

FOREWORD

As we come to celebrate the appearance of the fiftieth number of *Explorations*, the mouthpiece of the Institute for the Study of French-Australia Relations (ISFAR), we can note with considerable pleasure that our journal has dramatically exceeded the expectations that Dennis Davison, Wallace Kirsop and I set out for it over a quarter of a century ago. The first number (which appeared in May 1985) contained several short articles on a diversity of themes and people, all of them lively and colourful enough, but very much in line with the deliberately chosen emphasis on Melbourne and Victoria, and with the small-scale ‘bulletin’ format.

Today, *Explorations* still prefers a small format, but it has gained impressively in size, scope, substance, and presentation. The composition of its editorial advisory board, which now has members from several states and from France, reflects this change of approach, which had begun during Wal Kirsop’s tenure as editor, and has continued apace under the joint editorship of Ivan Barko and Jana Verhoeven. Credit for the transformations is widely shared, but particular thanks are due to Stephen Alomes, whose presidency of ISFAR was marked by a sustained and focussed determination to give *Explorations* a stronger presence among Australian periodicals. The commitment and the technical desktop publishing skills of Kate Jones have also been of great instrumental value.

Among the many changes that have occurred, at least three warrant special mention. Firstly, since number 44 (June 2008), the academic status of *Explorations* has been significantly enhanced by the decision to include a range of fully peer-refereed studies. Together with other forms of contribution—such as notes, essays, reviews and personal testimonies—this has created a highly flexible publication, one that can attract the highest levels of scholarship as well as more idiosyncratic and individual stories. Secondly, the introduction, as a regular feature of the journal, of the French-Australian Bibliographical Notes (pioneered and maintained by Elaine Lewis), has made *Explorations* an important centralised repository for information that would otherwise be scattered and only haphazardly available. Thirdly, the digitising and web-based archiving of the journal, a project led by Jana Verhoeven and supported by the University of Melbourne, mean not only that *Explorations* can count itself as part of contemporary publishing practice, but that its content, readily

searchable, is henceforth accessible for researchers and other interested parties throughout the world.

Beyond these particular improvements, perhaps the greatest contribution of the journal has been to help establish some more clearly defined parameters in what was originally a rather amorphous notion of French-Australian connections. This has occurred in an inductive way, rather than from any pre-existing theoretical model, but over time, a quite rich and complex field of knowledge and study has emerged. The present invitation for contributions maps some of the parameters of that field, including ‘the social and cultural, the political and economic, the contemporary as well as the historical, covering topics such as literature, the arts, popular culture, comparative studies, mutual perceptions at a distance, experiences of travellers and tourists, migration and the francophone world’.

As a result, we now know a great deal more about the ways in which Australian and French cultures have interacted since the time of the earliest journeys of discovery, as well as the ways in which they continue to interact today. We also know that any construction of Australian history without reference to the French dimension would be a significantly incomplete one. At a time when public discussion is focussing—very understandably, moreover—on Australia’s place in the Asian world, the long-standing and enduring connection with a core European civilisation is worth remembering and fostering. The field that has been opened up seems to be attracting significant new interest, which bodes well for our journal’s future.

The present issue is an excellent example of the range and strength of *Explorations* today. Kerry Mullan’s research on present-day intercultural misunderstandings in conversations between French and Australian English interlocutors casts light on stubborn stereotypes. Without being overly optimistic about overcoming judgmental attitudes, she guides her readers towards a greater awareness of how social interactions are informed by underlying cultural values. Jean Fornasiero examines an entirely different kind of cultural encounter, that between members of the 1802 Baudin expedition and indigenous Australians through the medium of music; in their attentive observation of the importance of art in the Aborigines’ daily lives, the French explorers projected an image quite distant from British colonists’ views of a *terra nullius*. Sophie Masson’s reflection on the ‘in-betweenness’ of her identity as a French-Australian and as a writer is vital and moving: it is especially

welcome at this time when Masson's book *The Hunt for Ned Kelly* has won the 2011 Patricia Wrightson Prize, the children's literature category in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and in the light of her recent election as President of the Australian Society of Authors. We offer her our warmest congratulations.

Explorations Number 50 is therefore a worthy landmark, allowing us to measure the progress we have made, and to look with confidence towards future developments. As we do so, it is natural and right that we should pay homage to all those whose contributions have given the journal such firm grounding. They are too numerous to list here, but one person does stand out. Colin Thornton-Smith was a founding member of ISFAR, and his research and astute commentaries have been regularly published in *Explorations*. The commitment, wisdom, enthusiasm and skills he brought to the journal over many years as a member of its editorial committee were greatly valued, and they have been missed since health problems obliged him to step down. In dedicating this number to him, the present editors and I salute the spirit and scholarship that give his work such enduring qualities.

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EDITORS' NOTE

The current issue of *Explorations* features two significant changes in the presentation of bibliographical and other scholarly information. Our predominant referencing system to identify sources will be Harvard, which lists quoted books, articles, conference papers, etc. at the end of the article in an alphabetically organised reference list or bibliography. In the body of the text, a short reference in brackets, including the page number if appropriate, will refer the reader to the corresponding item in the references. This initiative seeks to eliminate unnecessary repetitions.

In the few cases where fuller citation of complex sources is necessary, such as some archival sources, we will use traditional footnotes: indeed the second editorial initiative in this issue is the substitution of footnotes for endnotes. We believe footnotes are more reader-friendly than endnotes.

We hope our readers will appreciate these changes.