

# Introduction

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Art historians at the University of Melbourne have always been involved in the study of print cultures. Allied to this commitment has been the contribution of successive professors in creating a collection—of considerable quality—of old master and Australian prints for the Baillieu Library. This work began with Sir Joseph Burke, the first Herald Chair of Fine Arts, who was instrumental in securing the gift of the Orde Poynton Collection of old master prints and rare books in 1959 and the Harold Wright Bequest of 1964. The Print Collection and Rare Books Collection in the Baillieu Library are comprehensive in their coverage of many of the greatest printmakers in Western art. Students and staff as well as researchers from the wider community need only search the online catalogue and make an appointment with the curator to view original etchings and engravings by artists of the calibre of Dürer, Callot, Rembrandt, Hogarth and Goya. Many of Australia's pre-eminent printmakers, especially the Lindsay family, are also represented. Classes are held regularly in the library, complemented by online engagement, for example through the subject *Virtual print room* in which students undertake all the tasks of a curator in developing and staging a museum exhibition.

As well as distinguishing the University of Melbourne from many other institutions of learning, the cultural collections open the way for collaboration and sharing. In this issue of *University of Melbourne Collections* there is an article by Dr Colin Holden, based on his research as the Redmond Barry Fellow. The annual Barry Fellowship is jointly funded by the university and the State Library of Victoria, and fosters research that makes links between the collections of both. Dr Holden's research on prints by the Piranesi family will result in a further collaboration: a major exhibition at the State Library in 2014, bringing together works from the library, university and National Gallery of Victoria.

The Baillieu Library's Piranesi volumes are remarkable. They were bought by the first Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, James Goold, when he was a parish priest at Perugia in Italy and later accompanied him to Australia. They were purchased by the University of Melbourne from the Catholic Archdiocese in 1974–75, and are in exceptional condition. Few print rooms anywhere in the world have such a complete holding of the works of Piranesi.

It was the generous bequest of a curator at the National Gallery who also had strong connections with the University of Melbourne, the late Dr Ursula Hoff, that established an internship for researchers to work with the print collections of the gallery and the university. Karen Ball's article on prints illustrating the role and status of women in society was made possible by the Ursula Hoff Internship.

Over recent years the collections have helped forge an international partnership—a student exchange between the universities of Birmingham and Melbourne initiated by Clare Mullett (Birmingham) and Helen Arnoldi (Melbourne). During her placement here earlier this year, Birmingham doctoral student Emily Millward curated an exhibition of rare botanical books from the Baillieu Library, as well as working with Egyptian artefacts in the Classics and Archaeology Collection.

I am sure you will enjoy reading about these and other projects that draw upon the diversity of cultural collections at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Jaynie Anderson holds the Herald Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne.