

BOOK DATA *in Australia*

Book Data has
**opened a local contact
office in Australia,**
appointing Glenda Roach
to act on their behalf.

Book Data in Australia
Reply Paid 20
PO Box 746
Noosa Heads Qld 4567
Phone (074) 74 8544
Fax (074) 74 5202

The new office serves as a
point-of-contact for
all enquiries.

Now... publishers have a local contact address for

- making enquiries about Book Data's services.
- sending updated title information to.
- regular and accessible correspondence.

Glenda can be contacted any time

- directly at the new office on Wednesdays.
- all messages, faxes and mail can be sent to Book Data in Australia, marked for her attention.

Book Data in Australia
Working with us couldn't be easier

Book Data in Australia
Reply Paid 20, PO Box 746
Noosa Heads Qld 4567.
Tel (074) 74 8544 Fax (074) 74 5202
Book Data in the UK
Northumberland House
2 King St, Twickenham TW1 3RZ UK
Tel +44 181 892 2272 Fax +44 181 892 9109

Cover story

The Australian War

Pam Ray, curator AWM photographs section

The photographs collection of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) is one of the largest collections of photographic images housed in Australia, with over 900 000 images.

The concept of a memorial which would also be a museum and research library had been in the mind of one man from the early days of World War I. The journalist, historian, and Official War Correspondent Charles Bean began taking photographs and encouraged Australian troops to collect, some would say scavenge, artifacts for what he envisioned might one day become a permanent memorial to those who lost their lives in the 'Great War'.

The collection comprises two parts. The first is official Australian Government archival material, photographs taken by government employees, and subject to the provisions of the *Archives Act* and the *Australian War Memorial Act*, including some taken by Frank Hurley, Hubert Wilkins, Damien Parer and George Silk. Other well-known photographers represented in the official collection include Max Dupain, Olive Cotton, Laurie LeGuay, Ron Berg and Ern McQuillan.

The second is images donated by private individuals. The earliest official photographs date from 1916, and the most recent depict peacekeeping activities in Somalia. The earliest privately donated image is a daguerrotype of a member of the Bean family, while the most recent documents the work of the contingent, mainly medical staff, who served in Rwanda in 1995.

Unlike most collections the AWM collection is a negative-based one. Nonetheless, every form of photographic process is represented in the collection. Some of the images were processed in the field in less than ideal conditions, and this poses unique problems for our conservation staff. All the official cellulose nitrate negatives of historical importance (about 160 000), mainly from World War II, have been duplicated for preservation purposes. Work was completed in December 1995 on decontaminating, cleaning and rehousing the entire collection of images on glass, mainly World War I images, totalling about 90 000.

The next step will be to desilver them, duplicate them, produce a print then write captions. The glass cleaning program, which took two years to complete, was only made possible under the Australian Government's LEAP program for unemployed youth. Some segments of the acetate negative collection dating from the 1950s to the 1970s are showing severe deterioration and are being duplicated in our current conservation program. All the official colour material shot after 1960 has been duplicated, and the precious World War I Frank Hurley colour Paget plates will be duplicated this year.

Most captions are written by staff and consultants working within the photographs section, but at times we enlist the aid of donors, current and former military per-

Memorial photograph collection

sonnel, and experts on the AWM staff. The captions contain sufficient detail about what is significant in the image, keeping in mind that future generations (it is hoped) will have no personal experience of war.

In 1990 a start was made on capturing images for incorporation in an integrated collection management system. The photographs section is the system's largest customer, with approximately 165 000 images on the system with accompanying full-text, fully searchable, narrative captions.

The images previously held in analogue form have been converted to digital form and will be available via a new OPAC in the AWM research centre, and on every staff member's desk, by February 1996. Eventually it is hoped to make images and text available to a wider public, rather than to just visitors to the Memorial.

To make photograph captions searchable by a variety of access points it was decided to take advantage of the cost savings offered by use of a commercial automatic indexing package. This has worked very successfully and staff time savings are significant.

Some librarians will wonder why AWM does not use for its photograph collection Library of Congress or some other recognized standard subject headings, MARC cataloguing and so on. The simple answer is that standard systems do not cope well with the intricacies of rank and uniform, military unit hierarchies, and search techniques and terms to satisfy users seeking pictures of equipment varying from the latest technology to obsolete nineteenth century rifles.

An aspect of the collection which is often overlooked is its value to social and

urban historians. For instance, a group of Australians today would have different faces to those who crowded the rails of troopships going overseas in 1940. Development in city streetscapes can be followed from images of troops marching off to the Sudan war, to South Africa in 1899, to Egypt in 1914–1918, and to subsequent conflicts, along Swanston Street, along George Street, and to the Brisbane Town Hall.

The photographs collection was heavily used during the 1995 *Australia remembers* activities, with images from the collection used by RSL clubs, major art galleries, families seeking photographs, newspapers and other publishers.

It is anticipated that use of this and other AWM collections will stay at a high level following the greater public awareness of our rich resources. It is a collection with something for everyone. ■



Pam Ray, curator, and Ian Affleck, assistant curator, AWM photographs section, searching the photographs image database

In 1990 a start was made on capturing images for incorporation in an integrated collection management system. Eventually it is hoped to make images and text available to a wider public, rather than to just visitors to the Memorial.