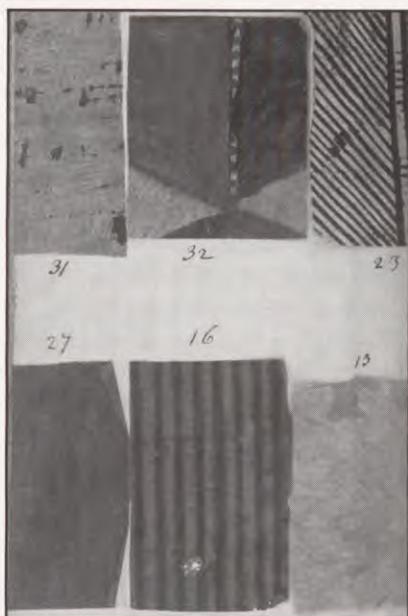


# FROM PAPER TO HYPERSPACE

BY David Cunnington



Digitising projects include (above) Plate from *A Natural History of the Birds of New South Wales* by John William Lewin, London, 1822 and (below) Samples from *Different Specimens of Cloth Collected in Three Voyages of Captain Cook to the Southern Hemisphere, 1787*. (University of Melbourne Library Collection.)



**T**HE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE Library acts as a filter for library users by collecting quality information resources that provide the building blocks of knowledge, and perhaps occasionally, a glimpse of wisdom. It does this now, as it has done so in the past, through a range of information artefacts, most commonly of the paper and ink variety. But it has never been a purely paper and ink library.

Information has always been packaged in ways other than the codex. Already by the 1950s, when the Baillieu Library was built, the new storage medium of microfilm was beginning to emerge. Film, fiche and card were a revolution in library storage and access, and only a hint of what was to come.

Very quickly the Baillieu's information collections included audio recordings, first on records and tape. Later information came on compact disc. Pictures, manuscripts, archives, slides, kits, and filmstrips emerged as the new artefacts of the 1960s. By the 1970s the computer file made its appearance, first remotely via modem connections, then via compact disc within the Library. Online bibliographic indexes that were once only available at high cost and with often precarious connections were suddenly in the Library on CD-ROM and available for searching on a desktop computer.

Paradoxically, by the 1990s with the introduction of the World Wide Web we have come full circle and we once again access our information remotely, no longer via modem but directly through the Web. With the growth of the Web it is now possible to publish full text electronic versions of journals and books, and a whole new industry of electronic publishing and distribution has begun.

We have added these new resources to our collections as well.

Unfortunately, perhaps not for Library users but for those managing these artefacts, while new formats of publication are developed and hit the market, the old ones don't really go away. For many libraries, including the Baillieu, collections no longer mean paper and ink but any format that can store or hold information.

In this decade the concept of the library only as a physical building housing all the collections has become an outdated paradigm. The electronic and digital revolutions means that libraries are no longer limited in their selection of what can be bought and put on the shelves. It is also possible to provide physical access seamlessly to resources held elsewhere on the Web. The information provision paradigm has shifted from ownership to access. This has not only meant a rethink of library buildings but also the realisation that the information seeker can gain access to the library from virtually anywhere as long as they have access to the World Wide Web. Libraries, including the Baillieu, are shifting away from the reality of a static physical building toward the idea of a virtual place or gateway.

There has been a growing realisation that what librarians are managing is no longer simply a library, not quite a "cybrary" (the totally virtual collection as some of the soothsayers have predicted), but a combination of formats; that is better described as the hybrid library (or "hybrary".) In the hybrary, the challenge is to achieve a balance between resource formats in order to derive the best value for money in providing information to the University. It

is this imperative that has prompted the University Library over the past few years to consider opportunities for the gradual replacement of some paper and ink publications with access to electronic versions. It has also opened up possibilities for the digitisation of existing resources. This provides a means of making current collections more accessible to library users, both within the Library building and remotely from anywhere on the Web.

Ironically it has been the potential users of some of our older, rarer and least accessible publications who have benefited most from the rapid arrival of the digital age. Some of the digitisation projects for our arts and humanities collections that have been completed or are currently in publication include the following:

**Exam Papers** — as one of the most heavily used publications in the Library the digitisation of University of Melbourne exam papers was an early project that now delivers, via the Library's Web site and Buddy service, over 1,200 separate exam papers in selected subjects from 1996 onwards.

**Cambridge Manuscript** — in conjunction with a rare books exhibition to highlight the donation by Pierre Gorman of over 1,300 books about Cambridge University and the city of Cambridge, a digital facsimile of one of the manuscripts in the collection was produced and promptly sold out. An accompanying online exhibition is currently in production. The work is a superbly illustrated manuscript titled *Foundation of the Universitie of Cambridge: an herald manuscript depicting the arms of the Earls of Cambridge, the Chancellors of Cambridge University and the colleges of Cambridge University*, dated 1662. The facsimile and images for the online exhibition were produced by first photographing each page onto film and then creating digital images by scanning the transparencies.

**Lewin's Birds** — this is a copy of the first surviving London edition of the beautifully illustrated John William

Lewin's *A Natural History of the Birds of New South Wales*, published in London in 1822. The complete work has been digitised, again from photographic transparencies. The online exhibition is currently in production.

**Cook's Tapa Cloths** — a very rare and fragile tapa cloth book, *A catalogue of the Different Specimens of Cloth Collected in Three Voyages of Captain Cook to the Southern Hemisphere*, published in London for Alexander Shaw in 1787. The complete work has been digitised and an online exhibition is in production.

**Farrago** — the University's student newspaper began in 1925 and various archival collections, in paper and microfilm, are held in the University of Melbourne Library, the State Library of Victoria, and the Rowden White Library. This project aims to convert the complete set of *Farrago* from 1925 onwards. Already 1950 to 1998 have been digitised and stored on CD-ROM for conservation and access purposes. *Farrago* will be available on the University Library's Web site once arrangements for copyright have been resolved.

**Maps** — a range of antique and historic maps, including collections of rare planning maps of Melbourne, are currently being digitised for the Library's Map Collection. These will be available from the Library's Web site.

**Online Exhibitions** — the opportunity for publishing digital images of the Library's rarer collections is continued through the production of online exhibitions that complement the Library's physical exhibition program. These continue to be published and are available from the Library's Web site.

Additional projects are in various stages of production, including a database of archival photographs of the University, individual online exhibitions, Art in the Library projects, and continuing research into the feasibility of high use electronic reserve collections.

The future of electronic library resources for the University Library also includes video and audio streaming, further links from catalogues and indexes directly to full text titles, 24 hour, seven days a week access for all University of Melbourne staff and students from anywhere in the world, further digitisation of existing collections, and the creation of multimedia publications that will continue to assist library users to access our civilisation's memories and knowledge. The proliferation of information in multiple formats reinforces the need for filtering and quality support for library users. It makes the selection of resources an even more important role for librarians in the digital age. The value that the University Library offers to its users is represented by the total of the benefits we provide — by selecting, providing physical and intellectual access, time and cost savings, ease of use, relevance, reliability, trustworthiness — less the costs to the user. Electronic products are now an established resource in the Library's collections and provide new benefits to users that were unimaginable when the Baillieu Library opened its doors in 1959.

As we continue to serve our users 40 years on, in a hybrid library that maintains its "tightness of fit" with the information needs of our academic community, we will rely increasingly on the growing supply of electronic products. We will also rely increasingly on human intervention and assistance to ensure that administrators, academics, scholars and students continue to obtain value from their investment. And hopefully we might also use the electronic information revolution to help us on our journey from information to knowledge, and possibly move us a little closer to wisdom. ■

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