Most Australian students in the 21st century are familiar with teaching technologies that go beyond the ‘chalk and talk’ range. Image projection must surely be the predominant of these, whether the images in question are still or moving. Today, images are usually displayed through popular computer programs such as PowerPoint, but are still referred to by educators (and within the program itself) as ‘slides’. Many of us are familiar with the origins of this term: the photographic or other graphic image on a positive transparency, often placed for safety in a cardboard frame. Others may be familiar with its predecessor: the two-inch by two-inch glass slide, also often (but not always, as it is far sturdier than the ‘modern’ slide) in a frame or binding. These were common until just after World War II and, indeed, a version of the glass ‘magic lantern’ slide was in use in education in Australia for the first 50 years of the 20th century.

In early 2014, a collection of 431 glass slides was discovered in the rare books closed stack of the Architecture, Building and Planning Library at the University of Melbourne. These were stored in a variety of drawers and boxes and, although dusty, were largely in excellent condition. Most had titles on paper binding, and handwritten descriptions were evident on the slides themselves. However, there was no accompanying explanation of when these slides were last used, what they were used for, or how they came to be together—indeed, whether they were together purely because they were in the same medium, or for another, obscure, reason.

The librarians who discovered them, Naomi Mullumby and Sarah Charing, felt that the slides were valuable in two ways: as artefacts that reflected the history of teaching in the Faculty of Architecture, and as historical records in their own right. They also found a way to add currency and relevance to the slides, by identifying several subjects taught today that could be enhanced by using the historical material presented by the slides. They decided to find a way to preserve, catalogue and then digitise the slides.

The slides were well preserved, but, as mentioned, they had no accompanying information on how they had been used in teaching. The ‘2 x 2’ glass slide was phased out in the early 1950s (by 1951, the more flexible and much smaller 35 mm slide was being discussed as a convenient alternative). We can assume that although there would have been a crossover phase between the two formats, the 2 x 2 slides were used in teaching architecture and planning subjects in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This was not only a time at which universities had expanded considerably following the enrolment of many thousands of men and women whose education had been delayed by six years of war; it also saw the Murray Committee investigation into tertiary education, which recommended a major increase in opportunities for Australians to study at university.

John Bayly, who taught at the University of Melbourne in the early 1950s, recalls of the slides that ‘It was a historic collection and I don’t know anything about its origins. I used it a great deal, it was a pretty good collection of black and white two by twos’. (He also, he says, used his own ‘35 millimetre stuff from wandering around Europe looking at things’.)

The slides fall easily into three—perhaps four—groups. The groups are mainly architectural, with just one oriented to urban planning. The first is a collection of almost a hundred slides of classical architectural forms, primarily ancient Greek, which no doubt saw common use in teaching in the 1930s and ’40s. The second is arguably more unusual and intriguing, though its
use in teaching is obscure. These are slides of a visit made by architecture lecturer David Saunders to Turkey in the early 1950s, chiefly examining architectural and decorative form. Another group, which may or may not have status of its own, comprises nine photographs of plans and elevations of the University of Melbourne’s Arts and Education block (1919–24, now known as ‘Old Arts’); there is also a small number of photographs of the university in various stages of development. The last, and largest, group is a selection of slides appropriate to the teaching of town planning in the early 1950s; these coincide with the establishment of the Diploma of Town Planning in 1950, anticipating the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works’ (MMBW) Plan for Melbourne, which was launched in 1954.

The ancient architecture slides
Ninety-one slides pertaining to Greek architecture are included in the collection; there are also 31 slides largely relating to Roman architecture, although these were stored, apparently randomly, among other subject matter such as images of Canterbury Cathedral and the tomb of Akbar the Great in Agra, India.

Miles Lewis’ unpublished report on the development of architectural teaching in the University of Melbourne traces the pedagogical development of the discipline up until Lewis’ father, Brian, was appointed chair of architecture in 1947.3 Lewis outlines the changing nature of the course, both in proposed and realised stages, across the first half of the 20th century; in most cases subjects such as Architectural History were delivered as first-year subjects. These 91 slides may have been used in that subject. In the main, they do not appear to be unique images but rather photographs taken from books; for this reason they are arguably the least interesting, certainly the least unusual or rare, element of the collection.
The Saunders slides
Twenty slides are attributed to David Saunders. They are dated 1952, and depict buildings and scenes from Syria, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Saunders received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Melbourne in 1951, by which time he had two years’ experience as an architect, and in the following year he went to London for a brief period of work. We assume that Saunders visited Syria and Turkey en route to England. He may have been inspired by the recently published book *Turkish crossroads* (1951) by the prolific British author Bernard Newman; he may perhaps have been accumulating teaching materials to use in a course in architectural history, in which he lectured at the University of Melbourne between 1956 and 1968, before relocating to Sydney.

Saunders’ papers, deposited at the University of Adelaide, cover only the later period of his career; it is not currently known whether he wrote about his Turkish and Syrian experiences, or indeed how he used these slides in his teaching (if at all). John Bayly recalls that ‘David Saunders got into the history side of the thing and he and I used to do the course for fourth year architects and engineers, that was a town planning subject. David did the history side and I did the current practice side of that undergraduate subject’.4 The majority of Saunders’ publications—for instance, his edited collection *Historic buildings of Victoria* (1966) and *A manual of architectural history research* (1977)—do not touch on these experiences, and earlier work—such as editing the newsletter *Cross-Section* between 1955 and 1961—concentrates on modern architecture.
The urban planning slides

As mentioned, glass slides were still in use (although gradually being phased out) in the early 1950s, and the Diploma of Town Planning dates from this period—all of which suggests that these items were used in teaching town planning. But this is not necessarily the case; planning was a component of architectural education before the creation of the diploma.

Additionally, and significantly, a large portion of the slides are remnant from the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission (MTPC) of 1923–30. Notoriously, the MTPC’s 1929 report, recommending sweeping and radical planning innovation for Melbourne, was barely implemented, being abandoned by the state government at the onset of the Great Depression. However, the report had its enthusiasts throughout the 1930s and ‘40s; John Gawler, a lecturer in architecture at the university from 1920, claims in his 1963 memoir, A roof over my head, to have regarded it ‘as a text book on town planning’ which he ‘used … at the University, and recommended … to all my students’. As chairman of Victoria’s Town and Country Planning Board, Gawler worked alongside surveyor Fred Cook and architect Arthur Kemsley—both also involved in the MTPC—and was instrumental in advancing the teaching of town planning at the university.

The MTPC’s report is often considered a failure, largely because the common expectation in the 1920s—that on the delivery of its report the MTPC would be converted to a permanent body—did not come to pass. There are many indications, however, including Gawler’s statement above, the prominence of many of the MTPC’s members as late as the 1960s, and the use in teaching of slides derived from MTPC research, that the report was very influential, at least until it was superseded as a comprehensive planning document by the MMBW’s 1954 report (which was, itself, influenced by the MTPC report).

One of the MTPC’s (self-imposed) duties was to stage extensive publicity campaigns, notably throughout the suburbs of Melbourne; the MTPC was partly funded by local government, and saw value in propaganda campaigns across the metropolis. Town halls were the usual venue for slide-based information nights in the mid- to late 1920s, and the principal propagandists for the MTPC were its chairman, architect Frank Stapley (previously lord mayor of Melbourne), and surveyor Saxil Tuxen, a volunteer member of the MTPC who devoted a large part of his time to its cause, to the extent that he funded his own trip to the USA in 1926 for the purposes of examining planning and building innovations in that country.

There is no doubt that a component of the slide collection is derived from the MTPC; some images are taken directly from Fred Cook’s images executed for the MTPC’s preliminary and final reports. Others are undoubtedly Tuxen’s, from his 1926 journey; they parallel photographs that were in an album Tuxen passed on to his daughter, Joan. Still others are peculiarities: on his return from the USA (the commercialism and ostentatious nature of which did not impress him), Tuxen prepared a plan to alleviate the wasted space in an old, but undeveloped, subdivision at Maidstone, in Melbourne’s west. There is a good argument this was based on the design for Sunnyside Gardens in New York, which he had recently visited. His attempts to impress his fellow commissioners with this scheme were not, however, successful, and it did not become a part of the MTPC’s recommendations. Yet an image of the scheme is in this slide collection (see p. 10). Tuxen donated some items to the Faculty of Architecture upon
his retirement in 1970; since Bayly recalls using the MTPC 2 x 2s in the 1950s, it is possible that these were Tuxen’s.

Slides that also appear to date from the 1920s, but for which authorship is more difficult to find, include three images of backyards in Melbourne’s southern suburbs, photographed from railway lines. These may date from the mid-1920s and Tuxen’s suburban lectures (Tuxen lived in Sandringham, and would have seen these backyards on his daily commute). Such images were commonly used in town planning advocacy, because the exposed, visible, but unkempt backyard seemed to many to imply a moral lack; such images were often used in decrying the state of Sydney’s inner suburbs. But now these slides—particularly the very practical backyard complete with curious horse—are among the most quaint in the collection (see p. 9).

Further anomalies abound in the planning-related slides. John Bayly recalls trips to the Gippsland town of Yallourn, built by the State Electricity Commission in 1923: ‘There was always the excursion to Yallourn’.6 There are slides relating to the town and to other aspects of the postwar development of the Latrobe Valley mining enterprises. These may have been the contribution of architect-planner Frank Heath, who lectured in planning at the university in the first few years of the Diploma of Town Planning. Heath produced a report on this region and its development in 1947.7

There are also numerous slides of Port Melbourne, many relating to the development of the Fishermans Bend area between the 1920s and ‘40s. These appear to be largely from the beginning of that period, although Bayly recalls that he and Fred Ledgar, professor of planning from 1954, ‘advised Port Melbourne and Brighton and one other council which escapes
Saxil Taxen (photographer); T.W. Cameron, Melbourne (slide maker), San Francisco—
new road after completion, c. 1926, glass slide in cardboard mount, 8.3 × 8.3 cm. Glass
Slides Collection, Architecture, Building and Planning Library, University of Melbourne.

me, I remember the council meetings at both those places from time to time’. This, he says, took place in 1955: ‘The way it happened was that the engineer was doing the planning course and he engaged his lecturers as consultants to the Council, which wasn’t a bad way of going about it’.

One important aspect of this consultancy was, Bayly recalls, the recommendation that the Port Melbourne beachfront be zoned residential—an idea since taken to its logical conclusion with the development of the Beacon Cove estate in the 1990s. Although the Port Melbourne slides focus primarily on the 1920s–30s, the predominance of Port Melbourne in the collection indicates the value of this part of Melbourne as a planning laboratory between the 1920s and ’50s.

While some of the planning-related slides have a firmly established provenance, others are only locatable historically by trends of the period. Images of American cities of the 1940s and ’50s are prevalent; while these are not attributable to any donor, their usefulness in teaching town planning in the 1950s is evident, particularly considering the diploma owed its existence to the establishment of a planning arm of the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, which delivered its plan for the city in 1954. Postwar America was undoubtedly seen as the location of the cities of the future, particularly regarding automobile transit, and students were keen to see examples of such cities ‘in action’.

In sum, the 210 planning-related slides of the collection are a diverse and fascinating (if also often inexplicable) series of images that not only reflect the history of Melbourne’s development up until the mid-1950s, but also give us some insight into the way urban landscapes, demography, aesthetics and problems were viewed by the
new generation of city builders of 60 years ago. While we cannot necessarily understand how students of the 1950s were presented with slides illustrating Melbourne’s problems of 25 years previously, we can be fairly sure they were.

There is one more story from the world of $2 \times 2$ glass slides, one that sadly has not left a remnant in the collection but which nonetheless gives a flavor of the period and the use of slides in the early 1950s. Bayly recalls his early involvement in student politics:

I stood as architectural representative for the SRC [Students Representative Council] against Kevin Borland. Kevin was standing as a communist candidate and I was obviously not doing that but Kevin and I got on very well, always did. So much so that in a history of architecture lecture we made one of those two by two slides … We were both standing for SRC but because we knew that neither of us would get away with it one of us had the idea and we made a two by two slide, half of which was red and said Vote 1 Borland and the other half was blue and said Vote 1 Bayly.

I was operating the projector for Brian Lewis’ history lectures and this slide came up—Brian wasn’t looking at the screen—and a laugh burst out around the assembled multitude. Brian looked around, looked at the screen and said, ‘Bayly and Borland each fined five pounds!’ which never came to anything.\footnote{Bayly and Borland each fined five pounds!}

The future of the slides
So what, then, of the slides themselves, a valuable component of the Architecture, Building and Planning Library Rare Materials Collection?

After canvassing the options to get funding for the preservation and digitisation work required to ensure the slides would be accessible in digital format, we decided to propose

Photographer unknown (possibly Saxil Tuxen), *Backyard from railway at Balaclava*, c. 1920–30, glass slide in cardboard mount, 8.3 × 8.3 cm. Glass Slides Collection, Architecture, Building and Planning Library, University of Melbourne. Although we do not know how images of backyards in Windsor and Balaclava were used in teaching, urban renewal advocates for much of the 20th century discouraged practices such as keeping animals—other than conventional domestic pets—in suburban backyards.
Fisherman's Bend—Commission's scheme, c. 1920–50, glass slide in cardboard mount, 8.3 × 8.3 cm. Glass Slides Collection, Architecture, Building and Planning Library, University of Melbourne. The many images of Port Melbourne and Fishermans Bend in the collection gain new relevance with current redevelopment plans for this area. This hand-coloured slide indicates a scheme for the expansion of the residential part of the area to maximise rail access to surrounding industry. It was not built.

the project as part of the university’s Cultural Collections Projects 2014 program. Each year this program provides students, alumni and volunteers from the community with an opportunity to work with the university’s cultural collections, as a way of expanding their vocational skills and adding to their learning experience. For the library, it meant that the slides could be cleaned, rehoused and catalogued by someone who was really interested in them, and keen to undertake the project, and that funding could then be sought for digitisation.

A University of Melbourne Faculty of Arts PhD student, Natasha Story, was selected. After some training in archival management and cleaning techniques, she painstakingly brushed-vacuumed the dust off each of the 400–plus slides, researched and ordered the best archival-quality housing for them, and created an inventory that could be used by the University Digitisation Centre to create metadata (cataloguing information) for the digitised objects.

The slides were subsequently accepted as part of the University Library’s priority digitisation program, and, early in 2015, the scanning work was undertaken. The files are now available through the university’s Digital Repository, where they are
accessible to staff and students for research, teaching and learning, and also to the wider community.

Natasha Story, having completed and submitted her PhD, and inspired by her work in Public Record Office Victoria and the Architecture, Building and Planning Library, decided to pursue a career in librarianship. She was subsequently one of the two successful student candidates for the 2015 intake to the University Library Cadet program.

The authors would welcome more information on the slides from readers.

Sarah Charing is a liaison librarian in the Architecture, Building and Planning Library at the University of Melbourne. She is actively involved in preserving, and involving the community with, the ABP Library’s cultural collection, and represents the ABP Library on the university’s Cultural Collections Subcommittee.

Dr David Nichols is senior lecturer in urban planning in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne, and chair of the faculty’s Library Committee. His most recent book, co-authored with Renate Howe and Graeme Davison, is Trendyville (Monash University Publishing, 2014).

Access to items from the Rare Materials Collection of the Architecture, Building and Planning Library can be requested by contacting the service desk at the library. Images of the Glass Slides Collection can be found at https://digitised-collections.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/55798.

1 F. Keith Manzie, ‘Here’s how to get the most out of colour’, Argus, 5 October 1951, p. 14S.
2 John Bayly, personal communication, 27 February 2014.
3 Miles B. Lewis, ‘The development of architectural teaching in the University of Melbourne: A report prepared for the committee’, unpublished report, prepared for the University of Melbourne Committee to Consider all Aspects of the Teaching of Architecture and Building in the University, [1970], copies available in Baillieu Library Rare Books and in the Architecture, Building and Planning Library Rare Materials Collection, University of Melbourne.
4 Bayly, personal communication.
6 Bayly, personal communication.
8 Bayly, personal communication.