

MIRRORING THE ARCHIVES:
THE WRITING OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORY
AND THE BAUDIN EXPEDITION

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The history of the early European discovery of Australia and the subsequent pattern of British settlement explain the relatively late conceptualisation of Australia as a unified national entity, ready for the writing of its history. The Australian coast had been visited and mapped since the beginning of the seventeenth century by the Dutch, and perhaps also the Portuguese. The earliest maps show unconnected fragments of the coastline which progressively coalesced as subsequent navigators added to the picture. Gradually it became possible to hypothesise a single land mass and this vast country was named New Holland by Abel Tasman in 1644.¹ After the English took possession of the east coast of New Holland in 1770, the first colony was established by them at Port Jackson in 1788.

The colony at Port Jackson, present-day Sydney, was a penal colony. It was established by Captain Arthur Phillip, and comprised principally convicts who often remained in the country after working off the usual sentence of seven years. Twenty-five years after the first settlement, in 1803, a penal colony was established in Van Diemen's Land,² followed by those of Albany and the Swan River. The last convicts arrived in Western Australia in 1867.

The subsequent colonisation of the rest of Australia by the British took place in stages, and the colonists were now primarily free settlers and emancipated convicts. The strategic colonies became the capital cities of the regions surrounding them and these regions later became the states. The first colony of New South Wales included Victoria and Queensland. The state of Victoria was proclaimed in 1851 and Van Diemen's Land became the state

¹ As early as 1648, Joan Blaeu's map, 'Nova et accuratissima totius terrarum orbis tabula', depicted in outline a large continent, recognisably Australia, which the Dutch named New Holland.

² After the visit of the Baudin expedition to Sydney in 1802, this colony was established precipitately by Governor King as fears were held that the French might lay claim to Van Diemen's Land.

of Tasmania in 1854. Queensland, which included the Northern Territory, became a separate state in 1859. The colony of South Australia, established in 1836, annexed the Northern Territory in 1863. It was not until 1890 that Western Australia, colonised in 1829, was granted self-government. This succession of colonies, founded piecemeal along different parts of the vast coastline, evoked in their lack of cohesion the difficulty of conceptualising the country as a unified whole.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the improvement in communications and transport between the independently functioning states, the notion of a federation of states under a central government began to be contemplated. The initial movement was led by the visionary politician Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales. Central to the idea of federation was the notion of national identity which would be the tool for welding together the separate states.

The identity of the nation was founded both on remembering the past, but also on the selective forgetting of parts of it. Transportation was far enough removed in time and former convicts had become respectable citizens. As they were keen to make a new start they actively hid their shameful past.³ The chequered history of this network of colonies and states, comprising both free settlers and former convicts, made the idea of an identity in which all citizens could recognise themselves imperative. The identity to be forged required reinforcement of what was common to all Australians. Although it affirmed the British heritage and celebrated the heroic pioneering past, it was resolutely turned towards the future.

The writing of the narrative of the British settlement of Australia, accompanying the emergence of nationhood, would thus support not only the sense of national unity but that of national identity. The historian's task would be to weld together the disparate entities that composed the nation. At its beginnings, for these reasons, the writing of the history of Australia was imperialist in focus, dealing predominantly with the British colonisation of New Holland. Elements which might undermine the fragile balance, such as history from an Aboriginal perspective and the role played by other European nations in the exploration of Australia, were virtually ignored.

³ Which would be revealed in later times to their descendants several generations along in their genealogical searches.

Librarians, archivists and historians during this period were anxious to establish the writing of the history of Australia on a firm basis and made a concerted effort to collect source material from British sources. Even at this time, some archivists and historians suggested that the narrative should not be limited to British discovery, but should also take account of the exploration carried out by other European nations, and the first attempts were made to broaden the scope of historical writing by the collection of material which would serve as the basis for a more complete understanding of the contribution of the French and other Europeans in the early exploration of New Holland.

In this paper, we will explore, in the context of the general document collection process, the history of the acquisition for Australian archives of documentary material relating to the French scientific expedition captained by Nicolas Baudin at the turn of the nineteenth century. This exemplary expedition, commissioned by Napoleon, then First Consul, explored the west, south and east coasts of New Holland between 1801 and 1803 and until relatively recently has not received the place it deserves in Australian historiography.

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One of the first to interest himself in documenting the history of the continent was James Bonwick who became a model for subsequent historians and archivists. Bonwick was born in England in 1817 and had emigrated to Tasmania in 1841 to head a school in Hobart. Subsequently he worked in educational institutions in South Australia and then Victoria. In 1856 he published his *Discovery and Settlement of Port Phillip*, the first of his historical works.⁴ Over the next three decades he was to publish numerous works on the history of Australia, including *The First Twenty Years of Australia* which was published in 1882, and in which he used archival material he had collected in England.

⁴ This was followed in 1867 by *John Batman*, then *The Last of the Tasmanians: the Black War of Van Diemen's Land; Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians*, and *Curious Facts of Old Colonial Days*, all of which were published in 1870. *The Port Phillip Settlement* was published in 1883 and *The Romance of the Wool Trade* in 1887.

The wealth of material he found prompted him to offer his services as transcriber to the Queensland government in 1883. Subsequently he made transcriptions of documents for South Australia in 1885, and for the Melbourne Public Library in 1886.

From January 1887 to 1893 he carried out transcriptions for Tasmania and from April 1887 to 1902 for New South Wales. In his correspondence with his friend, Sir Henry Parkes, he emphasised the necessity of transcribing in England the documents relating to the history of the colony in order to constitute a collection of archives in Australia itself which would mirror that in the Public Records Office in London.⁵

The year 1888 was the centenary of the British colonisation of Australia. To mark the occasion, the Parkes government funded the transcription of original sources in London and a new official history of Australia. Bonwick concentrated at first on the Public Records Office and the British Museum. For fifteen years until 1902, he assembled a team of women to help him in transcribing the official documentation of the colony from its origins: principally letters and dispatches. These transcriptions were then published from 1892 to 1901 as *The Historical Records of New South Wales*.⁶

Bonwick recounts the difficulties he had in finding a complete documentary record. Firstly, most of the official documents between 1788—the foundation date of the colony—and 1800 were missing. He found some documents in store-rooms, buried under building materials, and others half eaten by rats. Still other documents, which had remained in the colony, had met a similar fate. Unfortunately, from the standpoint of historical accuracy, Bonwick's transcriptions now have limited value since they censor as well as transcribing omitting certain names in order to avoid offending the sensibilities of persons who would rather forget their convict past.⁷ These

⁵ This request was granted in 1887.

⁶ The publication of it was decided in 1891 and continued until 1901, when seven volumes had been published, covering the period up to 1811. In 1914, the Government decided to continue its publication under the name of the *Historical Records of Australia*.

⁷ In a letter to Sir Henry Parkes dated 8 May 1885, James Bonwick wrote: 'Objections to a general transcription of early records I can understand, as family names and stories may appear; as I seek only to make for your Public Library a list

documents nevertheless served as a basis for the writing of the *History of New South Wales from the Records*.⁸

George Burnett Barton, the author of the first volume of the *History*, noted, however, that his history could only provide a partial historical view as there was further work to do with regard to the collection of documents in archives in continental Europe:

It is much to be wished that some effort should be made for the purpose of obtaining as complete a collection of those publications as can now be made: and also that the Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese archives should be carefully searched for the purpose of procuring authentic copies of all State papers relating to this country. It is not until these materials shall have been obtained that we can hope to arrive at any satisfactory conclusions with respect to the only portion of our history that still remains buried in obscurity.⁹

Some of the documents transcribed gave indications that the need existed to search in the archives of mainland Europe to obtain a more complete picture. The documents concerning the Baudin expedition are a case in point. This scientific expedition departed from Le Havre on 27 October 1800 with the aim of exploring and charting parts of the coast of New Holland. On the return of the Baudin expedition to France in 1804, the bulk of the material collected by the members of the expedition was lodged in archives in France. This consisted of an array of objects: collections of specimens, officers' journals, scientific reports, artists' drawings, letters written and received by participants in the expedition, as well as official documents pertaining to it.

Australia, logically enough, holds few original documents relevant to the expedition. Some of the letters and other papers written by different

of all the documents in the Record Office here, from 1786, and a short Digest of their contents'. (James Bonwick, Letters to Parkes, May 8 1885–January 10 1890, in *Parkes' Correspondence*, Mitchell Library, CY A872, vol., 2, p. 363.)

⁸G. B. Barton, *History of New South Wales from the Records*, vol. 1, Sydney, Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1889. Vol. II was written by A. Britton and published in 1901.

⁹*History of New South Wales from the Records*, vol. 1, p. x.

members of the Baudin expedition to the British, notably to the Governor of the colony of Port Jackson Philip Gidley King, are to be found in the British archives. This series of documents was transcribed by Bonwick and his team, and forms the appendix, of some sixty pages, to the *Historical Records of New South Wales*.¹⁰ Some of the documents are in French with English translations, but most are translated into English, without the French originals.

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Contemporary with Bonwick's activities, history as a rigorous and method-based discipline was taking shape in the universities as professorial chairs in history were established. The new discipline was built on the systematic consultation of original documents. Also, in parallel with the developments in universities, the creation of the important State libraries took place, the principal aims of which were to conserve the country's documentary heritage and to increase the Australian collections. George Arnold Wood arrived in Australia in 1888, at the time of the centenary celebrations, and was appointed Professor at the University of Sydney in 1891. He was a friend of Sir Henry Parkes and took a particular interest in Australian history, training a subsequent generation of historians and archivists.

Ernest Scott,¹¹ appointed in 1913 to the new Chair in history at the University of Melbourne, was among the first to recognise the contribution of France to the early exploration of Australia.¹² In his books, *Terre Napoléon: A*

¹⁰ *Historical Records of New South Wales*, ed. F. M. Bladen, Sydney, 1896. Tome IV, *Hunter and King: 1800, 1801, 1802*. The appendix is entitled 'The Baudin Papers', pp. 941–1010.

¹¹ See *The Discovery of Australian History 1890–1939*, eds Stuart Macintyre and Julian Thomas, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1995; Stuart Macintyre, *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1994.

¹² According to Stuart Macintyre, '[...] as Scott examined existing accounts, he found the same errors and elisions passed on from writer to writer. It is to be feared that in the writing of Australian, as of much other history, there has been on the part of authors a considerable amount of "taking in each other's washing". Hence

*History of French Explorations and Projects in Australia*¹³ and *Lapérouse*,¹⁴ he set out to examine the role played by France, which he saw as having been misrepresented by the British in the backlash of the antagonisms of the Napoleonic era. Although underscoring British superiority as regards the colonisation of the Southern Hemisphere, Scott was anxious to correct two widespread erroneous ideas: firstly, that the mission of the Baudin expedition was to spy on the British colony,¹⁵ and secondly that the French had imprisoned Flinders at Mauritius in order to give themselves time to publish the maps of *Terre Napoléon* with the place names attributed by one of the naturalists of the expedition, François Péron, and the officer Louis Freycinet.

Coincidentally during this period, the Frenchman Comte Alphonse de Fleurieu, together with the French Société de Géographie, embarked upon a campaign to seek tangible recognition of discoveries made by the French in the early days of the Australian colony. Fleurieu was the great-nephew of Claret de Fleurieu who, as the French Minister for the Navy and a member of the commission of the Institut de France, had written the naval instructions for the Baudin expedition in 1800. Alphonse de Fleurieu sought the restoration of the names the French had given to places they had discovered first, but which had subsequently been replaced by English names.

Fleurieu travelled to Australia in 1911, getting in touch with the Geographical Societies in the different Australian states, and with archivists, librarians, politicians and intellectuals, such as Ernest Scott. He had limited success in his mission. In the state of Victoria, he achieved the restitution of French names in five cases.¹⁶ In South Australia the original name was

his own account, *Terre Napoléon*, based on a rigorous examination of the available sources', *The Discovery of Australian History 1890–1939*, p. 75.

¹³ London, Methuen, 1911.

¹⁴ Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1912.

¹⁵ In an article published in April 1913, 'Baudin's Voyage of Exploration to Australia', in which he examines the original documents of the expedition found in the Archives nationales in Paris, Scott declares: 'This collection of documents, which describe the origin of the project and the nature of the work it was expected to perform, contains not a sentence to justify the suspicion aroused at the time...', *The English Historical Review*, vol. XXVIII, n° 110, April 1913, p. 346.

¹⁶ Cape Montesquieu, Descartes Bay, Cape Duquesne, Cape Réaumur, Cape Volney.

restored to the Fleurieu peninsula.¹⁷ His visit nevertheless served to make a new generation aware of the role played by the French in the early exploration of Australia and to motivate further research in the area.

Various librarians were already aware by this stage of the paucity of library holdings relative to non-British exploration of Australia and were beginning to think of ways of rectifying the situation. Among these librarians was Hugh Wright, the first Mitchell Librarian, appointed at the opening of the Mitchell wing of the Public Library of New South Wales in 1910.¹⁸ Wright met Fleurieu during his stay in Australia and was sent in 1913 to Europe to secure the Macquarie manuscripts for the Library by the Principal Librarian William Ifould. He visited Paris between July and September 1914 where, with the aid of Fleurieu, he began his voyage of discovery in the French archives.

Fleurieu put Wright in touch with Mme Robert Héloüis, who had been carrying out transcriptions of French manuscripts for him, and whose wide knowledge of the French archives had previously been noted by Ernest Scott. Guided by Héloüis, Wright discovered many of the manuscripts concerning French exploration of Australia. Fleurieu also accompanied Wright during the latter's visit to Le Havre where Dr Loir, the director of the Muséum d'histoire naturelle, showed him the forty-six volumes of Lesueur's manuscripts. In his report to Ifould, Wright recounts the event and gives his conclusions:

Dr Loir was particularly helpful and courteous during my examination of the 46 volumes of Lesueur's manuscripts. Count de Fleurieu assures me that the printed account of Baudin's expedition was badly done owing to jealousy among

¹⁷ Fleurieu subsequently published his findings: *La Nomenclature française en Australie et en Tasmanie : communication faite au Congrès national des sociétés françaises de géographie tenu à Paris (15–19 juillet 1913)*, Paris, Masso, 1914.

¹⁸ This wing was built to house the valuable collection of Australiana that Thomas Scott Mitchell had bequeathed to the Public Library of NSW in 1907. Mitchell's collection of books and manuscripts, together with the books and maps bequeathed by William Dixson in 1952, constitute one of the most important resources in Australia for the writing of Australian history. Dixson also published studies of the French explorers La Pérouse and Dumont d'Urville.

the members of the expedition. As I had not the printed account handy for comparative purposes I cannot definitely say how much is omitted, but I feel positive that all that was essential was included in the publication. Just as one could expect I found among the volumes many unfinished sketches and many notes, little scraps of information, that even today might be of very little value to the collector or specialist in Australian zoology. In my opinion a copy of Lesueur's mss. and sketches amounting in all to 46 volumes, folio and quarto size, would be more suitable to a natural history museum than to the Mitchell Library. Many of the drawings of butterflies and fishes were beautifully done in water-colours, and by photography the delicate colours would not be reproduced. To employ an artist to copy the coloured sketches would involve such a large outlay as to put the reproduction out of consideration.¹⁹

In spite of this decision, he concluded in his report that the Mitchell Library should employ H elouis to transcribe by hand other documents concerning the exploration of Australia. This ambitious project, the first systematic transcription of the manuscripts of the French explorers, was spread over some fifteen years, beginning in 1913 with the transcription of the documents from the Baudin expedition, and finishing in 1929. H elouis, with the help of her sister, Mademoiselle M. Briau, worked at the Biblioth eque nationale, the Archives nationales, the Service Historique de la Marine and in the Caen departmental archives. Ongoing correspondence between Mme H elouis and the successive librarians at the Public Library underscores the active role she played in identifying the documents she would copy, and also her strong belief in the importance of her work for historians of the future. In 1922, she writes the following to Wright:

[...] tous ces documents sont bien int eressants pour vous. Je dis tous car plus nous irons, plus les moindres d etails seront pr ecieux. Et un jour, il sera tr es curieux de savoir comment nos soci et es

¹⁹ Hugh Wright, 'First Draft, Sydney Sept 21 1914', *Copies of letters to the Principal Librarian W. H. Ifould Public Library of NSW 1914 from Hugh Wright*, CY Reel 1569, ML MS 499, Item 2, n o 3.

scientifiques, etc. du temps de La Pérouse, d'Entrecasteaux, et autres, envisageaient les Terres et les Mers Australes, ce qu'elles savaient à leur sujet, ce qu'elles cherchaient, et comment elles préparaient nos expéditions françaises, tout en suivant avec passion les expéditions anglaises. Tout cela, c'est encore, et ce sera l'histoire de l'Australie.²⁰

It was Mme Hélouis who informed the librarians in Sydney of the death of the Comte de Fleurieu in 1926 and of the fact that he had bequeathed all his papers to the Société de Géographie in Paris.²¹ The copies of the manuscripts from the Baudin expedition (and of other French explorers of Australia), made by hand by Mme Hélouis and her sister, are known as the 'Hélouis Transcripts'. These original copies are to be found in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and a copy of these, along with those commissioned by the historian Ernest Scott, are in the National Library of Australia in Canberra. Together they constitute an important chapter in the narrative of the acquisition of copies of French documents relative to Australian discovery.

Ida Leeson succeeded Hugh Wright as Mitchell Librarian and under her expert leadership the acquisition strategies of the library were expanded and developed. Leeson had been a student of George Arnold Wood and had also studied languages at the University of Sydney. She had begun her career at the Public Library of NSW as cataloguer, working under the guidance of Christopher Brennan. In 1909, she was promoted to the position of cataloguer of the Mitchell collections, working with Hugh Wright and when in 1919 she was appointed Principal Accessions officer, she sought to

²⁰ Hélouis, Mme, Letter to Hugh Wright, 5 October 1922, ML 117, In-Letters 1923: '[...] all the documents are of great interest for you. I say *all* because the further on we go, the more the smallest details will be of value. And one day, it will be fascinating to know how our scientific societies, etc. in the time of La Perouse, d'Entrecasteaux, and others, viewed the Austral Seas and Lands, what they knew about them, what they were seeking, and how they prepared our French expeditions, at the same time following with passionate interest the English expeditions. All that, still is, and shall be the history of Australia'.

²¹ Wright had entertained the hope that Count Fleurieu would bequeath his papers to the Mitchell Library. The papers are now in the Département des Cartes et Plans at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

build on Mitchell's collection of Australiana. During her long service leave in 1927, Leeson was sent by Ifould to the United States of America and Europe and was given 'special leave' of three weeks in order to follow up on various research questions for the library.²² Her personal goal was to find the missing third log of Matthew Flinders, confiscated by the French during the explorer's imprisonment on Mauritius, for which she had intended to search amongst the papers of General Decaen, held in the archives at Caen. In London, however, she located the missing log at the Public Records Office where it had been miscatalogued. Later during her trip, Leeson went to Paris looking for further material under the guidance of Mme H elouis.

In 1933, Leeson was named Mitchell Librarian. This position gave her the scope she needed to plan in a systematic way the acquisition of copies of material which would provide an increased number of primary texts to serve as the foundations for the future writing of the history of Australia. By 1939, the technology had been developed to make possible the photographing of material on microfilm and the Trustees of the Library had decided to send Leeson to Europe where she was to carry out an ambitious copying programme, both in England and on the continent. Unfortunately this trip did not eventuate due to the outbreak of war. Instead, Leeson was given the task of identifying and arranging for the copying of documents contained in the archives of Victoria and South Australia and this work formed the foundation of what would become the Joint Copying Project. Leeson was subsequently seconded to the army for the duration of the war. After the war, she was given other responsibilities and was no longer concerned with the work which she had played such a large part in initiating.

In 1945, the Joint Copying Project was finally set up as a collaboration between the National Library of Australia and the Public Library of New South Wales. Filming began in 1948. The aim of the Project was to make microfilms of all the documents concerning Australia to be found in the Public Records Office in London and ten years later the project was expanded to include other libraries in the United Kingdom. Phyllis Mander Jones, who had worked closely with Leeson, succeeded her in 1946 as Mitchell Librarian and carried on the work of organising and expanding the collections. Mander

²² Ida Leeson, 'Report on work done and to be done in copying overseas...', ML Doc. 1835, p. 10, quoted in Sylvia Martin, *Ida Leeson, a Life*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2006, p. 208.

Jones, who had a historical training²³ and was competent in several languages, focussed on extending the Project to include not only documents from the United Kingdom, but also those from other libraries elsewhere in Europe. In 1959, as representative of the Mitchell Library in London, and advised by the historian Brian Plomley, she made a preliminary visit to the Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Le Havre with a view to evaluating the importance of the Lesueur Collection, rejected, as we have seen, by Hugh Wright in 1914.

Convinced of the collection's worth to Australian historiography, Mander Jones made a second trip to Le Havre in 1960, accompanied by the Australian photographer Axel Poignant and his wife Roslyn. Mander Jones had persuaded Poignant to photograph the illustrations by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicolas-Martin Petit, made during the Baudin expedition.²⁴ Roslyn Poignant remembers the warm welcome the Australians received from the director of the Muséum, André Maury, and also that the collection was housed at that time in the École des Beaux-Arts in Le Havre.²⁵ Roslyn Poignant recounts²⁶ how, by changing the lighting, Axel Poignant developed techniques for retaining in his photographs the luminosity of the original parchment. In the evening he would develop and print the photographs that he had taken during the day and work sometimes did not stop until midnight. The photos he took are now to be found in the Mitchell Library.²⁷

Mander Jones retired from the Mitchell Library and in 1962 was appointed Officer in charge of the Joint Copying Project in London at the Australian High Commission. Over the next four decades the Project produced and dispatched to Australia 10,000 reels of microfilmed records

²³ It was she who created the first State Archives department in the Public Library.

²⁴ An article on the 'mission Australienne' [sic] appeared in the newspaper *Le Havre Libre*, 7 April 1960.

²⁵ During the Second World War the Director André Maury removed to a place of safe-keeping the drawings and manuscripts of Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, one of the artists of the Baudin expedition, as well as other documents from the expedition.

²⁶ In conversation with Margaret Sankey during 2008.

²⁷ A selection of these photographs is to be found on the Baudin Legacy website: [www. http://sydney.edu.au/arts/research/ baudin/iconography/axel_ poignant.shtml](http://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/research/ baudin/iconography/axel_poignant.shtml)

from overseas sources dated from 1560 to 1984.²⁸ The London Office of the Project was shut down in 1993 and the final microfilms reached Australia in 1997.

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During the 1960s, other initiatives were also taking place: Brian Plomley²⁹ was carrying out his work on French explorers and the Tasmanian Aborigines and historian Leslie Marchant had begun to explore the French archives in search of material to illustrate French exploration of Western Australia.³⁰

Another archival project, linked to the professional development of archivists in Australia, was taking shape in South Australia. Charles Braibant, Director of the French Archives nationales, organised a ‘Stage International des Archives’ for the benefit of foreign archivists in order to showcase the wealth of historical documentary material relative to other countries held in the French archives. The archivist, Brian Baldwin, encouraged by Gerald Fischer, Director of the Archives of the State of South Australia, was awarded a scholarship by the French government to participate in a three-month internship in the French archives which allowed him to identify the French documents relative to South Australia. Baldwin, who was accommodated with his wife in an apartment at the National Archives, spent eight months in Paris in 1963.

After the internship, and with the permission of Hedley Brideson, Chief Librarian at the State Library of South Australia, Baldwin remained in France to continue his detailed search of the archives, and to arrange microfilming

²⁸ These details accessed from NLA websites in 2005 and 2014: nla.gov.au/collect/ajcp.

²⁹ Norman James Brian Plomley, also known as Brian Plomley, was particularly interested in the French documentation of the Tasmanian Aborigines, before the first British colony was established in Van Diemen’s Land in 1803. His publications include: *French manuscripts referring to the Tasmanian aborigines: a preliminary report*, Museum Committee, Launceston City Council, 1966, and *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Hobart, Blubber Head Press, 1983.

³⁰ Which would result in the publication of his book, *France Australe*, Perth, Scott Four Colour Print, 1998 [1982].

of the documents concerning South Australia, most of which concerned the Baudin expedition. In Paris, his research was conducted at the Archives nationales, the Muséum d'histoire naturelle and the Musée national de la marine. He also travelled to the Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Le Havre in May 1963.³¹ Another archive visited was that at the Château de l'Age³² to which he was invited by Baron de Freycinet and his wife. Baldwin's finished project,³³ consisting of 36 microfilms, provided Australian libraries with the first complete copy of the main journals and of the correspondence from the Baudin expedition. Half a century after Madame Hélouis's hand-written transcriptions, Brian Baldwin's microfilms provided the second chapter in the Australian collection of copies of French documentation relative to the role played by the French in the early history of Australia.

The first publication in 1974 of Baudin's *Journal de mer*, translated into English by Christine Cornell and entitled *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin*,³⁴ was a direct spin-off from Baldwin's project. Cornell was the first to use the microfilms obtained by Baldwin, both to write her Master's thesis, published in 1964,³⁵ and then as the first stage in her translation project. This translation, accompanied by a detailed critical apparatus and including other documents relevant to the expedition, was the first significant work on the Baudin expedition to use copies of documents held in an Australian archive.

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³¹ Where he spent less time, knowing that Mander Jones was paying particular attention to this museum.

³² This archive has since been dispersed and most of its contents sold to individual collectors and libraries..

³³ Most of the microfilms concern the Baudin expedition, but Baldwin also microfilmed documents on Flinders, Wakefield and Light. Baldwin wrote up a description of his work in France in his article, 'French Sources for South Australian History', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, vol. 64 (1963), pp. 23–37.

³⁴ Christine Cornell, *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin Commander-in-Chief of the Corvettes Géographe and Naturaliste*, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974.

³⁵ Christine Cornell, *Questions Relating to Nicolas Baudin's Australian Expedition 1800–1804*, Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965.

Since the end of the 1990s, digitisation, with the possibilities it affords, has replaced microfilm. In this third stage in the copying of records in European archives, but also in its dissemination, a new era has begun. The exemplary Baudin Legacy Project,³⁶ funded for five years by the ARC in 2005,³⁷ exploits these new possibilities and seeks to build on them. The first stage of the project has been to collect digitised copies of the journals of the Baudin expedition, of which the originals are to be found in the French Archives nationales, the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Muséums d'histoire naturelle, in both Paris and Le Havre. The second stage consists of the transcription in Australia of these copies of journals. As always, accuracy is of the utmost importance and the transcriptions are checked against the originals.³⁸ The ultimate aim has been to create a website so that these documents are available to all scholars, not just nationally, but globally. The third stage of the Baudin Legacy Project addresses the question of the visibility of the Baudin expedition in Australia by providing translations into English of the journals. One of the main reasons why many scholars of Australian history have been unaware of the existence of these documents, or have not paid attention to them, is because the majority of the documents are in French. Thus the translation of these journals crosses the language divide and makes them immediately available to non French-speaking scholars and the wider public.

The copying process in digital format thus provides new possibilities for the dissemination of archival information. In the case of the Baudin expedition, the copying and transcription process has had some unexpected side-effects. Since the earliest copies were made at the beginning of the twentieth century, time has taken its toll of the archival documents. In a few instances, documents have gone missing or been misplaced since the copies

³⁶ <http://sydney.edu.au/arts/research/baudin/project/>

³⁷ Australian Research Council. The Chief Investigators in the continuing Project are Margaret Sankey, Jean Fornasiero, John West-Sooby and Michel Jangoux. The Research Assistant to the Project for the duration of its funding was Jennifer Genion to whom I am also grateful for her research and editorial comments in the preparation of this article.

³⁸ CDs are often copied from existing, sometimes old, microfilm which has deteriorated. This makes it all the more important to check always against the original.

were made. The copy, then, becomes as it were the ‘original’ document. Likewise, the inexorable deterioration of certain manuscripts in the French National Archives, in spite of an active programme of restoration and preservation,³⁹ follows its course and some microfilms made several years previously still retain the trace of certain words and lines of text which have disappeared from the original manuscript. Thus the microfilm, too, becomes a ‘primary’ document.

The authorities of the French Archives nationales welcome the creation of the Baudin Legacy Project website and see it as an active collaboration in the dissemination of the material that they own. As Madame Anne Pérotin-Dumon, head of the Section ancienne⁴⁰ at the Archives put it, we of the Baudin Legacy Project add the ‘grey matter’ necessary to actualise these documents and to bring them to a wider audience. The staff of the Archives have been most generous with their help and support at every stage of the project.⁴¹ As we have indicated, the Baudin website is a work in progress, and will continue to be so, as the team continue to add new archival material.

In conclusion, we can note that the archival copying process which began with James Bonwick, before Federation and the birth of Australia as a nation, has evolved in the digital age into more than just a mirroring of European archives. The original aim was to mirror in Australia the primary resource material, to be found in the United Kingdom and Europe, so as to provide the necessary basis for the writing of the history of the fledgling nation.

Just as the nature of copying has changed over time, so has the historiography of Australia and its place in the world. Digital resources have made possible an active collaboration between Australia and France, in order both to preserve the original archive and to foreground, for a national

³⁹ The sheer volume of paper in the Archives nationales makes it difficult to keep up with the necessary preservation work.

⁴⁰ In 2010.

⁴¹ The members of the Project team are particularly grateful to Mesdames Claire Béchu, Brigitte Schmauch, Armelle Le Goff, Nadine Gastaldi, Anne Pérotin-Dumon of the Archives nationales de France. Gabrielle Baglione, Cédric Crémère and, before her retirement, Jacqueline Bonnemains, have always been generous in their help and support of the Baudin Legacy Project.

and global audience, the important part played by the Baudin expedition in Australia's past.

It is to be hoped that this manner of making available French archival material concerning Australia will provide a useful tool for Australian, French and other historians, as well as for the many others interested in various aspects of the Baudin expedition. Already feedback from those consulting the website suggests that scientists, artists and writers of fiction, as well as historians, find the site a useful resource.⁴² Perhaps we may envisage the Baudin enterprise as a model for the collection and dissemination of information for other French voyages to Australia and even for other areas of the burgeoning study of French-Australian history.

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⁴² Feedback has come from overseas (Canada, Sweden, France) as well as locally.