



### 2020 Conference Presentations on YouTube

Last year's History of the Book and the Future of the World conference delivered a successful 3-day program, now available on the [BSANZ YouTube channel](#). While the online format was adopted in response to restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, it presented some advantages with regards to attendance. It was great to see participants joining from other places and time zones and pleasing to hear that this resulted in our largest ever conference! Personally, I enjoyed the online format and it was great to see participants making good use of the chat and Q&A features.

### 2021 conference

This year's conference will be a hybrid, offering in-person attendance in New Zealand as well as the option to participate online. The conference committee are in the process of planning and the theme will be announced soon.

### New Executive Team and Subcommittee

Following the 2020 AGM we have a new Executive team – we welcome Professor Andrew Benjamin as Vice-President, Ella Silbeck Porter as Treasurer, and Dr Helen Bones, who is leading a new Engagement subcommittee. Professor Véronique Duché and Dr Jocelyn Hargrave continue their good work as President and Secretary. Adria Castellucci, Hayley Webster, and Gemma Steele have joined the new sub-committee to arrange online events – there are two ideas in the works for 2021 so watch this space for details!

Our sincere thanks to outgoing Vice-President Dr Anna Welsh and Treasurer Daniel Wee for

their excellent contributions to BSANZ during their time on the executive committee.

### Industry Insight



**Hayley Webster speaks to Dr Mary Carroll from Charles Sturt University's Information Management Program about their new subject 'Working with Special and Cultural Collections'.**

*Can you tell us a bit about the new special collections subject?*

Our new subject 'Working with Special and Cultural Collections' extends and complements a number of other subjects in our courses such as 'Collections and Digital Preservation' and 'Curation and Training in the Information Workplace'. In our curriculum we like to allow people to specialise in particular areas if they wish to, so this new elective builds on some of the concepts in our core curriculum by focussing skills and knowledge in one area of expertise. Like the complementary subjects in the course, 'Working with Special and Cultural Collections' takes a wider view of special collections to include the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector which is important for our students. Informed by practice, the aim is to provide an overview of key knowledge such as sustainability, preservation, collection care, ethics and policy in practice in special collections. It is meant to

be an introduction, but we hope that it will inspire people to explore further.

*What prompted you to add this elective to the syllabus in 2020?*

There were a couple of things that prompted the addition of this subject. One was the identification of a gap in the curriculum of Australian Library and Information Studies (LIS) courses, based on research I undertook with some colleagues. Another prompt was advice from industry that this was needed in the skill set of some graduates. And finally, there were many students already working in this area or who aspired to, so we wanted to provide support and connect them to a community of practice including societies such as BSANZ. I see it as a launching pad for them to explore further and for us to engage directly with the sector.

*Can you tell us about how students engaged or responded with the content? What are their interests in special collections?*

Their interests were as numerous as they were: people already working with special collections in libraries, archives and museums who wanted a broader view or to consolidate their practice with theory; people who just loved the whole special collections area and have this as their career goal; and people who had their own special and unique collections and wanted to care for them. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and people buried themselves deeply into the practice and the theory of this area of expertise. They explored and uncovered little known collections, told us about their own collections, and interrogated our guest speakers on what skills and knowledge would best serve them in the sector.

*What did you find most enjoyable about teaching the subject?*

A delight for me in this subject was engaging with an amazing group of special collections practitioners from across the GLAM sector

(including BSANZ members) and seeing that delight reflected in the students' responses and engagement. Practitioners are integral to the success and engagement of students in the subject and their generosity was astounding. This integration of practitioners into the curriculum also allowed me to balance practice and theory, which can be challenging. It is easy for students to focus on the 'how' and forget the 'why' but engaging with practitioners allows this to happen seamlessly.

*What role do you think library and information studies courses have in promoting bibliography, the history of the book and library history? What would it be in an ideal world?*

Ah, reality and the vision are difficult to disentangle for me. The reality is that the university sector is very focussed on people being job ready these days and that has a very skills-based intent. I think this misses the idea of knowledge and the role of educators to engage, enthral and inspire people to search further - for education to be just the beginning, and for educators to provide a push in the right direction. My colleagues at CSU retain the desire to engage students so it is a balance between the 'need to know' and the 'nice to know'. Passion-based learning is something I have explored with a friend, Dr Sue Reynolds (now retired), and I think that guides me in what I teach. So, I suppose in the contemporary LIS curriculum it is difficult, but not impossible, to weave the context, history and passion for the institutions, collections and the history of knowledge, including bibliography, into the curriculum. I am a strong believer that history can be applied practically to contemporary practice and policy and is invaluable in identifying precedents and also where we have gone wrong. If we don't reflect on the past, we can't address issues in the present. I think we have almost got the balance right at CSU as we cover information history, history of the book and the profession and now special

collections. These are interwoven in the curriculum so not at first obvious, but they are very much there. Keeping that focus will always be a challenge but it will be what helps define the GLAM professional in the future. These things need champions - that is something individuals and groups can contribute to this area.

### Member Profile: Jodie Lea Martire



I'm an inveterate booklover who has luckily spent most of her life working with words. I do some writing, editing and translating (from Spanish) to earn my keep, and I've previously worked in publishing houses and as a bookseller. I also got a librarian qualification along the way. Nowadays, I'm studying a Master of Communication for Social Change at The University of Queensland, focusing on contemporary Australian publishing and small presses. What I'm interested in is how books can change the world! I completed my thesis in 2020, which investigated the strategies used by two Australian small presses (Wild Dingo and Spinifex) to publish silenced and underrepresented voices. I interviewed both publishing staff and authors they published, and I'll be converting my thesis into a journal article and an industry publication (through the Small Press Network) over the summer. As a collector, I have my Lesbian Library – I collect fiction, non-fiction and poetry, in English plus some Spanish-language titles. I'm particularly keen to get "lifesavers", works that were lifelines for queer women who sought books as their community. I joined BSANZ to expand my knowledge of book-related scholarship, and in the November conference I so enjoyed the diversity of periods, issues and techniques discussed, and

the kind enthusiasm that members showed for research so unlike their own.

### News

There has been some discussion amongst rare book professionals about the [Poison Book Project](#), which you can read about [here](#) and [here](#). The project has found that some 19<sup>th</sup> century emerald green cloth-covered publishers bindings contain arsenic. The scope of affected books is still being ascertained by various studies, however the potential for arsenic is something to be aware of in collections with these types of bindings. At Museums Victoria, where I work, we have just begun a survey of our Rare Book Collection to look at this.

A [Discord](#) channel has been established for professional discussions in rare books and book history. The group is aimed at newcomers to the field, but I think it would be useful for anyone interested in these areas of study. Sign up [here](#).

[In news](#) from Caltech, a census revealed hundreds of copies of Newton's *Principia* and suggests that the tome was more widely read and engaged with than has previously been thought.

Wildenstein Plattner Institute has digitised over 11,000 pre-1945 sales catalogues and made them [freely available online](#). The New York Academy of Medicine have digitised [11 manuscript cookbooks](#) dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century – perhaps Monash Special Collections might entice them to join the next Rare Books Bake Off?

The La Trobe Journal [No 105 \(September 2020\)](#) is available online. [RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage](#) have also published some interesting looking articles over the course of the year.

A fascinating author talk with Jordan Alexander Stein on [When Novels Were Books](#) argues that the emphasis on studying novels in regards to literary form has eclipsed an

equally necessary focus on their material qualities. In the 18th century size was an indicator of genre, with octavo being the common format for a novel. Stein explains that folios were reserved for prestigious and specifically scholarly works, and that their large size meant they were study-bound. I found this interesting in relation to the natural history books that I work with, as what I have read suggests that both small and large books were necessary in a scientific context. Large and prestigious reference works would have been a staple in a scholarly library, while the increased focus on direct observation in the form of field or lab work created a need for more portable references (although modern field guides did not exist until a much later period than covered by Stein.)

An author talk with Jonathan Senchyne on the [Intimacy of Paper](#) similarly stressed the importance of materiality to book and literary history. Senchyne argues that in 17th- to 19<sup>th</sup>-century America paper was experienced in ways that are lost to us now through a tendency to focus on the literary rather than material aspects of books. Rags used to make paper were an everyday part of life, for instance in the form of the ubiquitous rag bag in which people collected material that couldn't be otherwise re-purposed. These rags were sold or exchanged for goods and recycled into paper. A sustainable approach that might have lessons for us today!

For some technical insight try the Rare Book School presentation [Understanding the Mechanical Behavior of Library & Archive Materials with Changes in Relative Humidity](#) by Al Carver-Kubik. This presentation is helpful for understanding how relative humidity can affect books over time and in different storage conditions. A [Woodblock Webinar](#) hosted by Museum Plantin-Moretus provided a fantastic assortment of presentations relating to a project they undertook to digitise their woodblock collection. Some speakers focused on

technical or professional aspects such as digitisation and metadata, while other speakers focused on how the collection enabled their research.

On the natural history front, I was enthralled by [Into the Wild: Medieval Books of Beasts](#) from the Morgan Library, which outlines a number of features common to manuscript bestiaries and explores the Worksop bestiary in detail.

I was looking forward to catching up on the BSA panel on [Building Better Book Feminisms](#) and it did not disappoint! Leslie Howsam articulated a vision for a book feminism that is "capacious, ambitious, generous and collaborative". Drawing on work by Sara Ahmed, Kate Ozment explored the notion of citation as a feminist practice within book history. (If this interests you check out this [Are Citations Political](#) discussion hosted by Monash University Library.) Tamar Evangelista Dougherty outlined the work of some Black feminist librarians, while Sarah Werner suggested that the focus on the ideal copy in bibliography overlooks unique objects and privileges the collection of canonical texts.

The BSA also has a new series called [Candid Conversations](#) which pairs a librarian with a bookseller to break down some of the barriers in the people and professions that make up what they refer to as the "rare book ecosystem". This seems like a great initiative, and the first episode provided a lot of practical insight including some perspectives on etiquette between librarians and booksellers.

Thanks to our previous Vice President Anna Welch, we are now exchanging newsletters with the BSA. Hello to our readers in North America! And goodbye for now, bibliophiles.

- Hayley Webster

Please send *Broadsheet* submissions to [hwebster@museum.vic.gov.au](mailto:hwebster@museum.vic.gov.au)

