



## What a way to spend Easter!

The National Library holds the largest and most significant folk collection in Australia, with field recordings documenting traditional music going back to the nineteenth century as well as an active program of contemporary collecting in all states. In recent years the Library has actively promoted the collection so that it can be used and enjoyed by folk fans old and new, musicians and performers.

One of the largest folk festivals in the country, the National Folk Festival, held in Canberra every Easter, attracts an audience of more than 50 000 people from all over Australia as well as hundreds of performers across a range of genres. It's a wonderful venue to spread the word about the National Library's folk collection as well as the range and diversity of our other collections and services.

This year our usual information marquee was transformed into 'the Lounge', the venue for a series of conversations with various Festival performers called 'Live@theLounge'. Attendance at the seven 'Live@theLounge' interviews totalled an amazing 2930 people, and over 6700 Festival ticket-holders enjoyed other Library-sponsored events.

Nearly 50 Library staff volunteered this year, staffing the marquee for over 38 hours, and a roaming photographer spent three days capturing the atmosphere at the many

Library events at the Festival. All Library volunteers received a free weekend pass in return for their time and many took this opportunity to spend most of Easter enjoying the Festival.

For the very first time, we provided a public (and wireless) internet service, supported by TransACT, a major ICT service provider. Library volun-

teers, resplendent in colourful t-shirts, demonstrated the Library's online services and staffed the publications and leaflet display. Outside the marquee, we projected a continuous PowerPoint slide show promoting our digital collections and online services.

We estimate around 1000 people took advantage of the free internet access: checking

emails, monitoring bids for musical instruments on eBay, recharging their mobile phones, doing internet banking, applying for jobs and even checking their latest RSVP dates! Volunteers in the marquee answered approximately 1000 inquiries on the role of the Library and other subjects as diverse as social dancing, learning the ukulele, finding Gaelic music, using Libraries Australia and locating manuscripts.

The 2006 National Folk Fellowship recipients, Ben and Adrian Stephenson, rocked an enthusiastic audience with their workshops and were joined by all the previous Folk Fellowship recipients in a riotous concert. The National Folk Fellowship is jointly funded by the National Folk Festival and the National Library, and is designed to highlight the folk collections in the Library archives.

Altogether, the entire gamut of the nation's rich folk tradition was well represented, showing the relevance and value of library participation in communal events such as the National Folk Festival.

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