

restricted by Magdalen College in his lifetime. You can however access his notes, essays and examination papers which are held by UMA, as well as hundreds of metres of Cabinet records, classified departmental files and private correspondence including Sir John Kerr's 'private and confidential papers relating to the 1975 constitutional crisis' held by the NAA.

The guide is also available online as either a PDF document or, more usefully, in navigable HTML format with hyperlinks to the NAA series and item descriptions in RecordSearch and to any digitised content available. The guide does not indicate what is digitised – you only find out by using the hyperlinks which cover the NAA's own holdings: for the other institutions (including my own), the only links provided are to their websites via Appendix 5.

Maggie Shapley
Australian National University
 © 2014, Maggie Shapley
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.888032>

Australian War Memorial, ANZAC Voices, Canberra, November 2013 - November 2014.

Let's start with three questions. When did you last visit an exhibition in an archives; last see an exhibition strongly and self-consciously based on archival documents; and last read an exhibitions review in this journal timely and tantalising enough to get you to see it?

Many I suspect would score badly and care even less. In my experience archives, regardless of scale, struggle to present quality exhibitions. Having adequate funds for professional design is uncommon and integration with related programs, events and social media is often perfunctory. Presumed to be non-core business, exhibitions can be a soft target in tough budget environments, and even with resourcing for expert assistance, it is typically drawn from the museum and gallery sectors.

What then of *ANZAC Voices*, the temporary World War I exhibition currently open while the Australian War Memorial's (AWM) vast galleries are being redeveloped for the forthcoming centenary? It is such a refreshing contrast, reminding us, as did *Handwritten: Ten Centuries of Manuscripts From Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, hosted by the National Library in 2011–12, that it can be done well. So archival documents lead the way: official and personal; letters and diaries; maps and photos; menus and trench serials. For once, objects, art works and dioramas play support roles. But there is more to the exhibition's success than simple content preference.

Firstly, the key people who developed it, all from the AWM's Research Centre, present their summary of Australia in World War I from the personal perspective. While their text panels, tables of statistics and large reproduced maps give the strategic context, the exhibition storyline is carried by the words of individuals in varying locations and situations – soldiers of varying ranks at the front, mothers at home – describing what they saw and how they felt. This viewpoint, for servicemen at least, was pioneered in the 1920s by the war correspondent and official historian CEW Bean, and again from the 1970s by scholars such as Bill Gammage. It remains highly effective given a culture fostering the belief that we all have stories to tell and everyone is interested in them.

Secondly, visitors are encouraged to read the words written or typed almost a hundred years ago. Explanatory texts and transcribed extracts make this easier, as does a continuous voiceover quoting from letters and diaries, emulating the approach pioneered by US documentary film maker Ken Burns. For many, just seeing the actual originals such as a life-saving pocket diary with a bullet hole is compelling, or a diary entry opposite a blank page dated the day the writer was killed. Learning that some of what is on show is newly acquired material (for example from the Pheasant Wood mass grave at Fromelles excavated in 2010) also adds to the experience, and reinforces the idea of a living collection behind the selections on display.

Thirdly, the exhibition has strong online support. Additional processing of the AWM's World War I personal records began in 2011 to enhance web accessibility, and digitisation and transcription of the diaries and letters in the exhibition is proceeding. A version of the exhibition is also accessible from the AWM's website (<http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/anzac-voices/>), and specific aspects are featured in blogs (for example, <http://www.awm.gov.au/blog/2013/12/12/anzac-voices-improvisation-gallipoli/>).

In short, *ANZAC Voices* is an impressive archival exhibition. But it is also more than this, for its curators are fully aware of the debates and divided opinion about the war within Australian society, then and now. They point to the less patriotic motives for enlistment, and they are explicit about the effects of gas and trench warfare, foregrounding observations such as those of Lieutenant John Raws (23rd Battalion): 'My tunic is rotten with other men's blood, and partly splattered with a dead man's brains.' On the last panel they include details to remind visitors that as a percentage of those who served overseas, death in the Australian forces was higher than any other nation of the British Empire, adding: 'Many more returned home wounded in body and mind; most would never fully recover.'

Remembrance of events central to a nation's understanding of itself, especially milestone anniversaries, present archivists with rich profile and funding opportunities, as with the 1988 bicentenary. They require us to compromise too, as one understands the *ANZAC Voices*' curators had to when AWM management insisted on some politically based changes before it was launched in November 2013. To end her review of the National Archives of Australia's (NAA) travelling exhibition *Shell Shocked: Australia After Armistice*, Anne-Marie Condé wrote: 'It seems a pity that NAA has not taken advantage of its freedom from the commemorative mission that constrains the AWM. The NAA apparently sees no role for itself to use its collection to remind us of times when "veteran" did not always mean "hero"' (*Archives and Manuscripts*, May 2009¹). On the eve of the centenary of the Great War, social and cultural agendas are already evident. We do have the content, and potentially it can say so much.

Note

1. A Condé, Exhibition review of *Shelled-shocked*, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2009, pp. 178-80. Her point regarding the AWM's constraining commemorative mission equally applies to *ANZAC Voices*, as I note in an expanded version of the above review for *Honest History*, see <http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/piggott-michael-listening-to-anzac-voices-lead/>.

Michael Piggott

© 2014, Michael Piggott

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.888034>