

# International Museums and Collections Award 2012

Emily Millward

The International Museums and Collections Award is just one of the many professional development opportunities supported by Universitas 21, an international network of research-intensive universities established in 1997. This award involves the placement of a student from the University of Birmingham at the University of Melbourne (and vice versa) for four weeks, to experience the variety of cultural collections that the host university has to offer. The placement gives students from a range of disciplines a behind-the-scenes view of museum and collections work, as well as introducing some of the many skills required to work in the museums and heritage sector.

With my background as an archaeology and ancient history undergraduate and my current studies in Egyptology, I have always been interested in objects and museums. But I feel fortunate to also be curious about a wide area of history, across various cultures and chronologies. So when the opportunity to apply for this prestigious award was presented to me, it was too good to miss. My application led to an interview during which I had to give a talk about an aspect of museums. My initial thought was to discuss the



different types of jobs that museum staff undertake, but in my mind this did not represent the value of the work that museums carry out. In the end I spoke about 'Museums: Creators of history', discussing my idea that every action that a museum undertakes on an object adds to its history, a history that does not come

to an end when an object enters a museum collection. I mentioned that if I was chosen as the award winner I would be honoured to work closely with some of the objects in the University of Melbourne's collections and would feel privileged to be a part of their history and create individual moments on their object timeline.

**Previous page:** Emily Millward conserving a fragile book at the Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, University of Melbourne. Photograph by Marika Kocsis.

**Below:** Emily Millward with a finished book cradle for her rare book display. Photograph by Kerriane Stone.

My experience with the collections at the University of Melbourne was truly fantastic. I completed a range of projects including planning a children's treasure hunt for the 2012 Cultural Treasures Festival, researching Egyptian objects in the Classics and Archaeology Collection at the Ian Potter Museum of Art and creating a display titled 'Leaves from the literary garden' using botanical volumes from Special Collections in the Baillieu Library. I developed skills ranging from object research, handling and basic conservation, through to all the elements that go into curating and installing an exhibition. I found the diversity of objects at Melbourne amazing and the placement was certainly a great experience when looking ahead to a career in the museums and heritage sector. It was beneficial for me to compare how different university collection departments function, and I certainly learnt to appreciate the importance of making museum collections, especially those at a university, more accessible to a wider audience. I will be taking many ideas back with me to the Research and Cultural Collections Department at the University of Birmingham, where I know they will be implemented successfully.



The award partnership between the University of Melbourne and the University of Birmingham creates links between the award winners and the objects with which they work, thus adding to the history of these objects in the university collections.

Emily Millward holds a BA (Hons) in archaeology and ancient history from the University of Birmingham and is undertaking a PhD there in Egyptology.

The International Museums and Collections Award has been supported at the University of Melbourne by the University Library, Senior Vice-Principal, U21 Manager, Melbourne Global Mobility and School of Culture and Communication. Supporters at the University of Birmingham include staff of the Research and Cultural Collections Department and the International Office. To find out more about the International Student Projects Program, see [www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/projects/international/](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/projects/international/).