

# Introduction

James McCluskey

The University of Melbourne is a comprehensive, research-intensive university with a research expenditure rivalling that of the CSIRO. Our researchers are at the forefront of international scholarship in fields as diverse as human rights law, climate change, telecommunications and medicine.

As this issue of *University of Melbourne Collections* demonstrates, our cultural collections provide a unique research resource, for academics, professional staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the broader community. For instance, Dr Caitlin Stone and Dr Jim Berryman discuss a largely unexplored source of information about the early years of Australia's longest-serving prime minister, Sir Robert Menzies. Notebooks from Menzies' time as a law student, tutor and young barrister moving into politics tell us about his abilities and interests as a scholar, his personality and reputation on campus during World War I, and even his attempts at writing poetry. While the original manuscripts are preserved in the Baillieu Library, as is Menzies' personal library, a digitisation project has made his notebooks freely available to historians everywhere.

Opening up access to resources in this way is becoming even more

important as research becomes a global enterprise, with scholars on opposite sides of the world sharing information and collaborating to solve problems. For similar reasons, forging strong links with universities on other continents is increasingly beneficial. Kim Goldsmith, studying cultural materials conservation at Melbourne, and Emily Robins, an art history graduate from the University of Birmingham, are the latest students to swap cities for a few months and work on the cultural collections of their partner Universitas 21 institutions. The breadth of their experience is impressive, from dealing sensitively with anatomical specimens and models, to displaying finely crafted West African artefacts.

Other articles include Lili Belle Birchall's discussion of the Peter MacCallum Radiology Collection, recently donated by the Peter Mac to our own Medical History Museum, further tying our organisations together in partnership; Cathleen Rosier's look at the collection of Dr Samuel Arthur Ewing, whose choices of paintings and other works of art reveal much about this early benefactor of the university's art collection; and geology alumnus Craig Robertson's account of the story behind the beautiful ginkgo

tree outside the Geology Building on the Parkville campus—an example of a 'living fossil' whose discovery by European scientists can be traced through rare books held in the University Library. I hope you enjoy reading these and the other contributions to this issue of *University of Melbourne Collections*.



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