video in many different formats. The role of the Archive is to ensure the safety and longevity of the materials, and to constantly migrate the information onto the latest technologies so that the material remains accessible for future generations of Australians.

Aboriginal Studies Press (ASP) publishes up to ten new titles annually in the area of Indigenous Studies. Academic books include history, anthropology, archaeology, land rights and native title, health, education, languages and art, while general books include biography, autobiography and community stories. ASP publishes in print, sometimes with CD-ROMs. It is selectively moving into electronic publishing. ASP is the publisher of the best-selling *Aboriginal Australia Map* and, with the Research Program, publishes the journal *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. ASP runs a bookshop within AIATSIS and uses national and international trade distributors.

Social justice and equity

AIATSIS is committed to social justice and equity. It has constituted committees and has a policy to maximise the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Institute's membership, governance, staff and functions. Provision is made in the Institute's Act for the Council to have a majority (five out of nine) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. Since November 2002 there have been eight Council members in this category. At 30 June 2006, forty-one of the Institute's 122 staff were Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders.

One of the greatest contributions that the Institute makes to social justice in general terms is its wide dissemination of information on Indigenous Australians resulting from research. It does this through publishing; through its journal, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*; through seminars, and by answering requests for information.

The AIATSIS collections are open to all for reference and research. Some material is restricted because it is culturally sensitive or because donors or stakeholders have requested that access be limited. These restrictions are largely driven by considerations of social justice and equity.