

## Collection development and management

### HIGHLIGHTS

The Mura® collections web interface was completely redeveloped to increase its usefulness and make it easier to access. The AIATSIS thesaurus was also upgraded to allow for more effective browsing of collections.

A total of 188 collections were donated to the Audiovisual Archive. These included 1,487 audio recordings, 8,399 photographic images, and 720 moving image items dating from the early 1900s to the present day.

Rare technical equipment was acquired and repaired to enable the preservation of collection material on obsolete media. Archive staff designed and implemented a number of innovative technical solutions.

The AIATSIS Digitisation Program continued the digital preservation of collections, but with reduced staffing and fewer equipment purchases.

The Library focused on the digitisation of historical royal commissions and inquiries into Indigenous issues.

Over a thousand audiovisual items were received from the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, and other Indigenous organisations, for long-term conservation.

## ABOUT THE COLLECTIONS

One of the Institute's goals is to develop, maintain and preserve well-documented archives and collections, and to maximise access to these materials, particularly by Indigenous peoples, in keeping with appropriate cultural and ethical practices. AIATSIS works towards this goal through its Library and Audiovisual Archive.

The Library holds one of the most comprehensive collections of print materials on Australian Indigenous studies in the world. The Library has adopted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services. It holds print materials in all formats. The collection includes manuscript materials, serials, language materials, books, rare books, the records of organisations, art catalogues, newspapers and newspaper clippings, maps, posters and kits, microfilms and CD-ROMs.

Access to the Library's materials is provided through a public reading room; Mura®, the collections catalogue; and inter-library loans.

The Audiovisual Archive holds the world's premier collection of moving image, recorded sound and photographic materials relating to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. Its vaults contain approximately 45,000 hours of recorded sound, 620,000 photographic images, 8,000 video titles and 6.5 million feet of motion picture film. It also has a collection of around 1,000 artefacts and works of art. In total, the archive holds almost one million items.

The majority of items held in the Audiovisual Archive represent the primary results of field research funded by the Institute's research grants program as well as historical and contemporary items either donated or deposited by individuals, families and organisations for safekeeping and appropriate access. The majority of the material—around 98 per cent—is unique and irreplaceable. It provides an invaluable link between past, present and future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The role of the Audiovisual Archive is to document and preserve the materials to ensure both their longevity and accessibility for current and future generations of Australians.

The Audiovisual Archive also offers the specialist services of Community Access and the Return of Materials to Indigenous Communities (ROMTIC) project. Details of these programs can be found in Chapter 2.

## COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

### Mura®, the AIATSIS collections catalogue

Documentation of Library and Audiovisual Archive materials on Mura® is in accordance with standard bibliographic practices, and in line with Indigenous cultural practices. Value-added features include annotations and the use of specialist thesaurus terms to provide a level of bibliographic access through Mura® that is unavailable from other library catalogues. Book, serials and manuscript records are added to Libraries Australia, a free internet-based service that provides access to the holdings of over 800 Australian libraries.

The Mura® web interface was completely redeveloped to create a more modern and fully featured discovery tool that is easier to use. Additionally, the AIATSIS thesaurus was upgraded to enable more effective browsing of the AIATSIS collections. See the breakout box on Mura® on page 38.

### Audiovisual Archive 2025 plan

Audiovisual Archive staff conducted a major planning session in October in order to develop a long-term preservation plan ('the 2025 plan'). The chief aim is to put in place a systematic approach to identifying and copying the most at-risk materials held in the collection with a view to transferring all magnetic media material and the majority of film-based material to digital format by 2025. Importantly, the 2025 plan outlines the level of technical and human resources required to meet this objective.

## ACQUISITIONS AND DONATIONS

The Institute is grateful for donations of material from both individuals and organisations. These donations add significantly to the Institute's collections.

### Print materials

During the year, a total of 2,987 items were added to the Library collections. This included 805 purchased items, 1,239 serial issues and 35 items acquired through the research grants program. Purchases for the year cost a total of approximately \$80,000.

Priorities for the acquisition program include:

- materials of Indigenous authorship
- archives of people and organisations significant in Australian Indigenous affairs
- archives of people and organisations prominent in Australian Indigenous studies
- materials to support family history research.

Important donations received by the Library during the year included:

- Professor Jane Goodale—Papers, slides, field notes, letters, census, genealogy maps and audiotapes pertaining to the Tiwi
- Matilda House—'Welcome to Country', opening of 42nd Parliament speech by Matilda House, 12 February 2008 (National Apology Day)
- Rhys Jones and Betty Meehan—Notebooks relating to the An-barra Archaeological Project in central coastal Arnhem Land
- Linda McBride-Yuke—Duplicate copies of items from the Lambert McBride papers held at the State Library of Queensland
- Dr Peter Ucko—Papers relating to his term as Principal of AIATSIS, 1972–80.

### Audiovisual materials

During the year a total of 188 collections were offered for deposit or donation to the Audiovisual Archive. These collections

comprised 1,487 audio recordings, 8,399 photographic images, and 720 moving image items. These materials are held on a variety of analogue and digital carriers and the subject matter dates from the early 1900s to the present day. Eleven artefacts were also donated to the archive.

The following collections are of particular note:

- Photographs donated by Dorothy Hackett and Anee Glass featuring scenes from Warburton Mission and Ngaanyatjarra Lands between 1964 and 1987. This collection consists of over 1,000 colour slides, all superbly documented and in excellent condition. Also provided under this donation were a number of audio tapes from the 1960s of women's ceremonies and songs recorded in the Warburton area.
- A collection of artworks and artefacts donated by Janice Haynes. The material was collected by the late Leslie Haynes and Janice Haynes during fieldwork undertaken at Maningrida and Central Australia in the late 1960s. The works from Central Australia include a decorated life-size carving of a male figure, a boomerang, a digging stick, a shield and three small feathered objects used as ceremonial body decoration. The items from Maningrida include a dilly bag and two woven pandanus mats. This collection augments previous donations made to AIATSIS by Janice Haynes.
- Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association holdings consisting of original film and video footage from a number of titles, including *Green Bush*, *Holding on Holding Tight*, *My Colour*, *Your Kind*, *Yellow Fella*, and *Benny and the Dreamers*.
- Super 8 film footage shot by Graham Wilson at the old Mowanjumb community in 1974 when he was the acting district officer of Aboriginal Affairs at Derby. This short film features everyday scenes and includes footage of prominent artist Albert Barunga.
- David Bradbury's donation of a large collection of production materials relating to his film *Jabiluka*, which documented the struggle of the Mirrar people against the Jabiluka

Family History officer,  
PJ Williams, using the new  
Mura catalogue interface.  
Photography by Kylie  
Martin



## New online catalogue makes research easier

Users of the new AIATSIS web collections catalogue will be able to add their own tags—including in Indigenous languages—to assist them and other users in finding and collating information held in the Library and Audiovisual Archive. This is just one of a range of new features of the catalogue developed by the AIATSIS Library.

‘The new catalogue is a search and discovery tool, providing a one-stop shop for users of Mura® and those searching the publicly available digital collections’, says AIATSIS Library Director Rod Stroud. ‘It’s a new way for clients to discover information as well as allowing them to share information with others.’ Mura®, the AIATSIS collections catalogue, draws its name from a Ngunnawal word meaning pathway.

The new catalogue has a friendly and intuitive interface together with a powerful search engine. Users can narrow or refine a search by selecting from lists including authors, subjects or languages. The catalogue will also recommend related searches that may be of interest.

Users who register on the site can also add reviews to any of the records, share their opinions on the resources held in AIATSIS, and provide additional information and guidance to other users. Reviews may be one line or several paragraphs long.

‘Users can create a personal workspace, where favourite search queries may be saved for future use’, says Rod Stroud. ‘Records may be bookmarked, and comments added that will be visible only to the user. Records may also be emailed or saved from the e-Shelf facility.’

uranium mine. The collection, which has been valued at over \$150,000, includes the original mini DV tapes, transcripts of interviews, an SP Betacam master copy of the published film and a range of publicity material.

- Original rock art tracings from the 1970s made by Graham Connah at sites in the New England area of New South Wales including Emmaville, Yarowlyk and Moonbi.
- A large collection of oral histories recorded by Alan Williamson dealing with education in the Torres Strait Islands up until World War II. These tapes were primary source material for a book, *Schooling the Torres Strait Islanders 1873–1941: Context, custom and colonialism*, by Alan Williamson, published in 1994.
- Sixteen DVDs of Bardi language elicitation and dictionary work recorded by Claire Bowern.
- Film footage shot by Vern Page at Moonacullah Aboriginal Reserve, Deniliquin in 1955. This early colour film contains important historical footage of the Wamba Wamba Aboriginal Community and complements the oral history material recorded by Jill Pattenden and Wayne Atkinson that is already held in the Audiovisual Archive. The film was donated by the Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre.

A full list of gifts and donations received during the year is at Appendix 3.

### Auctions and special purchases

The Library purchases of rare books in 2008–09 included:

- D Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, from its first Settlement, in January 1788, to August 1801: with remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners, &c. of the Native Inhabitants of that Country*, 2nd edition, T Cadell and W Davies, London, 1804
- J Mann, *Eight Months with Dr Leichhardt in the Years 1846–47*, Turner & Henderson, Sydney, 1888
- George Taplin, *Lessons, Hymns and Prayers for the Natives Schools at Point Macleayin: In*

*the language of the lake tribes of Aborigines, called Narrinyeri* Adelaide, printed for the Aborigines' Friends' Association by Shawyer, 1864

- George Taplin, *Tungarar Jehovald. Yarildewallin. Extracts from Holy Scriptures, in the language of the tribes inhabiting the lakes and low Murray, and called Narrinyeri*, South Australian Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Shawyer, 1863
- Jane Watts, *Memories of Early Days in South Australia*, Advertiser General Printing Office, Adelaide, 1882.

### PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

AIATSIS houses materials to archival standards, with collections held in secure, temperature- and humidity-controlled vaults. All new collection materials are assessed for insects and mould on arrival at AIATSIS and any suspect materials are isolated in a specially equipped quarantine room where they are inspected and treated before coming in contact with any other collection materials.

### AIATSIS Digitisation Program

The funding received from the AIATSIS Digitisation Program (ADP) 2005–08 and 2008–11 has enabled the Audiovisual Archive and the Library to purchase and commission a large amount of now crucial digital infrastructure as well as employ more than 35 staff to operate the equipment, preserve and document the collection and facilitate access to it.

This was the first year of the 2008–11 ADP, which enables AIATSIS to continue work on the digital preservation of its collections for another three years. Funding for the 2008–11 ADP is \$10 million.

### Digitisation of audiovisual collections

Audiovisual materials are prioritised for preservation using criteria that include the physical condition and age of the original material, rarity of the content, obsolescence, and level of demand.



Cherbourg community members work through some of the material brought to the community by Audiovisual Archive staff as part of the ROMTIC program. Left: Tammy Dalton, Koby Douglas, Dorothy Douglas, Bessie Bond, Slade Dalton, unknown man & Peter Bligh. Middle: Stephen Williams. Right: Uncle Joe Button. Photography by Kerstin Styche

## Bringing culture back home: National Indigenous Knowledge Centres network

Indigenous knowledge systems are important to our understanding of the world and our history as diverse peoples. Much of this knowledge is included in the collections of materials held in AIATSIS and in other libraries, archives and museums across the country. These include photographs and films, manuscripts, recordings of languages, stories and songs, some of which need conservation and preservation.

Five participants from AIATSIS were invited to attend the Australia 2020 Summit in April 2008. Four participants were in the Indigenous Australia group—former Principal Professor Steve Larkin, Deputy Principal Collections, Bronwyn Nimmo, and Council Members Dr Mark Wenitong and Ms Terri Janke. Research Fellow Ms Toni Bauman was in the Communities and Families group.

The Indigenous Australia group put forward the concept of a national network of Indigenous learning centres to support and develop an understanding of the importance of culture for current and future generations of Indigenous Australians and their communities.

On 21 April the Australian Government released its response to the ideas generated by the 2020 Summit. The government supported the idea of developing an Indigenous cultural education and knowledge centre, naming AIATSIS in the recommendation. The government recommended a feasibility study to develop options for the most effective way to strengthen and support Indigenous culture.

AIATSIS is currently collaborating with the University of Queensland and the State Library of Queensland to assess models of how national networks of Indigenous Knowledge Centres could work effectively.

'AIATSIS advocates for a greater investment in the culturally appropriate management of Indigenous materials', Principal Russell Taylor said.

'AIATSIS wants it to be easier for Indigenous people to be able to find out what where materials are held in collections, and in turn for information to be digitally repatriated.'

The following amounts of collection material were digitised for preservation purposes in 2008–09:

- 1,464 moving image items
- 3,717 audio items
- 1,010 photographic items.

Notable collections digitised during the year include:

- The films of Peter Lucich. These films were made for the Institute in the early 1960s and include the titles *Children of Mowanjum*, *To light a fire*, *To make a spear*, *String from human hair* and *Dance time at Kalumburu*. The 8,000-foot collection is mainly original camera negative and was the subject of extensive research by ANU PhD student Dominic Sweeny.
- Original U-matic videotapes deposited by Eric Michaels. This collection was made while Michaels was a grantee at the Institute in the mid-1980s. The Yuendumu community established one of the first full-time Indigenous media centres in Australia. Michaels' unique methodology and innovative approach to film-making is evident in over 60 hours of videotape, most of which has required careful conservation treatment.
- Over 600 large-format photographic negatives from the WEH Stanner Collection. These photographs were taken by Professor Stanner during two periods of fieldwork in the Daly River and Port Keats (now Wadeye) area between 1932 and 1935. They provide a fascinating record of the ceremonial and everyday activities of the Murrinhpatha and Malak Malak peoples at that time.
- Four audio collections deposited by Lynette Oates in the early 1970s. The recordings represent over 93 hours of language material from north-western New South Wales. Mrs Oates' main interviewee, Emily Horneville, was an elderly women when the recordings were made but her interviews were always very lively and entertaining. During the interviews, Mrs Horneville also spoke some Barranbinya, a language once spoken

between Brewarrina and Bourke. These examples of Barranbinya are the only ones known to exist anywhere.

The Audiovisual Archive also has longstanding partnerships with several Indigenous organisations, who submit copies of all their audiovisual holdings to ensure their long-term preservation. The number of materials deposited by these organisations is on the increase. In 2008–09, the archive received well over a thousand audiovisual items from the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, the Irra Wangga–Geraldton Language Programme, the Katherine Regional Language Centre (Diwurruwurru-jaru), and the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre. The majority of the material deposited by CAAMA was recorded more than twenty years ago. Much of it is fragile and in urgent need of preservation. It is next to impossible for regional organisations to acquire the specialist equipment and technical knowledge needed to care for these materials, which is why they rely on AIATSIS.

#### Infrastructure

The Audiovisual Archive purchased both new and obsolete pieces of equipment in order to continue the digital preservation of materials held in the collection. Some of the noteworthy purchases include:

- a rare Studer A820 open reel audio tape playback/record machine renowned for its smooth and direct tape paths and gentle winding mechanisms which makes it indispensable for handling the more fragile analogue audio tapes in the collection
- a second-hand digital betacam recorder, which then had the edit systems upgraded to the latest version
- a Precision Minolta video display photospectrometer to analyse the colour of video screens and ensure they all match and are calibrated to factory standard colour specifications



Left: Technician Doug Smith at work on the Philips N1700/45 half-inch videotape player. Right (l-r): Technicians Graham Dyson and Rob Hansen at work on the restored Sony AV3670CE video-recorder

## Technology detectives: the fuses and circuits of digitisation

If you have a battered old video or tape recorder at the back of your garage, be warned. It might attract the sleuths in the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive workshop. Because for Doug Smith and Robert Hansen, certain outdated, obsolete or even wrecked audiovisual equipment can help untangle some important audiovisual puzzles.

These men are veritable technology detectives—experienced technicians who delight in locating, repairing, and even rebuilding from scratch, the visual and audio equipment of yesteryear.

Doug has been known to visit reclaimed-junk depots on the off-chance of finding a vintage gem. 'I came across this Philips half-inch video cassette player at the recycling depot', he says, proudly indicating a tangle of wires and circuits in a dusty, barely recognisable chassis. 'Thanks to Rob's expertise in all sorts of video playback equipment we'll get it working again—no worries.'

It's not all low-tech sleuthing. Both men use the Internet to search for obscure equipment or parts, with a large measure of success.

But what sounds like a hobby for engineers with a bent for history has a vital purpose. The AIATSIS digitisation program holds the key to preserving priceless video and audio recordings that have been saved, or are being saved for posterity. These are recordings whose content will be lost without access to serviceable, albeit obsolete, equipment designed for the formats on which they were recorded.

'We are archiving and conserving a lot of material that was recorded on old formats, particularly in the case of video', says Doug. 'And time is running out to ensure we have the means to replay the material to convert it to digital format.'

- a Nagra SN micro reel audio recorder, which was used by a number of professional sound recordists and film-makers in the 1970s. The archive holds ten audio collections comprising 118 tapes on this format that until now have not been playable
- a wide range of specialised audio and video calibration tapes (for obsolete recorders). These ensure that all playback equipment is maintained to factory specifications.

Because of the increased volume of digitised collection objects, the Archive increased the capacity of the 'work-in-progress' storage system to a total 37 gigabytes. This is supplemented by a fully automated data tape library that enables the creation and storage of a removable copy of the digitised collections off-site, thereby reducing the risk of data loss due to flood or fire.

### Digitisation of print collections

The Library Digitisation Unit scanned and preserved 13,121 digital files for preservation and access in 2008–09.

The AIATSIS Digitisation Program funded a staff member to catalogue material in digital form onto Mura®. The material includes books that are out of copyright, archived websites and publications from PANDORA—Australia's Web Archive, which is managed by the National Library of Australia and its partner organisations. This has increased the number of records on Mura® that link to material in electronic format that is accessible to remote users.

Library staff have been digitally preserving out-of-copyright books and making them accessible from Mura®. To date, over 400 titles have been added. This again increases remote access to some of our rare book collection through our catalogue and website.

The Library is currently focusing on digitising documents from historical government royal commissions and inquiries into Indigenous issues. Other projects include language material and wordlists.

### Library conservation

The Library employs a full-time conservator as part of the digitisation funding. The conservator assesses and devises treatments for any materials to be digitised as well as general collection items needing restoration.

During the year, the conservator individually treated many thousands of slips containing the Tiwi genealogies before they were digitised for the Tiwi Land Council (see Chapter 2, p. 32). Another major project was the rehousing of the ephemera collection, which is a diverse collection of materials including leaflets, fliers, badges, caps and T-shirts.

The Library undertook a six-month project to assess, rehouse and consolidate the storage of the unsorted collections held in its closed access stacks and a separate project to rehouse the Australian Indigenous Languages Collection. These projects, together with the installation of larger compactus shelving, has provided much-needed additional collections storage capacity that will last ten years into the future.

### FINDING AIDS

Finding aids were created and uploaded for 71 audio collections, representing a total of 1,437 field recordings. Audio finding aids offer a significant improvement on the level of documentation of audio recordings, which were previously only searchable in aggregate collections on Mura®. Collections such as ANDERSON\_C02 (seventy-one oral history interviews in Kuku Yalanji with Bloomfield River Mission residents, recorded by Chris Anderson between 1977 and 1979) are now described in sufficient detail for remote clients to select individual recordings for copying. Other collections, such as ALTMAN\_J01 (ceremonial songs from North Central Arnhem Land, recorded by Jon Altman between 1979–80) have been described in even greater detail, allowing clients to select relevant segments of recordings.

A list of finding aids created and uploaded to the website during the year is at Appendix 4.

The Library's capacity to produce finding aids has been limited by insufficient funds to employ a permanent archivist to organise and document collections of personal and private papers. Some collections have been sorted as part of the digitisation program funding and work on a range of large and significant collections is ongoing.

### TECHNICAL INNOVATION

The AIATSIS collections pose many technical challenges. The video collection alone consists of 33 different tape-based formats and more than 30 different video file types. Each format requires its own playback machine and presents unique preservation difficulties. As a result Audiovisual Archive staff have designed and implemented a number of innovative technical solutions to ensure that preservation and ongoing management of the collection are to world's best practice. Some examples include:

- using a Dobbin Audio Farm file batch processing unit for centralised and streamlined surrogate and derivative generation
- making heat sink and transformer modifications on nine analogue-to-digital converters vastly improving the original design
- replacing components on circuit boards of all Studer A807 open reel players to produce an output frequency response that is better than new specifications
- using automated BWF (broadcast wave format) xml quality-checking software to check for anomalies in file names, field tape sequence and description fields. This greatly reduces the amount of staff resources required to manually check the consistency and accuracy of technical metadata in BWF.