



2020 Conference Update

The BSANZ 2020 conference committee has decided that, in order to provide certainty to prospective delegates, we will make plans to host this year's conference in an online format. While travel restrictions may ease between Australia and New Zealand by late November, it is unlikely that mass gatherings will be advisable at that time and yet we feel strongly that it is important our organisation's members and friends continue to share research and give feedback. We hope to be able to do this as effectively as possible in an online conference.

We would still like to host a physical gathering, but it is too early to say what the situation will be in different parts of the country, and what cross-border travel will be allowed at the end of November. We can only say that we will be guided by the rules in force at the time. We have the conference venue booked and we will use it to the extent allowed.

Change of format:

With the move to an online format, we think it will be simpler to keep to a single plenary session rather than parallel panel sessions. Accordingly, we ask that presenters aim for a talk of 10-15 minutes, rather than 20 minutes as previously advised. Talks may be delivered live online or pre-recorded and may be followed by a short question-and-answer session.

We are also open to proposals that use online and digital platforms in novel and interesting ways. Please include some indication of your preferences and requirements in this regard when you submit your proposals.

We understand that the change to online presentation will be a challenge for some and we will aim to work with delegates to facilitate their participation. We aim to record presentations to be shared later. Please let us know when you submit your proposal if you would prefer not to have your presentation recorded.

Conference registration fees:

Online attendance will be free as a one-off recognition of the extraordinary circumstances. Those who attend in person (if this proves to be possible) will pay a modest fee to cover catering and other costs.

All speakers at the conference must be members of BSANZ. In view of the financial ramifications of the pandemic, for this conference only all new members will be charged the concession rate of \$45 for 2020-21 membership. The membership fee will revert to \$75 for the 2021-22 financial year, for all members who are not students. The BSANZ conference bursary will not be offered this year, in order to subsidise free online attendance.

The conference is still scheduled to take place on 30 November and 1 December 2020. Please note that the deadline for proposals has been extended to 31 July 2020, and we will respond to submissions by 31 August.

On Donald



Dr. Donald Kerr retired in April from his position as Special Collections Librarian at the University of Otago. During his 18 years in the role Donald sustained a lively calendar of four exhibition per year, each displaying 80 to 100 books from the Library's holdings, and documented nearly all of them online in a valuable repository of images and miniature book histories that continues to attract strong interest on the web. He also set up the University's Printer-in-Residence scheme that has subsequently been adopted by both Sydney and Oxford Universities. He eagerly worked with Shef Rogers to create the University of Otago Centre for the Book and offered a very successful Rare Book Summer School class on exhibition practice for special collections. With John Holmes he has offered a series of hands-on training workshops in letterpress printing and co-directed all of the annual Centre for the Book research symposia. He served for a decade as President of the BSANZ and has been a stalwart of the Rare Book Librarians meeting that precedes BSANZ conferences. Although retiring from his Library role, Donald will remain a co-director of the Centre for the Book.

That paragraph describes for the most part the duties expected of such an engaged and lively rare books librarian. What it does not convey is how incredibly productive Donald has been as a scholar. He is a regular referee and member of the Editorial Board for *Script & Print*, has compiled numerous guides to the University's collections (nearly all available online), edited a collection of essays on Charles Brasch, and published his magisterial and prize-winning biography of Thomas Hocken as a collector. He is far along on his life of a less well-known subject, William Arderne Shoults, whose book collection was given to Selwyn College and is now looked after by the University Special Collections. To say nothing of his contributions to *Script & Print* and other edited collections.

And this brief retrospective does not even touch on Donald's many achievement and contributions prior to moving south from the George Grey collection in Auckland. Such scholar-librarians have always been a rare breed and are on the endangered species list worldwide. Otago, Dunedin, Auckland, and the BSANZ are tremendously indebted to Donald for his immense talents, his unflagging enthusiasm, and his generous warmth in welcoming scholars and sharing his knowledge and passion for books. Here's to a long and happy retirement, with many more opportunities to read, write and discuss books.

- Shef Rogers, University of Otago

Member Profile



Paula Legel
Associate Curator, Heritage Publications
Tāmaki Paenga Hira

I've only recently joined BSANZ, though I have been aware of the Society for some time, attending the conference in Melbourne last year and thoroughly enjoying the wide range of discussion and varied body of research. I'm very pleased to now be part of this interesting and eclectic community of bibliophiles and look forward to participating in the online conference later this year.

The role I currently inhabit at Tāmaki Paenga Hira – Auckland War Memorial Museum (AWMM) is the first ever curatorial role dedicated to heritage publications in the museum's Documentary Heritage Team. Heritage publications at Tāmaki Paenga Hira is a broad church; books, pamphlets, serials, newspapers and maps, and I'm just beginning to get a sense of the scope and depth of the collections. Library materials at AWMM were some of the earliest of the Museum, starting with seven serial subscriptions in 1867 and

building into the research collection we have today.

There are many avenues I've been drawn to investigate, including early feminist activity in Auckland, rare scraps of 11 century music manuscript repurposed in 16th century book binding, nature prints and printers, donors and collectors and early hand drawn maps of Australasia. What to choose? Another element of my role is to facilitate access and engagement with our Pacific collections and communities. This has become a strong focus of my work that I find deeply rewarding.

Editorial

The Black Lives Matter movement has dominated minds, hearts and headlines in recent weeks, with Black people making powerful calls for racial justice around the world and at home, with strong allied support. This is happening at the same time as our institutions, including galleries, libraries, archives, museums (GLAM) and universities, are being held to account for their role in upholding racist and biased modes of thought by professionals and academics both within and outside the sector. All disciplines should heed the call to address implicit and explicit racism in their work, and this is especially pertinent to those of us that work in elite areas such as rare books.

Traditions are already being challenged within bibliography, with interest in applying frameworks such as decolonisation and feminism to book history becoming increasingly prevalent. In Library and Information Studies, the field of critical librarianship has inspired a much-needed reappraisal of our practices and promoted discussions around power and privilege. Long-held assumptions around research and authority are also being challenged, with Black and Indigenous professionals leading a critique of neutrality in GLAM. This is important work and heartening. However, it rests upon us all to continue to look at and expand upon these issues.

You may wonder why this *Broadsheet* has taken such a political tone. In my opinion no topic or research niche can be left untouched if we truly endeavour to end racism; bibliography is no exception. Our current disciplines are the result of increasing specialisation, which particularly occurred in the 19th century when modern institutions and professions were founded or redefined. It makes sense to me that as we unpack this history that we broaden our scope for understanding our material past, including the study of books.

On that note I've included some relevant links for reflection below.

- Hayley Webster

News

In the last few years a number of organisations have attempted to address the topic of inequity in bibliography and rare book librarianship. For some free video presentations try: [Toward Inclusive Bibliography](#) from the Bibliographical Society of America, [Feminist Bibliographies](#) from the UCLA Library, and [Exploring Careers in Archives and Special Collections](#) from the American Library Association's Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Diversity Committee. Keep an eye out on SHARP-L for the recording of the Decolonizing Book History session which formed part of the recent #SHARPinFocus program, and which I'm told will be made available online.

BSANZ librarians will probably be aware of Wiradjuri librarian Nathan Sentance, and his blog [Archival Decolonist](#). Sentance is one of a number of Indigenous professionals currently speaking up and challenging mainstream interpretations of history, which exclude marginalised voices by perpetuating a false sense of objectivity, as he writes in [Your Neutral is Not Our Neutral](#). The blog post [Decolonising Historical Maps](#) by Spatial Scientist Bess Moylan is a good example of how past scientific practices were racialised

(not neutral), and how the material evidence of this can be reinterpreted. If you haven't already read Fobazi Ettarh's article on [vocational awe in librarianship](#) please do – it explains the significance of librarianship being perceived as a “calling” and how this plays out regarding race and class in a profession dominated by white women.

The 2020 BSANZ conference seems like an ideal opportunity to reflect on some of these issues, with the decidedly forward-looking and expansive theme of '[The History of the Book and the Future of the World](#)'. The CFP allows for method-driven discussions such as decolonial or inclusive bibliography as well as professional issues such as library cataloguing and classification. In particular the CFP draws attention to book history and its relationship (or perhaps lack thereof) to critical race and whiteness studies.

As a relative newcomer to bibliography, one of things that interests me is learning about various approaches to book history, especially those deriving from outside disciplines. Kate Ozmet's articles [Rationale for a Feminist Bibliography](#) and [Building the Women in Book History Bibliography](#) and Sarah Werner's [Weaving a Feminist Book History](#) are inspiring on this front, however I would be interested to hear about other approaches – what would a queer history of the book look like, for instance? Also, unless I am missing something, we are lacking a handy *Reader* style text that would synthesise these different approaches.

As the COVID-19 health crisis eases in both Australia and New Zealand we are seeing a gradual reopening of library services and expanded access to the special collections and rare books so indispensable to bibliographers. Nicholas Sparks reports from NSW that many libraries are now open for business, including The National Art Archive and Capon Research Library at the AGNSW and the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection at Sydney Living Museums. He notes that there are some restrictions, so it is worth calling

ahead to plan your visit. Unfortunately, at time of writing the University of Sydney's Rare Books and Special Collections Reading Room is not open for consultation, although planning for re-opening is under way. In lieu of Book Fairs, we look forward to the ANZAAB Highlights Catalogue that the Association will be producing in the absence of physical Book Fairs this year.

Unfortunately, restrictions have not eased in time for Melbourne Rare Book Week, which was sadly cancelled for 2020. We have also heard that Dunedin Rare Book School, which was scheduled for February 2021, has been postponed until late January/early February 2022. Future Australasian Rare Book Summer School programs in Melbourne, Sydney and Wellington will continue the normal rotation from 2023 onwards.

The four-volume [Edinburgh History of Reading](#) was published recently, with a chapter from BSANZ member Amanda Laugesen. As a librarian in charge of a special library and rare book collection, I am keen to get hold of the recent release [Archives and Special Collections as Sites of Contestation](#). Another recent release that looks interesting is [Doubtful Readers: Print, Poetry, and the Reading Public in Early Modern England](#) by Erin McCarthy.

I've definitely increased my consumption of webinars, podcasts and documentaries to break up my workday during lockdown. Recently I enjoyed [Book Collecting in the Digital Age](#) hosted by Christie's. I would not describe myself as a serious collector, but I do occasionally indulge in some mid-20th century lesbian pulp fiction, and the advice suggested that being guided by personal interest was an effective collecting strategy.

The delightful Anna Welch and Des Cowley recently [discussed marginalia](#) in the State Library of Victoria's collection. The presentation by Derrick R. Spires about his 2019 book [The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United](#)

[States](#) for the American Antiquarian Society is extremely timely. Spires looks at how Black people engaged with early American print culture to articulate new forms of citizenship and resist scapegoating, providing a topical example relating to an epidemic of Yellow Fever in 18th century Philadelphia. Importantly, Spires also argues that non-Western ways of theorising are needed to fully appreciate Black literary history. Medievalists may be interested to watch [Manuscript Mise-en-Page](#) on the Bibliographical Society of America's YouTube channel, which looks at how an examination of page layout in manuscripts might inform interpretation. The brand new web series [Bite Sized Book History](#) looks to be a neat and accessible introduction to various aspects of book history.

It would be remiss of me to neglect an opportunity for shameless self-promotion. In that spirit I offer you [my posts](#) on the BHL Blog, where I write about Museums Victoria's digitised books for a general audience.

All the best until next time.

- Hayley Webster

Please send *Broadsheet* submissions to editor Hayley Webster
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