

VOLUNTEERING IS ITS



REWARD

After having the opportunity to volunteer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies STACEY ZARIFOPOULOS reflects on what she gained from the experience.

Being a Library Technician and having a passion for libraries and services for Indigenous Australians, I decided last year to apply to volunteer at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). AIATSIS is based in Canberra and is a world-renowned research, collections and publishing organisation. It seemed to me like a great opportunity to contribute towards libraries and Indigenous Australians in my own small way. Making contact was easy. I applied through its website, completed its online application form and after a couple of telephone interviews (as I live in Melbourne) I was accepted. The thought of volunteering for an organisation as important as AIATSIS was both exciting and a little daunting. However, once I settled into the role I loved it. My placement there was for five days in February of 2018.

The project I worked on at AIATSIS involved re-housing its language collection. The material in this collection is housed in pamphlet boxes and is very mixed in format. It was my task to protect these items from being lost or damaged. This was done by giving each item some support card and placing both the item and card in an A4 polypropylene archival bag. During this process I also placed new labels and barcodes on the support cards to identify the items accurately.

One of the many benefits I received for volunteering at AIATSIS was that I was given the opportunity to attend tours of its library collections as well as the digitisation centre. The library and its collections were rich and interesting. AIATSIS holds almost one million items with 670,000 photographic images, works of art and artefacts; 40,000 hours of audio files; 6.4 million feet of film; and 3,000 rare books and pamphlets.

As I am currently employed as a digitisation officer for the University of Melbourne's library, the digitisation centre was of particular interest to me. There are ten staff in the AIATSIS team

(compared to five in my workplace) and they provide both print and photographic digitisation for their assets, client requests, and publications. It was exciting to see what scanners, software and processes they use and compare their resources to those of my workplace. One thing they do which my workplace does not is deal with audio and video recordings.

While I was in Canberra some of my AIATSIS colleagues and I were invited along for a behind the scenes tour of the Australian ephemera collection at the National Library of Australia. The collection is primarily printed ephemera, very wide-ranging and arranged by subject in categories: general ephemera; Australian performing arts programs and ephemera; trade catalogues; programs and invitations; geography and travel; formed collections; and scrapbooks.

Volunteering at an organisation as rich and fascinating as AIATSIS was a very rewarding experience. It was extremely satisfying and I learnt so much. Library and information professionals are very fortunate that they are encouraged by their employers to volunteer across the industry and to share their experiences. I look forward to having the opportunity to volunteer at AIATSIS again in the near future. I will also be casting my net further and continuing to volunteer where and as I am able across the industry.

The final positive of volunteering at AIATSIS was the dedicated and friendly staff and other volunteers that I was able to meet and work with. They took a genuine interest in me, and why I wanted to volunteer, and were thankful for my contribution to their organisation. My most heartfelt thanks to Bella, my project supervisor at AIATSIS, and Emma, Volunteer Coordinator, for the opportunity they provided me to chase my dreams and explore new avenues in my career. ✨

STACEY ZARIFOPOULOS ALIATec

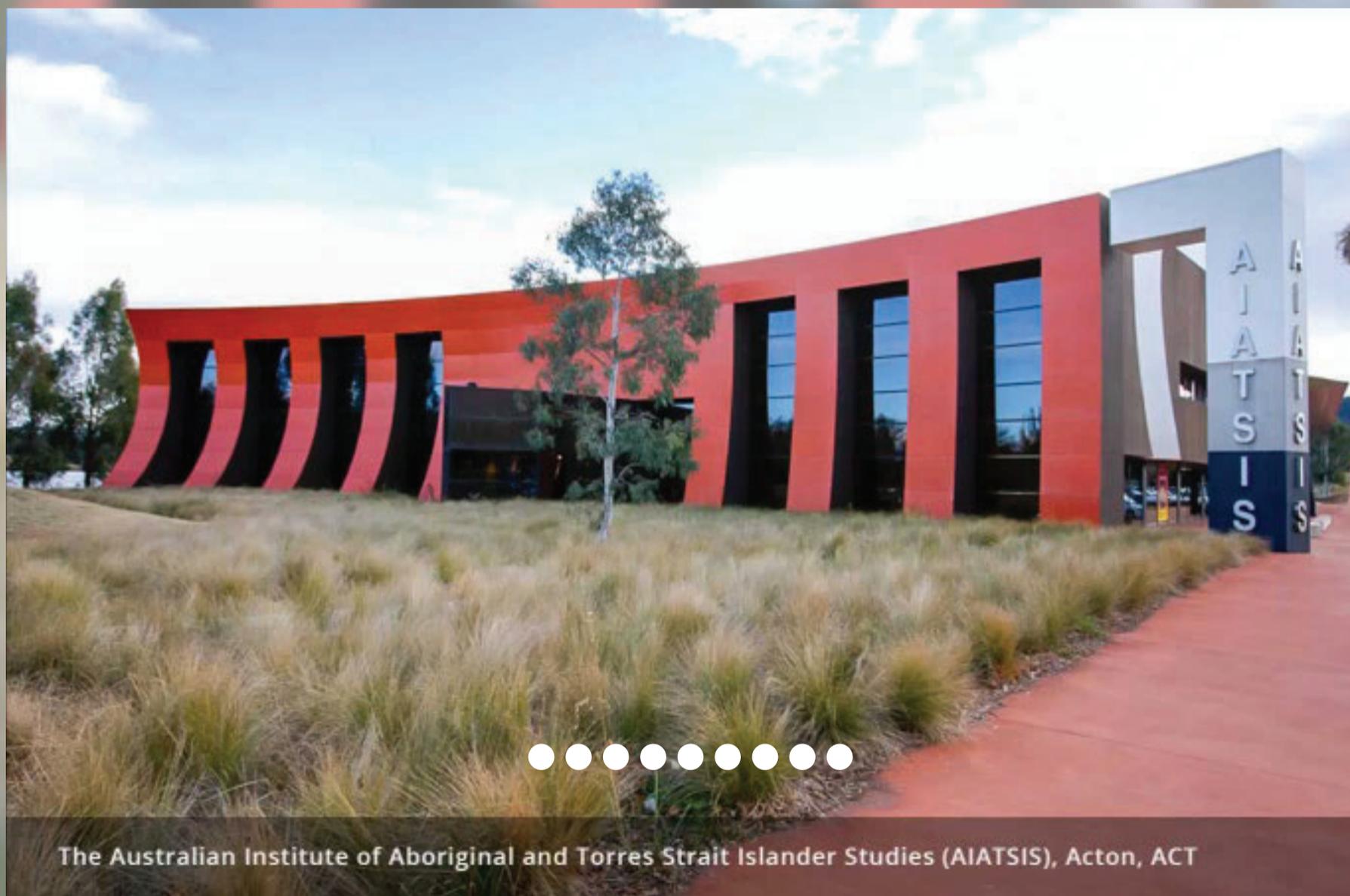
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