

Exactly what makes special

Over thirty years have passed since the original Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (now known as AIATSIS) was founded to fund and coordinate research into Aboriginal cultures throughout Australia. Great changes in the Institute's perceptions about research into and by indigenous peoples have occurred in this time. The Institute has also been a major player in establishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies as an important facet of educational life in Australia.

The AIATSIS special collections of pictorial, recorded sound, and film and video, have formed primarily as products of the research endeavours of the Institute and particularly its research grants program. Research into a wide variety of aspects of

hours of language, music and oral history tapes, and a film and video collection of over 10 000 viewing hours.

Importantly not all of this material has resulted from grantee research. All of the collections pursue active acquisition policies which aim to increase both historical as well as contemporary materials, and for twenty five years the Institute had its own ethnographic film unit which produced many films at the request of Aboriginal communities. Other notable examples of Institute projects involving acquisition of material into the Special Collections include the 1988 *After 200 years project* which resulted in the addition of 50 000 photographs and numerous oral history tapes. The *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, published in print and CD

in 1994, was an extensive user of special collections resources and also added significantly to their holdings.

But what makes these large audio visual collections so special? They are indeed the largest collections of their kind relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in existence in the world. But they have other special qualities.

They are characterised by their quality of being the raw materials of research endeavours rather than the more finished products such as academic theses, published articles or books or manuscript reports. This aspect, coupled with the inherent cultural sensibili-

ties of much of this material means that access to these collections becomes another area of difference from public libraries. Until this year access to materials in any of the



AIATSIS

Death Dance from Mabuiag Island, 1898 (AC Haddon Collection, Courtesy Cambridge University Museum). The Special Collections often hold important copies of significant historical material. For example it is possible to find photographs, wax cylinder sound recordings and early film footage made by the 1898 AC Haddon Expedition to the Torres Strait

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures funded and coordinated through the Institute has resulted in large collections which now comprise 500 000 photographs, 24 000

collections so special?

special collections was very time consuming for both clientele and staff. Access required an appointment with one of the collection managers (who are subject specialists rather than librarians), searching three separate databases to obtain listings of the contents of the various collections and arranging of specialist copying services in a position to provide copies.

In response to an almost overwhelming increase in demand for services from the special collections, both from Aboriginal people and communities and as part of the wider Australian and international interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, a new direction to enhance access to quality information and materials from these collections is about to be trialed.

This new direction involves utilising the potential offered by the new information technologies. The achievement of the CD-ROM version of the *Encyclopaedia of*

Aboriginal Australia has demonstrated the advantages in being able to integrate pictures, sound and film. As part of an Institute-wide initiative the special collections will concentrate on progressively producing in digital-format, selected groupings of materials from the collections. These will be developed to meet our most frequent requests and core collections of still and moving images, language, music and oral history materials will also be produced.

The primary aim of the new direction is to enhance the quality of access and service to our clientele. The new resources will be selected, researched, cross-referenced and presented in ways which will revolutionise the accessibility and usefulness of collection materials for our clients. Access will cross the former boundaries of specific media and will be immediate via computer screens with facilities to obtain direct copies.

Carol Cooper, special collections manager

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ALIA Special Libraries Section (Qld Group)

QUEENSLAND SPECIAL LIBRARIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Aims

- To recognise an information professional who has demonstrated outstanding achievement within information services;
- To promote the profession of information services to the wider community;
- To encourage membership of Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and active involvement in divisional activities.

Selection Criteria

Suitable candidates exhibit the following criteria:

- Willingness to share professional expertise and to participate in formal and informal networking activities.
- Evidence of efficient and effective management practices.
- Demonstration of successful promotion of the library and/or information service resulting in the achievement of a high profile with an educated and satisfied clientele.
- Evidence of professional involvement, either past or present, in ALIA divisional activities. Details of involvement may also include a list of published materials.

Conditions and Nomination

The conditions are set out in the Policies and Procedures. For copies of this and nominations forms, please contact:

Beth Mayo
Manager, Library Services, Coopers & Lybrand
GPO Box 150 BRISBANE
Telephone: (07) 3877 8663

Nominations must be received by the Selection Committee by 30 March 1996.

This Award is sponsored by ISA Australia.

Australian Library and Information Association

DUNN & WILSON SCHOLARSHIP

Aim

To provide a library technician with the opportunity to investigate a particular project relating to the practice of library technicians, which will increase his/her professional/occupational experience.

Conditions

- The Scholarship is valued at \$4000 for 1996. Applicants will bear any costs above that amount.
- Available to practicing library technician members of the Library Technicians Section of the Association.
- For the purpose of undertaking a project on an issue of relevance to the development and improvement of the practice of library technicians and/or library and information services in Australia.
- The project may include a study tour, either overseas or interstate, to survey the employment or education of library technicians; professional development to enhance the recipient's role; preparation of a publication; research/investigation in such areas as automation, conservation, technical services in relation to the practice of library technicians.
- The project is to culminate in a report presented in two parts:
 - A comprehensive report, suitable for publication as a journal article, forwarded to the National Executive of the Library Technicians Section within 4 months of the project's culmination.
 - The presentation of the 'Dunn & Wilson Oration' at the following National Library Technicians Conference.

Applications

Application forms are available from the Membership Officer at the ALIA National Office.

**This scholarship is jointly sponsored by
LJ Cullen Bookbinders and Apollo Moon Bookbinders,
Divisions of Dunn & Wilson**