

Introduction

Warren Bebbington

The University's cultural collections have been the centre of much activity since the first issue of this magazine appeared in November last year. As well as providing their regular personalised service to students, staff, researchers and the wider community, our collection managers, curators, librarians and archivists have been managing a major program of collections renewal, funded by the Miegunyah Trust. This has involved cataloguing books and prints in the Baillieu Library Special Collections, medical rare books and journals, earth sciences and East Asian rare books, rare and historic maps, and herbarium eucalyptus and early specimens; upgrading the collection database for the Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum and conserving historic dental drawings; condition surveying and conserving scientific instruments in the Physics Museum; and making digital preservation copies of cassette tapes in the University of Melbourne Archives. To share these and others of the University's collections with both the wider University community and the public at large, the Miegunyah Trust has also funded an event—The University of Melbourne Cultural Treasures Days—to be held on the

Parkville campus from Thursday 18 to Sunday 21 September 2008. Further details on the event are on pp. 38–39 and you are most warmly invited to join us for exhibitions, special talks, guided tours, and family activities.

This year saw the introduction of the University's new curriculum, known as the Melbourne Model. This curriculum is based on the belief that a well-rounded graduate needs a broad general education as well as specialised training. Collections such as ours have a role to play in both the liberal and vocational aspects of university life. Students who can drop into the campus art museum at lunchtime, walk past a colourful mural or abstract sculpture on the way to a lecture, or listen in on a symposium celebrating the anniversary of the birth of Percy Grainger, are richer for these experiences. On the other hand, medical students benefit directly from examining the specimens in their Faculty's excellent anatomy and pathology museum; young historians can create original work by researching among the unique manuscript collections at the University of Melbourne Archives; and botany students need a comprehensive herbarium collection in order

to identify the specimens they collect in the field. The University of Melbourne provides all of these and many other educational opportunities through its cultural collections.



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