

## LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH: A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE LA TROBE LIBRARY

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Despite the fact that the State Library of Victoria's building is bursting at the seams, there are many, many gaps in our holdings of materials relating to the French in Australia in general, and in Victoria in particular. Perhaps it is as well for me to describe the strengths that the Library does have and hopefully, what is lacking may become evident.

The La Trobe Library, which houses the Australiana collections of the State Library of Victoria, was opened in 1965 and named to commemorate Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph La Trobe's major contribution to Victorian history. A copy of his large portrait attributed to Sir Francis Grant and painted about 1838 hangs in the foyer.

The La Trobe (I hope my colleagues present here from the other La Trobe will forgive me for referring to it as if it were the only one) is the major reference library in the State for Australiana and material relating to the South-West Pacific, just as the Mitchell Library is in New South Wales. Its subject coverage includes history, travel, biography, literature and anthropology. It is especially strong in its holdings of material related to Victoria. Since 1869, the Legal Deposit Act has made it a statutory obligation for publishers to lodge one copy of every Victorian publication in the Library. The result is a very strong collection of material related to Victoria which it is our duty to preserve.

The many thousands of books, government publications, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets and maps accumulated through the Legal Deposit provision have been supplemented by gifts and purchases of early material relating to exploration and settlement in this State, and we are adding to the collections yearly both by donation and purchase.

Some of the early donations from French sources will be of interest: *The Catalogue of the Melbourne Public Library for 1861* refers to donations made previous to that year, including Anquetil's *Histoire de France* in 4 volumes, presented by Le Comte de Chabrillan, Consul de France; Fauchery's "*Le Mineur en Australie*" [sic] donated by the author; and a gift of 33 items from Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, which included his own *Discours, Messages et Proclamations* (1855), and his *Oeuvres de l'Empereur*, 4 vols (1854/6).

The French Consul was very active in the intellectual life of the community, as evidenced by his presentation of books to the Melbourne Public Library on 13 December, 1858, shortly before his death. The *Age* newspaper on 14 December, 1858, reported the occasion as follows:

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"PRESENTATION OF BOOKS FROM THE EMPEROR OF THE FRENCH TO THE MELBOURNE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

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The presentation of the valuable works lately forwarded to the Public Library by His Majesty the Emperor of the French took place yesterday, at the Library, at 12 o'clock, in the presence of His Excellency Sir Henry Barkly, Lady Young, Lady MacDonnell, the Comte de Chabrilan, his Honor Mr. Justice Barry, and Mr. D.C. Macarthur, two of the trustees, together with his Excellency's aide de camp, and private secretary...

The occasion had drawn to the Library a large number of the public, who seemed to take considerable interest in the unwonted event.

The volumes were well arranged upon the centre table in the Library, at which His Excellency was seated, having on his right hand Lady Young, and on his left the French Consul."

Following de Chabrilan's speech, Sir Henry Barkly responded, praising in fulsome terms both the Emperor's generosity and wisdom, and the high principles governing the provision of intellectual stimulation in Victoria:

"Of none of their institutions are the people of this colony naturally prouder than of their Free Public Library – open, without restriction of any sort, to every class; and His Majesty could have evinced no more acceptable proof of the interest which he takes in our social progress than by such a gift – a gift which cannot but tend to strengthen and cement those feelings of admiration and respect which prevail among us for the great French nation, of which he is the elected head."

The La Trobe collection currently consists of approximately 90,000 books, pamphlets and volumes of periodicals; a vast collection of printed ephemera which does and will in the future reflect much social action, even now being a valuable historic resource; nearly 500,000 separate pictorial items; substantial (about 2,500 metres) holdings of manuscripts; 60,000 volumes of hard-copy newspapers; numerous reels of newspapers on microfilm; thousands of theatre programmes dating as far back as 1842; many Lands Department plans; and massive quantities of architectural plans and drawings.

### *NEWSPAPERS*

The State Library's newspaper collection ranges from the first newspaper

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published in Australia — the *Sydney gazette and New South Wales advertiser*, 5 March, 1803, to last week's *Southern Cross* or yesterday's *Age*. The earliest London newspaper held by the Library is *Mercurius Britannicus*, 23 August, 1643. Nearly complete holdings of the London *Times* and *New York Times* form the basis for the Library's collection of overseas newspapers. The Library also acquires newspapers on microfilm, and in 1971 instituted a project to microfilm all Victorian newspapers, a task which is well underway.

The conservation and preservation of rare and fragile material is an important concern for the State Library of Victoria and we have accepted an obligation to not only maintain archival holdings, but also to ensure that a comprehensive, and well preserved, collection of recent newspapers will be available in the future. All newspapers are vulnerable and will in time become rare, and they cannot be preserved if subjected to constant use. A policy of restriction is one of the few safeguards which can be placed on such material in our endeavour to preserve the newspapers until microfilming will allow general use.

The La Trobe Library's holdings of French newspapers, or newspapers in the French language, are unfortunately not very great. We have *Le Monde* and *Figaro* from 1969 and 1966 respectively on microfilm. There is a nearly complete run of *Le Courier Australien* which, although Sydney-based, contains many articles of interest to Victorian researchers. There are some historic Australian-produced French-language newspapers of interest to the researcher scattered among the holdings, but regrettably, these are not extensive. One example is the *Journal de Melbourne*, which is held only for November and December 1858. We hold *Le Temps* from 1861 to 1942 (imperfect) and we are fortunate to have *Le Moniteur Universel* from 1789-1968, including some 1857 copies containing the serialised version of Fauchery's *Lettres d'un Mineur en Australie*. *The Courier of the Mines and Bendigo Daily Mail* is among the collection and in 1857 under the heading of *Ici on parle Français*, it announced its intention of devoting space for a news summary in French on arrival of each mail from England.

Of course, complete sets of such newspapers as *The Age*, *Argus* and *Table Talk* are held, and there are valuable, though incomplete, sets of the early illustrated newspapers such as the *Illustrated Australian News*, the *Illustrated Melbourne Post* and the *Australasian Sketcher* which are useful sources for research on people and events in this country in the nineteenth century.

## PICTURES

The La Trobe Picture Collection is the largest collection of Victoria's nineteenth century art treasures in existence. Its primary function is to provide a visual documentation of the history of the State. Because Victoria was settled within a few years of the discovery of photography most of the State's history

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has been documented by photographs and the collection is rich in this format, as well as in sculpture and oil paintings, watercolours and drawings, architectural drawings and a variety of photo-mechanical reproductions ranging from posters and postcards to invitations and even tram tickets. Modern historians use the collection increasingly, not only for its essential historical evidence but to enliven their publications for readers. It is also used by museums building displays, television producers and film makers, restoration architects, railway and shipping buffs and general researchers.

In the collection, there are key works of most important nineteenth century artists who worked in Victoria, including comprehensive collections of works by Ludwig Becker, William Tibbits, S.T. Gill, and Henry Burn. Most of the prints produced in Victoria in this period are held, as are extensive collections of all major photographers. The poster collections include material dating from the early 1860s, particularly important being the set of Theatre Royal posters acquired in recent years. The postcard collection is unique in its scope.

New material is acquired by purchase, loan and gift. In the past three years, there has been attempt to rationalise collecting, and the aim is to acquire as many nineteenth century prints and photographs offered for auction or private sale as possible. Material which is not for sale is frequently borrowed for copying. The Library continues to benefit from the generosity of donors who make gifts to the collection. These range from family photograph albums to oil paintings and the records of architectural firms.

The French connection in a pictorial sense in our holdings ranges from the only known album of photographs by Fauchery to Von Guérard's sketch "French Camp, Black Hill, Ballarat"; a pencil sketch by Edward La Trobe Bate-man (Governor La Trobe's cousin) of the first Government House at Jolimont, or Joli Mont; and two lithographs by De Sainson in 1833 depicting whaling at Western Port.

### *MANUSCRIPTS*

The La Trobe Library is the major repository of all sorts of unpublished non-official records relating to Victoria's history. Although the largest, it is not the only such collection; others include the University of Melbourne Archives, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and the Geelong Historical Records Centre. Significant Victorian material is also held by the National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library. We do not hold government archives since they are the responsibility of the Australian Archives (for the Commonwealth) and the Public Record Office of Victoria (for State and municipal records).

Pride of place among the manuscript holdings must go to the records of Victoria's foundation: Batman's journal, the field-book of the surveyor Wedge, Sir Richard Bourke's journal and the Port Phillip Association papers. We also have important holdings of nineteenth century immigrants' diaries; First World War letters and diaries; records of pastoral properties; records of welfare orga-

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nisations (particular children's welfare); papers and records of people and organisations in the labour movement; and cultural records such as the papers of writers, artists, composers and theatrical people. As well as original records, we have complete holdings of the output of two important microfilming projects: the Australian Joint Copying Project, which includes official and private papers relating to Australia held in the U.K.; and the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, which copies original records relating to the Pacific region.

In 1874 the Royal Society of Victoria deposited in the Public Library the records of the Burke and Wills Expedition. The Collection grew by fits and starts through the twentieth century. The main growth has occurred since the La Trobe Library opened in 1865 and, particularly, since the appointment in 1970 of a Field Officer whose work it is to contact and advise owners of material for the collections for use by future historians.

We have very little manuscript material in the collection which relates in a direct way to the French influence in this State. There are two or three letters to John Pascoe Fawkner from the vigneron Brequet and Pettavel in the Western District who placed orders for vines with Fawkner's plant nursery in Melbourne. In a copy of Hubert de Castella's work *John Bull's vineyard* there is a letter in de Castella's hand to Mme Trouette at Great Western sympathising at the death of her son Nicolas who died in a wine vat while trying to rescue a winery employee. It was Jean-Pierre Trouette and his friend Emile Blampied who began viticulture at Great Western in their "St. Peter's" vineyard.

Other French related manuscript material includes:

- an illuminated address presented in 1884 to "His Excellency Sir Henry Brougham Loch, Governor and Commander in Chief of the Colony of Victoria", on behalf of the French citizens of the State .
- two letters from M. Capron in 1857/8 to his father in Bristol, containing information about financial conditions in Melbourne, especially regarding the coal trade and carriage business;
- we have an assortment of letters from Louise Hanson Dyer, as well as a substantial collection of her papers from 1926-1962, including correspondence and biographical materials;
- Victorian Artists' Society papers include a variety of letters from such people as Louis Buvelot, Eugene von Guerard, Hubert de Castella, Berthe Mouchette and Marie Lion .
- papers relating to a few families such as M. and Mme Mouchette and Mlle Lion, and the Permezels, include prospectuses for their various

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ladies' colleges.

Rare Books in the Library include editions of some of the early French voyages, such as Freycinet, Dumont d'Urville and Baudin. There is a copy of the 1857 edition of Fauchery's *Lettres d'un mineur en Australie*, and Céleste Mogador's biographies *Adieux au monde* (1854) and *Un Deuil au bout du monde* (1877), as well as some of her fiction works. Unfortunately, we do not yet hold a copy of the *Guide des émigrants aux mines d'or en Australie* by Brout (1855), the first book published in French about Victoria. That is held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney and we will have to be content with a copy in the La Trobe.

Other relevant and interesting material is held in the National Library of Australia. There, the researcher will find:

- approximately 4' of transcripts from the records from the *Musée de l'Art Marin*, dealing with French exploration in Australia between the years 1696-1825,
- a letter from La Pérouse;
- transcripts of documents (1792-1845) of M. Beautemps-Beaupré, who was Minister for the French Navy and Colonies;
- paintings in the National Library of Australia include an oil by De Sainson depicting the unveiling of a monument to La Pérouse, and many engravings of the voyages of de Freycinet and La Pérouse.

There is also in the National Library an exceedingly rare pamphlet: *Fragment du dernier voyage de La Pérouse*. It is one of only two known copies, the other being in Paris. It is shortly (December 1985) to be published by the National Library in facsimile and in translation. Professor John Dunmore, Professor of French at Massey University in New Zealand, whose biography of La Pérouse is forthcoming, is preparing the facsimile edition.

Since our recent exhibition *The Italians*, documentation and pictures of this group in our community have flowed into the Library in large quantities. Following the exhibition *The French Presence in Victoria* to which La Trobe Library staff made a substantial input, some interest was expressed by a few families and individuals in depositing personal papers in the La Trobe Library, for safe keeping and for future generations of historians. However, little has materialised to date. I believe much of the problem lies with the Library's poor publicity in advertising its holdings and services. Many people do not realise that those old family papers and photographs which are often sent to the incinerator, have historic value in the Library. The adage is quite true that "one man's rubbish is another's icon!"

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And please – if you are a researcher – help to build on the small body of material we have already by depositing in the Library the fruits of your work, whether published or not, where it will remain permanently as an aid to further scholarship.

*State Library of Victoria*