

Museums and Collections Projects Program 2021

University of Melbourne

Law Rare Books Collection, University Library

Project Description

Collection Management - Research project

The Project

The focus of this project will be to conduct research into a selection of texts and materials in the Law Rare Books Collection. New information generated will be used to enrich the catalogue and to enhance research guides that highlight the significant works within the Collection. This new research will expand our understanding of these materials and aid future appreciation, interpretation and management of the Collection.

Background

The [Law Rare Books Collection](#) is an important public collection of rare and early legal texts. The collection is of research significance not only to lawyers, but also to researchers of legal, social and cultural history. It has particularly strong holdings of early printed law texts, law reports, seventeenth-century political pamphlets, classic legal texts and material relating to Australian Federation and the early years of the Commonwealth. Its nineteenth-century holdings are a good representative example of a colonial lawyer's library and are significant for what they can tell us about the practice of law in early Victoria. The collection's links to the beginnings of the University of Melbourne – via the collections of individuals such as William Edward Hearn and Sir Redmond Barry – make it of significance to Melbourne Law School and the University community more broadly.

Details

Working in consultation with the Law Librarian, the student will have the opportunity to research a selection of volumes or item types from the Law Rare Books Collection such as Justice of the Peace manuals, law books for students and pamphlets from the reign of Charles 1. Potential areas for investigation may include provenance, historical importance and their significance in the study of law today. To carry out this research the student may need to seek additional expert advice from professionals in external cultural institutions with similar collections. The findings from these studies will be used to enhance research guides on the texts. Further, those items with particular significance may also be highlighted on the Law Rare Books Collection website. The student will need the ability to work independently and be competent in use of the library and its catalogues (progress towards the completion of a degree in History / Law / Art Curatorship would be ideal). A knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of rare books would be advantageous. As this project involves creating content for information sheets, research guides and potentially the collection's website, well-developed research and writing skills are required. Sound oral and written communication skills are also needed as this role requires liaison with academics and collections staff. An interest in rare books and the history of Law would be ideal.

Benefits

The opportunity to work closely with the UoM's cultural collections and for professional development through experience gained in collection management procedures and practice. This project will improve knowledge of the collection, and assist in making it more accessible thereby contributing to its long-term management.

Supervisor

Carole Hinchcliff, Law School Librarian

