

Introduction

Justin Zobel



Our cultures and technologies are interwoven, influencing each other in unexpected ways. This is evident in social histories, where the interactions between people and communities shape events, but also in the histories of fields of endeavour: science, technology, medicine, economics, art, music, history. Refinements in engineering create devices that enable advances in the science of physics; developments in physics give rise to new possibilities in computing; circuit designs developed for computation are reimagined to create synthesizers that allow new forms of music; while art captures practices in medicine and inspires reflections on our humanity.

Cultural collections can help us consider our own discipline from a different point of view. This issue of *University of Melbourne Collections* contains many examples of overlaps and intersections between contrasting fields of enquiry. Joe Pascoe considers the Ed Muirhead Physics Museum from a humanities perspective, reminding us that the physicist in whose honour it is named was also an accomplished musician, as well as a man of religious faith. Jacqueline Healy explores an intersection between art and

medicine: contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander paintings, etchings, sculptures and other artworks that illustrate the medical knowledge of the first Australians. These record a deep understanding of the therapeutic uses of plants and animals, and demonstrate that Indigenous bush medicine is thriving in many communities today.

We can take pride in the part that Melbourne has played in fostering new technologies. Richard Gillespie tells us how the School of Computing and Information Systems Collection preserves evidence of this university's pioneering work in the field since the 1950s. The 1960s and 1970s saw the advent of music synthesizers on campus, with the Grainger Museum becoming a laboratory for electronic music under the leadership of figures such as Keith Humble and Warren Burt. David Chesworth shares with us his own recollections of the excitement of using the latest technologies to produce radically new music.

Sir Russell Grimwade, one of the university's most generous benefactors, was in his professional life a man of science: an industrialist and pharmaceuticals manufacturer. Yet he indulged his interest in

Australian history by assembling a fine collection of colonial art and books, which he and Lady Grimwade eventually bequeathed to the university. Debbie Robinson tells us about an intriguing aspect of Grimwade's collection—glass paperweights. These small but exquisite fusions of artistry, chemical science, and technical expertise encapsulate Grimwade's wide-ranging intellect.

Our lead story features another generous benefactor: Michael Buxton. This successful property developer and his family have donated to the university not only a substantial collection of contemporary Australian art, but also the funds to build and operate a gallery, the beautiful new Buxton Contemporary on the Southbank campus. Andrew Stephens tells us about this latest, and highly significant, addition to the university's cultural collections.

I am sure readers will gain much from these and the other articles in this issue of *University of Melbourne Collections*.

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