

Memory institutions shaping the past, present and future

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A society without memory is a society without present and future



A world leading library ...



- 5.5 million items
- 11.2 linear km of manuscripts
- 234,000 prints, drawings, paintings and maps
- Over 1.5 million photographs
- 114,000 architectural plans
- 40,000 subdivision plans
- oral history, postage stamps, coins and books
- ebooks, ejournals & databases
- 138 linear km in total
- assessed value of AUD2.145 billion (EUR 1.46 billion)



More than a library

Stern plate of HMS Resolution



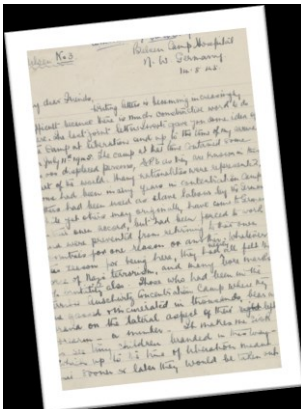
Cook's ammunition belt



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Extent and range of collections - WWI



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Extent and range of collections - WWI



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Memory institutions

- Memory institutions include “libraries, archives, museums, heritage (monuments and sites) institutions, and aquaria and arboreta, zoological and botanical gardens” Hjerppe (1994)
- Memory institutions hold *documents* which are
 - “something that contains/carries a *text*”
 - “That which serves to show or prove something; evidence, proof. ... Something written, inscribed, etc., which furnishes evidence or information upon any subject, as a manuscript, title-deed, coin, etc.” *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*



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documents* contain *texts* which can be *read

- In place of 'collecting institution', 'memory institution' focusses on the content, the **text** of the document
- "... a **text** is "something that can be **read**"
- **reading** which is "an acquired skill" that enables the **reader** to "recognise a **document**, isolate its **text**, ... understand the **surface meaning** of the **text**, and interpret, relate the **text** to oneself, to other **texts**, and to the world".
- Memory institutions hold and preserve **documents** which carry **texts** which can be **read**



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Libraries are a 'trusted brand'

- We convey authority through our collections and our descriptions of the **documents** we collect.
- Recruitment posters from the First World War are clearly propaganda and must be read as such not as records of fact.
- As **texts** interpreted by our readers, those posters tell of an increasingly war-weary Australia where ever more strident calls were necessary to attract volunteers for a horrifying war on the other side of the world.



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Every reader his [or her] *document*

1. Books are for use.
2. Every reader his book.
3. Every book its reader.
4. Save the time of the User.
5. The library is a growing organism
(SR Ranganathan 1931)



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A society without memory is a society without present and future

- The power of our collections, is to both carry forward memory and to challenge accepted views through providing evidence for analysis and interpretation
- Our work is integral to transmitting the memory of societies and thus to the present and future of our societies



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