2007: the year in review…
This year has been another productive and rewarding one for the Student Projects Program. Many of the University’s cultural collections benefited from student contribution and the students likewise profited from their time spent working closely with a particular collection. Collections fortunate to have students working on them this year included: Special Collections in the Baillieu Library (including the Print Collection), the art collections of the Potter and the Victorian College of the Arts, the science collections of the Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum, the Herbarium and the Physics Museum, the Classics and Archaeology Library Collection, the University of Melbourne Archives and the Malcolm Fraser Collection. The specialised projects continued to attract students from a diverse range of disciplines and a cross-section of tertiary institutions. Further, there was a wide variety of reasons for working on a cultural collections project: from internship subjects through to personal interest and exploration of career options.

In 2007 the projects available to students were varied and challenging, and this year several new collections recently positioned under the ‘cultural collections’ umbrella have provided new opportunities for students. Newly listed collections include the Malcolm Fraser Collection, the Historic Academic Gown Collection, the EJ Moeran Collection (part of the Victorian College of the Arts Library Collection) and the VCA Art Collections. It has been very rewarding to explore and develop projects with these collections.

The students, the projects, the collections…
This year the work undertaken by students as part of the Program has been inspiring. The brief summary that follows provides a glimpse of some of that work:

Jennifer Burt, studying for a Diploma of Library/Information Services at Swinburne University of Technology, completed her Industry Placement with Special Collections in the Baillieu Library. For her project she worked with the large holdings of Government Publications and was responsible for sorting, separating and listing the collections as well as investigating comparative holdings in other libraries in Victoria and Australia.

A student completing a Masters in Applied Science (Library and Information Management) at Charles Sturt University, for his ‘Professional Placement’ subject chose a project at the University of Melbourne Archives (UMA). He worked primarily with the Thomas Laby Collection where he arranged, described and assisted in the physical preservation of the collection. As a result, researcher access to the Collection has been improved.

Planning to enrol in the Post Graduate Certificate in Art Conservation Studies through the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation (CCMC), Alison Eggleton commenced a placement with the Herbarium where she was keen to gain some practical experience in conservation and object handling. Alison worked specifically with the Rupp Collection, where she rehoused a selection of botanical specimens to conservation standards ensuring all historical data was recorded and maintained.

Enrolled in a Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) at Charles Sturt University, Jacinta Fleming for her ‘Professional Placement’ subject, undertook a collection management assignment with Special Collections at the Baillieu. During the intensive two-week experience, she utilised her knowledge and interest in art by working closely with the art-related collections. This included sorting through a number of the artists books, executing basic preventative conservation procedures on the Stanislaus Ostoja-Kotkowski Albums and also writing an article on the Eragny Press for publication in 2008.

Natasha Frisch, also considering further study with the CCMC, last year worked on a project at the Ian Potter Museum of Art as a technical assistant. This year, keen to develop further collection management skills, she worked on the Gerard Herbst Poster Collection. Through this project she was responsible for the cataloguing and conservation flattening of a selection of posters from this extensive international collection.

Jo Herbig is completing a Graduate Certificate in Art History at Melbourne with a view to enrolling in the Master of Art Curatorship in the future. Embarking on a career change, she is keen to gain as much experience as possible in the cultural collections sector and so has undertaken various volunteer
work opportunities including one of the student project placements. Jo has recently commenced working on a Significance Assessment for the VCA Art Collection which will see her working with an important collection of artworks that span the past hundred years.

**Michael Huang**, enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts (Librarianship /Corporate Information Management) at Curtin University of Technology, completed for his ‘Archives Concepts and Practice’ subject a placement at the University of Melbourne Archives. Specifically, Michael worked on the Leonhard Adam Collection and through the hands-on experience of arranging and describing he was exposed to some of the real challenges facing archival collections. Michael later reflected that he found his UMA placement to be an essential practical experience that complemented the theory he had been studying in textbooks and through lectures.

Studying a Bachelor of Arts (Art History) at the University, **Robert Lukins** was keen to gain some professional experience in working closely with an art collection. After being trained in conservation flattening, Robert worked alongside Natasha on the Gerard Herbst Poster Collection at the Potter. Through his time spent cataloguing, humidifying and then flattening a section of this large collection of international poster art, Robert had the opportunity to develop his professional skills and had an insight into how an art museum manages its large and varied collections.

**Amanda McKenzie** is currently completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Monash University where she is majoring in glass blowing and casting. She came to the Program wanting to gain some collection management experience as she is considering applying for the Master of Art Curatorship course. Amanda has been working with the Herbarium’s Rupp Collection where she has been involved in the conservation of this important botanical collection.

**Heather Mills** is enrolled in her second year of a Diploma in Library and Information Services at Box Hill TAFE and as part of her industry placement has been working with Special Collections. Through her placement, she has applied her skills to many facets of the collections including an inventory of the restricted access collection, research, relocating material, re-shelving the Private Press Collection and various other collection-related duties. Heather has a particular interest in all things books and through her placement has been able to combine her professional development with her personal interests.

Enrolled in a Master of Art Curatorship, **Anna Olah** was keen to gain some professional experience through working on the Doris McKellar Photographic Preservation Project at Archives. With a keen interest in both practical and theoretical photography, Anna was able to apply her skills to the archive collection. Her project saw her re-house the collection of 500 negatives that feature images of the University between 1915 and 1919, into preservation packaging thus contributing to their long term stability and accessibility.

**Matthew Potts** was enrolled in a Master of Public History degree at Monash University. For his Public History placement subject, he chose to complete a significance assessment on the botanical models that form part of the Herbarium’s collections. The collection comprises 130 mixed media plant models, mostly European in origin, that date from the early twentieth century. Through his extensive research, Matthew has managed to explore the history of the models themselves as well as the position they have occupied in the teaching of Botany at the University.

In his Honours year of a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne, **Marco Quabba** was eager to take up the opportunity to work with the Baillieu Library Print Collection. Inspired by the insight he had been given to the collection through the Virtual Print Room subject, his project required him to verify that inscription information (including titles and artist details) was correctly recorded on the electronic catalogue. Through close inspection of a selection of prints, Marco analysed the works using artists’ catalogues raisonnés to assist him in confirming and expanding on existing catalogue information.

Continuing on with a project that she commenced last year, **Alison Rabinovici** who is currently enrolled in a Masters in Music (Musicology) at Melbourne, made great progress on the conservation of a 1905 orchestral ledger from the Louise Hanson Dyer Music Library’s Rare Collections. The project has seen her brush vacuuming and rehousing each page in Mylar enclosures. This work will enable this important historical resource to be accessible to future researchers.

**Miriam Riverlea** has a long association with the Centre for Classics and Archaeology, and having just completed her Masters thesis in Classical Studies was keen to continue her involvement with the Centre through a different angle. She chose to work on a Significance Assessment for the Classics and Archaeology Library. This was no small task as the library holds around 20,000 volumes. The completed document will be used to inform future management decisions on the collection.

Completing a Master of Art Curatorship at Melbourne, **Lauren Rogers’** project has seen her working with the Malcolm Fraser Collection. Wanting to broaden her study experience she chose to work with Neville Fraser’s World War One diaries which give an account of his experiences at the Somme, Ypres and Messines Ridge. Lauren’s role has been to transcribe selected content from the diaries which will soon be accessible through the Fraser website.
Thomas Ryan is currently studying for his Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering degree at RMIT University. In a bridging of two of his interests, he is working on a project at the Physics Museum, assisting in the interpretation and display of scientific artefacts in the collection. Through the project, Thomas is writing extended text panels for a selection of the objects and designing the layout for the new display. He is enthusiastic about being able to apply an interest in art with his science background to the Physics Museum’s collections.

Loretta Shepherd, for her internship subject which was part of a Master of Art Curatorship, undertook placement at the University of Melbourne Archives. For her placement, Loretta worked as a curatorial assistant on the Missionaries of Civilisation exhibition (June – October 2007) that explored the Commercial Travellers’ Association of Victoria. For the project she assisted in object selection, research on the Association and contributed an essay to the exhibition catalogue.

Jasmine Targett is currently in her third year of a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Monash University where she is majoring in painting. She has worked on two projects within the Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum. The first project involved cataloguing dental extraction instruments. The second, which she has recently commenced, has her working with the Museum’s photographic collection. In both projects Jasmine has been keen to broaden her understanding of collection management procedures and practices. Interestingly, her cataloguing work with the museum’s collections has been providing much inspiration for her own artistic practice.

Ben Thomas is completing a PhD at the University and since the middle of the year has been working on an exhibition project with Archives. Ben is curating an exhibition entitled The History of Art History at the University of Melbourne to coincide with the 32nd Congress of the International Committee of the History of Art (CIHA), which is being hosted by the Department of Art History on 13-18 January 2008.

Studying for her Masters of Information Management at Curtin University via distance education, Catherine Voutier chose to work on a project at the University of Melbourne Archives. For her Industry Placement subject, Catherine has been working specifically with the Malcolm Fraser Collection where she has been arranging and describing the Family History Records.

Liz Cohen who last year co-curated an exhibition entitled Casting the Ancient World, is working in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford which is currently undergoing a £61 million renovation. She started as a volunteer in early 2007 in the Antiquities Department where she worked on a number of projects including grant applications, exhibition development and various collection management duties. Liz is currently employed on a short term contract as a Gallery and Documentation Assistant where she is assisting in the implementation of the new museum database and is also supporting curators in the Antiquities Department as they develop their gallery plans for the new Ashmolean (due to open in 2009).

Kathleen Kiernan who worked on a collection management project with the Baillieu Library Print Collection, has since completed her Masters thesis on the collected works of Jan van de Velde II held in the John Orde Poynton Collection, Baillieu Library. She was also successful in securing the Harold Wright Scholarship which has meant that for the past six months she has been based at the British Museum studying the extensive collections in the Department of Prints and Drawings and continuing her research into Jan van de Velde II. Inspired by her research on the artist, Kathleen is currently in the process of curating an exhibition of this beautiful collection of 17th century Dutch etchings. The exhibition Journeys and Places; Etchings by Jan van de Velde II from the Poynton Collection, will be on show in the Ian Potter Museum of Art in early 2009.

Lucy Spencer, who in 2006 completed research on the plaster anatomical models in the Harry Brookes Allen Museum, is currently employed by the Victorian Arts Centre where she is working with the Performing Arts Collections. She has just started cataloguing the Circus Oz Collection which should prove to be very entertaining work.
Kerrianne Stone, who last year co-curated the exhibition Casting the Ancient World, has been working at the Ian Potter Museum of Art where she was the Project Officer for the Henderson Bequest Digitisation Project. Kerrianne was responsible for coordinating the project which has seen the artworks professionally photographed with the images added to the collection catalogue and subsequently available to the public through the museum’s website. She has recently commenced work on a digitisation project with the Baillieu Library Print Collection.

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**Personal reflections on two of the projects...**

Robert Lukins gives an insight into his experience with the Gerard Herbst Poster Collection at the Potter, while Lauren Rogers reflects on her placement with the Malcolm Fraser Collection.

*Between the months of March and July this year, Natasha Frisch and I accepted the Cultural Collections’ invitation to take part in one of their student projects working with the Gerard Herbst Poster Collection. Not knowing a great deal about the collection, we arrived promptly at our first meeting with the supervising staff, keen and bright-eyed to learn what the semester had in store for us. The Herbst collection comprises approximately two thousand posters representing art, film, graphic design, exhibition, theatre and many other subjects. The posters come from all over the world, many from Eastern Europe and date from the mid to late twentieth century.*

A large proportion of the posters had been stored for many years in cardboard cylinders, and it was necessary to apply a process of conservation flattening and stabilisation to these vulnerable works on paper. It was here with humidifying tent and HB pencil in hand, that Natasha and I stepped up to the crease. Over the coming weeks, we received instruction and training in a broad range of areas including artwork handling, condition reporting, humidifying and flattening, cataloguing and database management. Throughout the entire process we had a number of staff and supervisors from the Museum whom we could call upon for assistance and advice. The Herbst collection is a daunting group of works but we felt supported by a fantastic team of art industry professionals.

*The proof in the Student Projects Program pudding came as we neared the end of our twelve week project and were both asked to stay on at the Potter in on-going contracts of paid employment. We are now able to apply the skills and experiences we gained with the Herbst Collection to our current projects. Working on a volunteer basis for Cultural Collections granted us skills and opportunities that would otherwise have certainly passed us by. Taking part in the Program was fulfilling, engaging and not nearly as dull as watching posters flatten might sound!*

*Robert Lukins, November 2007*

*In July I started an internship with the University of Melbourne’s Cultural Collections through the Student Projects Program where I worked with the Malcolm Fraser Collection. This allowed me to work in the Archives, learn best-practice in object handling and work closely with the diaries of Neville Fraser. The project involved transcribing the World War 1 diaries of (John) Neville Fraser, the father of Malcolm Fraser, who kept detailed diary records from 1914-18. These detailed diaries began before war broke out in 1914 and paint a picture of life in the early twentieth century from the point of view of a young Australian man, studying at Oxford, who is attempting to convince his family that he should enlist rather than continue at law school. As war breaks out across Europe, Neville Fraser found himself enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery and went on to fight at major battles on the Somme, Ypres and Messines Ridge. During this time he was twice injured, but returned home from a war that many did not.*

At some times challenging to decipher, the hand written diaries included short-hand notations and slang phrases from the 1920s that with time became remarkably easy to read. Perhaps the most interesting excerpts from the diary are those that don’t concern the war, but those from before his enlistment and during his training. It is in these passages that both the naivety and youth of Neville Fraser are apparent; whether chasing girls (referred to interchangeably as ‘wimps’ or ‘flappers’), swimming or playing roulette with his friends, his boyishness makes the scenes of war have even greater impact.

*During my internship I was lucky to work closely with the curator of the Malcolm Fraser Collection, Dr Caitlin Stone, who would often lend a hand in deciphering the meaning and handwriting of Neville Fraser. The project also required researching names, dates and events mentioned in the diaries and providing this information, along with the digitized excerpts of the diaries to form the basis of the website. These digitized excerpts along with my transcriptions will be available soon on the Malcolm Fraser website and will encourage further research into this important primary source material.*

*Lauren Rogers, November 2007*

**Wrap up for the year...**

This year has seen some outstanding results due to the enthusiasm of the students, the collection managers and other interested staff who are keen to ensure that the University's cultural collections remain a valuable and engaging resource on the campus and beyond. Through the Student Projects Program the management, understanding and appreciation of these unique collections has been extended, and students, collection managers and the collections have been enriched through this exchange. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved with the Student Projects Program this year, whether directly as participants or indirectly as supporters. It has been a very rewarding year and we look forward to building on this success in 2008.

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