

FOREWORD

Explorations 48 is bursting at the seams. For the first time in many months we have more quality submissions waiting to be printed than we can accommodate within the constraints of the journal's current format. Several articles and book reviews have been held over to *Explorations* 49, a delay for which we apologise to our authors as well as to our readers.

The current issue is dedicated to the *Alliance Française de Melbourne* which celebrates the hundred and twentieth anniversary of its foundation this year. It was the first *Alliance* in this part of the world, established only a few years after the creation of the *Alliance Française* in Paris. *Explorations* 48 contains an article by Katia Menglet and Colin Nettelbeck on developments over the last two or three decades in the life and activities of the Melbourne *Alliance*, and the connection between these developments and French cultural policies at large.

In the section 'Notes, Documents and Reviews' we have another text loosely connected with the *Alliance*: it is the account by Michael Shirrefs, a broadcaster, printmaker and composer, of his re-discovery in the State Library of Victoria of a substantial collection of maps and books donated in 1880 by the French Government to the people of Melbourne. The gift of this half-forgotten collection was made to the Melbourne Public Library, the predecessor of today's State Library, on the occasion of the 1880-1881 Melbourne International Exhibition. The story of this re-discovery was the inspiration for an exhibition, curated by Michael Shirrefs, to be held at the *Alliance Française de Melbourne* later this year.

Apart from these two items related to the Melbourne *Alliance*, the current issue also has a major article, focussing on Sydney, on the connection between the Australian wool industry and the introduction of French *haute couture* to Australia. The author of this study, Margot Riley, an established fashion historian and a Curator at the State Library of New South Wales, will be known to many readers of *Explorations* as the senior curator of the 2004 exhibition *Vive la différence! The French in NSW*.

The current issue also contains Elaine Lewis' now well-established column, 'French-Australian Bibliographical Notes', as well as one book review and one book note — three further book reviews had to be held over to the next issue, due to lack of space. The *Explorations* team is both embarrassed and delighted by this *embarras de richesses*.