This year as in previous years, the Cultural Collections Projects Program has given students and volunteers the opportunity to work closely with the University’s museums and cultural collections. Many chose to work on a project as an internship to develop new professional skills. Others selected projects to gain experience working in a specific area of the cultural sector - to see what it may be like. And still others wished to work closely with a collection to satisfy a personal interest or make a difference to that collection. Regardless of motivations, participants in the Program and the collections have been greatly enriched by the experience. Cataloguing projects have made the collections more accessible; preventative conservation projects have contributed to their longevity; while research and exhibition projects have ensured the collections remain relevant and dynamic to the University community and beyond.

Projects, students, more projects, more volunteers...

In 2012 we had 48 students and volunteers participating in the Program. To prepare them for their projects training sessions were held in cataloguing, box making, object handling, brush vacuuming, and significance assessment. While it is not possible here to fully describe all of the projects worked on (each with their own story), below is an introduction to the students and volunteers who achieved so much over the year and a brief outline of their projects.

The University of Melbourne Archives (UMA) hosted sixteen students and volunteers on projects which varied from exhibition support and cataloguing through to archival documentation and preventative conservation. Laura Oberin studying for her Master of Arts and Cultural Management (Melbourne) and Jody Jane Stitt completing a Libraries and Information Studies course (Swinburne), worked together on the Commercial Travellers’ Association collection. For their project they catalogued the photographs in the collection that document life in Australian country towns c. 1920-1975. Kim Henderson studying Librarianship (Curtin) completed a listing of the Mount Lyell Collection, while Michael Symons, completing a Masters of Information Services (Edith Cowan), explored issues in archival preservation and storage through his placement. Hannah Gwyther, a Masters of Art Curatorship student (Melbourne), has been working on a project with the Fine Arts Department Collection. For her project she has been appraising, listing and documenting the records which focus on Joseph Burke’s public life as a Professor of Fine Arts at this University. With a background in art history, Hannah has found the opportunity to sift through this important collection to be a fascinating experience. Also enjoying the opportunity to delve in the UMA collections are Bethany Holland, studying for her Bachelor of Arts (Melbourne), and Julia Ulyannikova completing her Masters of Information Management (RMIT). Bethany and Julia have been applying their well-developed research skills to a project that has them seeking out ANZAC and Gallipoli related materials at Archives. Collection material found will form the basis of an on-line subject guide for these WWI collections. Masters in Information Management (Monash) student Jessica Kilpatrick has continued her archival documentation project with the Lindsay Tanner Papers that she commenced late last year. For the project she has assisted in the appraisal, listing and documenting of the existing arrangement of the collection and the creation of a consolidated finding aid. Volunteer Moyra McAllister has continued her project work with a selection of early UMA files from the business collections identifying details that relate to acquisition, ownership and access conditions. Vincent Muller (Graduate Diploma of Information and Knowledge Management, Monash University) through his professional placement has been introduced to the processes and systems utilised by UMA with a particular emphasis on photographs and films – his two areas of special interest.

An exhibition-based project has Alice Gibbons (Master of Art Curatorship, Melbourne), Emily Were (Bachelor of Arts, Melbourne) and Lucy Watson (Master of Art Curatorship, Melbourne) working as curatorial assistants on the upcoming UMA exhibition entitled When do we want it? Now! Their project work has seen them research various themes for the exhibition that will draw on the Protest Collections held in the UMA and will be held in the Baillieu Library in early 2013. They will also be contributing an essay to the accompanying catalogue and further extending their experience by assisting in the installation of the exhibition. Also exploring the collections housed at UMA are Emily Keppel (Bachelor of Arts) and Claudia Motolese (Masters in Cultural Materials Conservation). The two Melbourne students have been working together on an archival storage and textile rehousing project with the UMA’s textile collections. Both Emily and Claudia have enjoyed applying preventative conservation practices to these collections assisting in their long term preservation and management. Lastly, volunteers Barbary Clarke, Jean Taylor and Ardy Tibby have continued their project work processing the items in the Victorian Women’s Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives.

This year the Physics Museum has had two dedicated students working with its collections. Silvia Krambeck (Graduate Diploma in Art History/Creative Writing, Melbourne) and Stephanie Smith (Cultural Materials Conservation, Melbourne) have been cataloguing objects in the
museum’s collection. While neither have a Physics background, both Stephanie and Silvia have brought a unique range of skills to the project and enjoyed the challenge of trying to identify what it is they are cataloguing. Thanks to collection manager Phil Lyons, both now know much about galvanometers and have a working knowledge of how to split the atom!

The University’s art collections have also benefited through the Projects Program. The Victorian College of the Arts hosted two students Dominique van de Klundert (Masters of Art Curatorship, Melbourne) and Rickie-Lee Robbie (Masters in Information Management, RMIT) on a rehousing and inventory project. Dominique and Rickie-Lee have compiled an inventory of works on paper in the VCA Art Collection and also photographed, documented and rehoused the works into solander boxes.

The Baillieu Library Print Collection hosted two student volunteers. Kim Clayton-Greene (Masters in Art History, Melbourne) worked on a cataloguing project with the John Lionel Berry Architecture Collection while Meg Sheehan (Bachelor of Arts, Melbourne) completed a narratives compilation project on Giulio Bonasone’s series The Loves, Rages and Jealousies of Juno. Meg has since curated a display on this series for the ground floor of the Baillieu and her extended labels can be accessed through the Print Collection’s on-line catalogue.

The art collections at the Ian Potter Museum of Art also benefited from student volunteers this year through the placement of three students on projects. Isabelle Waters-Lynch (Masters of Cultural Materials Conservation, Melbourne) continued the work she started late last year with the Leonhard Adam Collection of International Indigenous Culture where she compiled an index for the glass slides in the collection and made storage boxes for the slides. Also at the Potter, Master of Art Curatorship students Sarah Craven and Vanessa von Westernhagen both enjoyed their cataloguing project with the Gerard Herbst Poster Collection, a fascinating collection of 20th century graphic art. As part of their placement they also had the opportunity to learn and use EMu (Electronic Museum), the Potter’s electronic database, and explore copyright issues associated with the posters.

Students and volunteers also worked closely with the Special Collections in the Baillieu Library this year. Anna Heyward (Bachelor of Arts, Melbourne) completed her research and rehousing project with the Meanjin collection of linocut printing blocks where she found it an enjoyable challenge to identify the sitters portrayed in the blocks. Thomas Vranken (Bachelor of Arts, Melbourne) continued working on a rehousing and inventory project with the elephant folios in the BX Collection. Louise Box (Masters of Art Curatorship, Melbourne) undertook the role of exhibition assistant on the Knowledge through Print exhibition. Through the project, Louise worked alongside curator Wallace Kirsop to revisit the important 1963 London exhibition Printing in the Mind of Man. Working on the design and ‘look’ of the exhibition from the earliest stages through to the eventual installation, Louise was able to utilise her creative skills to help curate a beautiful and considered exhibition that transformed the Leigh Scott Gallery space. Belinda McDonald (Masters of Information Management, RMIT) experienced a different aspect of the Library’s operations through her cataloguing placement. Working with specialist cataloguers, Belinda was able to complete the cataloguing of the McLaren (Victoria) Collection which she found very satisfying.

Preventative conservation projects with the Library’s collections also proved popular this year. Imogen Dixon-Smith (Bachelor of Arts, Melbourne) and Matthew Duca (Bachelor of Arts/Diploma of Modern Languages, Melbourne) were trained in the art of phase box making and then applied these specialist skills to rehouse a selection of atlases from the Rare and Historic Maps Collection. Re-housed, the atlases are protected from environmental changes which will aid their long term preservation. Also applying preventative conservation measures to the University Library’s East Asian Collections was Hannah Gould (Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Languages, Melbourne). Hannah’s project saw her re-house a collection of Japanese postcards, the majority of which relate to the Great Kanto Earthquake in the early 20th century. Fluent in Japanese, Hannah brought her language skills and great enthusiasm to this project and is planning to showcase the collection in a future exhibition. A further conservation-based project has seen Bachelor of Music students (Honours) Thomas Bell and Dallas Kunig work closely with a selection of oratorios from the Rare Materials Collection in the Louise Hanson-Dyer Music Library. For their project they have been brush-vacuuming the oratorios, re-housing them in archival folders and recording any distinguishing inscriptions.

Two projects were completed with the Rare Materials Collections in the Architecture and Planning Library. Matilda Velthuis (Bachelor of Environments, Architecture) undertook a project where she inventoried and re-housed the contents of a set of plan drawers containing photographs, atelier drawings, architectural plans and other archival documents. Matilda found the project to be inspiring for her studies and appreciated seeing the University as a custodian of rich cultural resources. A second project with Architecture’s collections had Andree Ruggeri (Bachelor of Arts, Melbourne) curate a display in the ERC for the Cultural Treasures Festival. Andree’s exhibition highlighted theses from the Architectural Theses Collection which demonstrated the University’s role in the development of local architectural practice and scholarship.

A significance assessment project on the Brownless Rare Book Collection commenced late last year by Anna Bagshaw (Masters of Information Management, CSU) continued this year. Using an established methodology Anna has been researching and appraising this collection of 1,850...
volumes that cover the vast range of subjects that constitute the history of western medicine, some of which date from the 16th century. Meanwhile, Anne Faithfull (Master of Museum Studies, Macquarie University) is undertaking a significance assessment on the Creswick Campus Historical Collection which relates to the teaching of Forestry and comprises photographs, herbarium specimens, archival documents, wood samples and teaching aids. After spending a couple of days based at Creswick exploring the collection, Anne has been researching its rich history. Once completed, these significance assessments will become important collection management tools in our long term understanding, management and appreciation of these two distinct collections. A further project at the Creswick campus saw Information Management student Erin Rule (University of South Australia) work on an inventory of the collection in an effort to establish and document its current status and scope.

The Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum had two volunteers working on collection management projects. Lucy Watson (Master of Art Curatorship, Melbourne) completed her cataloguing project with the Major Kenneth Russell collection of WWI treatment appliances for jaw and facial injuries. Also working on a cataloguing project at the Museum, Rula Paterson (Master of Arts and Cultural Management, Melbourne) catalogued a 1940s Italian Army Dental Instrument set. As part of the cataloguing process, she researched the history of the case and its contents and then entered this information onto the Vernon database.

The Medical History Museum has hosted several volunteers this year on a variety of projects. William Boyle (based at the Royal Melbourne Hospital Clinical School) assisted curator Dr Jacqueline Healy with preparations for the exhibition A Med Student’s Life. Also working with the collections, Sarah Barrow (Masters of Art Curatorship, Melbourne) carried out exhibition related research for The Art of Teaching exhibition. This exhibition explores the historic connections between the Medical School and Victoria’s major hospitals in the 19th century through artworks, documents and archival material. Melbourne student Lin Li Ng (Bachelor of Arts - Ancient World Studies and Classics) interested in learning more about collection management procedures and practices worked on a cataloguing project. After receiving training in the Vernon database she has been creating and expanding existing catalogue records of objects in the collection.

Lastly, the Grainger Museum hosted two students on projects. Thomas Mendelovits’ (Master of Information Management, RMIT) project involved attaching metadata to the museum’s image files to enhance the interpretative and research potential of the collection material. Natalie Bello (Masters of Music, Melbourne) undertook a volunteer placement at the Museum where she created a spread sheet that records concert, program details and supplementary materials that relate to Grainger as a performer. As well as creating a useful reference tool for future researchers, this project enabled Natalie to integrate her research findings into her Master’s thesis – an excellent outcome!

**Museums and Collections Award 2011-2012**

The Museums and Collections Award was offered again this year, and in mid January Melbourne recipient Emma Neale travelled to the University of Birmingham and in July, Birmingham recipient Emily Millward was hosted by the Cultural Collections Unit. The Award enables a month placement with the museums and collections of the host university. Below, Emma Neale, reflects on her experience.

As the University of Melbourne’s recipient of the Museum and Collections Award for 2011-2012 I am delighted to be part of a growing program that provides students an opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom and work with the cultural collections of the University of Birmingham. I am a third year Bachelor of Arts student studying a double major in Art History and Screen and Cultural Studies. In January, I embarked on the one-month all expenses paid exchange, braving the winter to experience the art and culture of the UK.

The diverse structure of the program offered an insight into Birmingham University’s vast collections and its scope provided hands-on experience in areas including curatorship, collections management, archiving and conservation. For one project I was invited to curate a display of the vast textile holdings of the Danford Collection of West African Art and Artefacts. It provided new experiences of exhibition planning, display designs and object selection, while also an opportunity to utilize skills I have gained from volunteering with the collections at Melbourne University. In my work with the Danford Collection I was able to put into practice these skills adapting to the specific requirements of the diverse collection which included kente cloths, traditional clothing, weaves, mats, and loom instruments.

My time at Birmingham coincided with the preparations for the Cultural Olympiad marking the upcoming 2012 London Olympics. I feel very fortunate to have been able to contribute at this exciting time assisting with initial conservation and condition reports for the objects to be exhibited as part of the event. I was also able to explore the vast stores of the Cadbury’s Research Library and Special Collections, in a project to propose archival material and rare books for inclusion in the ‘Impressions of Jamaica’ exhibition celebrating the arrival of the Jamaican Olympic team, residing and training at the University. A particularly interesting opportunity was to explore the Sir Raymond Priestley Collection and read his memoirs about the establishment of the West Indies University campus. It was fascinating to learn of his work with all three Universities and gave me a chance to consider the connections shared between the collections of Melbourne and Birmingham and different frameworks in which to approach and appreciate them.

The VISTA 3D Imaging project was also another placement where using two 3D scanners, the portable desktop NextEngine and the more advanced Minolta, I created a 3D image of a small stone statue from the Danford Collection. The scanner provided me with a new way to engage with the object, revealing every curvature and giving me the opportunity to examine the smallest details while knitting a digital 3D image in the process.

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts provided another arena for me to investigate my interests in conservation. I developed an educational workshop for 15-17 year olds introducing the topic of conservation within the gallery. The workshop considered art from different centuries that utilized various materials and techniques and provided a broad picture of conservation and preservation for the participating students. I included a 14th century
One of my goals during my placement was to gain knowledge and experience in a conservation studio and the most rewarding experience of this Award was the generous mentoring I received at the Wilson Conservation Studio. Senior Paper Conservator Sarah Kilroy provided an open forum for my questions about the industry. Her advice and the many helpful resources she referred me to have been invaluable. This project enabled me to test my manual dexterity with treatment of 19th century theatre playbills. I was also entrusted to assist in the treatment of an 18th century Francesco Bartolozzi print, ‘Prospero Disarming Ferdinand’.

During my placement at Birmingham University I was also privileged to visit other conservation studios. Sarah Kilroy recommended me to the Historical Royal Palaces conservation department and subsequently I was invited for a personal tour of their impressive conservation studios at Hampton Court Palace. Their large textile and conservation department added another dimension to my growing understanding of this industry, unveiling the project management aspects of conservation and exciting new technological advancements. These site visits were a perfect way to conclude my placement. Through them I felt as though I had achieved my goal of gaining an international perspective into the conservation industry and I look forward to extending this knowledge through opportunities closer to home.

The growing alumni of the Museum and Collections Award provided much welcome support. Past Melbourne recipient Emily Wubben offered great recommendations from her experiences in Birmingham, and once in the UK, I was able to build a friendship with Katy Wade, a previous Birmingham University recipient of the Award. Katy became my cultural tour guide and together we visited the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter and Stratford-upon-Avon. I also made use of my base in Birmingham to have a day trip to Liverpool, a weekend in the countryside of Gloucester and visit family in Ipswich. I extended my trip with a week in London giving me the opportunity to visit the fantastic museums and art galleries the city has to offer.

The Museum and Collections Award has introduced me to new areas of arts and culture while offering opportunities to utilize and test my prior collections knowledge and experience. It has inspired an even greater passion for conservation and collection management and has given me confidence to work with leaders in the industry and develop ongoing professional networks. I am truly most grateful for being chosen for this Award and I highly recommend this opportunity for students interested in cultural collections and museum careers.

Following on from Emma’s successful stay in the UK, Birmingham student Emily Millward arrived at Tullamarine airport on a wet and cold winter’s morning excited to explore all the city had to offer – albeit after a good long sleep! During her month-long placement with the Cultural Collections Unit, Emily had the opportunity to work with several of the University collections. As Emily was studying for her PhD in Egyptology, she was keen to be involved with the Classics and Archaeology Collections, and for her project at the Potter she researched a collection of Egyptian artefacts. Another project at Melbourne involved the development of a children’s activity for the Cultural Treasures Festival weekend. Emily’s creation of a treasure map took younger visitors on a hunting expedition across the Physic’s, Zoology and Dental Collections and was well received. Emily also curated the display Leaves from a Literary Garden which utilised botanical themed books from Special Collections; researched a selection of classically themed prints from the Baillieu Library Print Collection; and lastly worked with conservators from the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation where she assisted with a variety of projects from Japanese wallpaper preservation through to the care of an aboriginal art collection. While in Melbourne, Emily immersed herself in as many cultural activities as possible attending numerous lectures and exhibitions on campus and throughout the city. At the conclusion of her placement, Emily commented:

I cannot express how much I enjoyed my placement at the University of Melbourne. It was great to work with so many collections and I learnt many new techniques and further developed others that I know will continue to be of use to me in the future….It was very rewarding working with so many collections…. They organised projects to fit with my personal interests and endeavoured to allow me to develop different skills. My placement was fantastic and I have learnt so much. The experience I had is one that I will never forget.

Award recipients Emma and Emily embraced this wonderful opportunity and shaped it into something that was truly their own. I am sure that they will remember fondly the people they met and their host cities. Further, the professional skills developed will continue to benefit them over the coming years. To see Emma and Emily discussing the Award go to http://www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/. Plans are currently underway for the Museums and Collections Award to be offered again in 2013 so please watch our website for further developments.

Reflecting back on the year, it is rewarding to see the excellent achievements that result from this collaboration between Program participants and the cultural collections. As many students and volunteers move on to different things - be it continuing studies, finishing studies or moving in (or out!) of the workplace, I know that they will take with them a very positive experience from their placement with a collection.

Thank you to all the collections staff who have enabled this exchange to take place, and of course a big thank you to the participating students and volunteers whose continuing enthusiasm, skills and interest in the University’s cultural collections have made a real difference to their inherent value. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

Helen Arnoldi
Cultural Collections Projects Coordinator
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