

## Website features women's collections

*In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History* is a new exhibition in the Australian Women's Archives Project (AWAP) Showcase at <http://nfaw.org/women-s-history/>. It features around 40 women, including Mary Elizabeth Fairfax and Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, who have given significant sums of money to charitable causes since the late nineteenth century.

AWAP was set up to encourage women and women's organisations to discover and preserve their stories by depositing their records in archives and libraries. It aims to cover the less well-known stories such as the librarian, trade unionist, and feminist Jean Arnot and Aboriginal archivist Loris Williams.

The project conducts original research and makes it available through the online Australian Women's Register and the Showcase which celebrates themed groups of women. Since biographies and historical essays are linked to published and archival resources, AWAP provides an opportunity for libraries of all kinds to make collections relating to women and women's organisations more accessible to a broad audience. The website receives 35 000 visitors a month.

The Showcase provides articles on historical themes and links these to individual stories such as *She's Game – Women Making Australian Sporting History* featuring Tasmanian physical-culturist and writer Marie Bjelke-Petersen, surfboard rider and swimming teacher Isabel Letham, and the City Girls' Amateur Sports Association. Records relating to the CGASA are in the Mitchell and Dixon Libraries and the Sydney University Archives. A fascinating collection about Isabel Letham is in the Warringah Libraries Local Studies collection.

AWAP is increasingly building listings of women not readily available elsewhere. For example *Putting Skirts on the Sacred Benches* provides details of more than 700 women who were candidates for parliament in NSW, *Carrying on the Fight* contains 800 entries for Victorian women parliamentary candidates, and *Faith Hope and Charity* lists 4000 women who won Imperial honours from 1901–1989.

AWAP is a project of the National Foundation for Australian Women (<http://nfaw.org/>) and the University of Melbourne with staff in the School of Historical Studies providing leadership in the area of historical research. Technical innovation and support to the project is provided by research fellows in the University's eScholarship Research Centre (eSRC). In 2008 the project received an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage, Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) grant of \$150 000 plus contributions from industry partners including the National Library (NLA). The grant is being used to upgrade the website so that historians can more readily contribute their research and to facilitate participation in the NLA's People Australia project which will further increase access to the website's authoritative information.

AWAP welcomes contributions to the register, either biographies of women or information about relevant collections which may be submitted at <http://nfaw.org/contribute-to-the-australian-women-s-archives-project/>. Brief biographies prepared in the course of cataloguing collections would normally provide sufficient detail for a register entry. Information about collections relating to women and their organisations held in local libraries and smaller collections are particularly welcome.

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