

# Museums and Collections Projects Program 2021

## University of Melbourne

### Rare Maps Collections, Special Collections

#### Project Description

##### Research project – History of the Rare Maps Collection

#### The Project

This project involves completing research into different facets of the Rare Maps Collection to gain a better understanding of its history within the University, and to provide a context for interpreting this significant collection. In addition to creating a brief history of the Collection, this project will involve identifying collection strengths especially in relation to the Walker Collection, and surveying the online holdings to examine the role of Melbourne and Victorian maps within the Collection. Research findings will inform on-line descriptions, contribute to the compilation of a collection development report and facilitate better discovery of the Collection.

#### Background

In 2020 the Rare and Historic Map Collection transitioned out of the general collection and moved to Special Collections held in the Baillieu Library. This move has resulted in a need to better describe these rare maps and record their history. The [Rare Maps Collection](#) is part of the [Special Collections](#) and comprises approximately 15,000 sheet and atlas maps. The criterion for inclusion of an item in the Rare Maps Collection is a production date of pre-1950 for maps of Australian origin, and pre-1900 for maps of other places of origin. Other maps not qualifying by this criterion are included if deemed to be of special historic or cultural significance, rare, particularly fragile, or holding particular interest for research eg. maps of particular place of origin, thematic maps of particular interest or of an unusual nature. The earliest items in the Rare Maps Collection date from the fifteenth century and it is an important collection of historically significant maps. The Rare Maps Collection is the most significant collection of its kind in an institute of education in Victoria, and more research is needed to assess its significance relative to similar collections within Australia.

#### Details

Under direction of the Prints Curator and in consultation with the Maps Librarian, the student will complete research into the Rare Maps Collection. This research may include: developing a written definition of the rare and historic map collection by drawing on the Collection's statement of significance and examining the online holdings; writing a brief history of the Collection at UoM which will involve contacting current/former collection managers; identifying the strengths of the Rare Maps Collection, in particular the Walker Collection, and writing a definition of the collection which may include liaison with donors to further contextualise the collection; examining the role of maps of Melbourne and Victoria in the context of the rare collection by viewing online holdings. Research findings will be utilised to inform online descriptions of the Rare Maps Collection and contribute to the compilation of a collection development report. Ideally the student will understand collection management principles specific to the documentation of museum objects (progress towards a relevant degree would be ideal). Knowledge of the correct procedures for the safe handling of collection items is required, as this position requires the inspection of vulnerable paper-based collections. Sound research skills and the ability to work independently on research leads is needed. A knowledge of history and an interest in maps and geography would be well regarded.

#### Benefits

Opportunity to work closely with one of the University of Melbourne's extensive cultural collections and for professional development through experience gained in collection management procedures and practice. Satisfaction gained from completing research and contributing to greater discoverability of the Rare Maps Collection.

#### Supervisor

Kerriane Stone, Curator - Prints

