

North Sydney residents discover 'a sense of place'

Stanton Library's local studies collection

Stanton Library, North Sydney Council's Public Library is one of Sydney best and busiest public library systems. Located near North Sydney's central business district, the library serves a resident population of 53 000 plus a daily influx of some 50 000 workers to this vibrant commercial area. North Sydney, as its name implies, is directly due north of the City of Sydney, across the harbour and connected to it by the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tunnel. The landscape features numerous harbour foreshore vistas, parks and walks, a busy commercial business district and a rich heritage and history intertwined with the early days of Sydney Town. North Sydney's innovative approach to open-style government and urban and heritage planning make it a unique community with a strong sense of place and community involvement.

Due to the rapid urban development which has taken place over the last forty years, North Sydney Council is dedicated to preserving its history and heritage for the future. Stanton Library's Historical Services Department is responsible for providing services and facilities which aim to:

- preserve, develop and maintain a unique North Sydney Local Studies and Archive Collection;
- manage and co-ordinate Council's community museums (historic sites in their own right), as well as St Thomas' Rest Park (the earliest European burial ground on Sydney's North Shore);
- foster and promote North Sydney's history and heritage; and
- provide a quality historical and information service.

Stanton Library's first local history librarian began to acquire and organise local resources on the history and development of North Sydney in 1974. In recent years our focus has been on providing greater bibliographic access to the rich and varied resources contained within the David Earle Local Studies Collection (named in honour of a former resident who was active in the heritage and conservation movement of the 1970s). Both cataloguing and indexing are used to describe local stud-



Oral history volunteer interviewers in front of the oral history collection at Stanton Library 1997

ies materials. Monographs, serials, North Sydney Council Rate/Valuation and Minute Books and microfiche/microfilm resources are catalogued at either monographic or serial level. Other formats are indexed using Flint and Berry's *Local studies collections: guidelines and subject headings for organising and indexing resources* (1985).

Over the last two years we have begun to catalogue rather than index some of these other materials. To date, 6066 black and white photographs, 1668 vertical files, 145 postcards and 400 subdivision plans have been catalogued. In late 1997 we began cataloguing the map/plan collection.

We anticipate that public awareness and use of the David Earle Local Studies Collection will increase as more items are catalogued and accessible via the library's OPAC and the wider Shorelink Library Network.

As technology improves and becomes a way of life within our library systems, more documents and resources are being transferred to digital format. At Stanton, we launched our photo-CD-ROM *The face of North Sydney* in January 1997. This disc contains 2500 black and white photographs complete with text and copyright information, our history and heritage information leaflets series and the full text of *Naming North Sydney*, a guide to the origins of street place and suburb names published in late 1996.

Apart from our print sources, including a collection of historical Council archives and photographs collected from the community over the last twenty years, Stanton's Historical Services Department also collects the voices and memories of the people who lived, worked or contributed in some way to the history, growth and development of North Sydney. Interviews are taped, logged and added to the local studies collection for public access. These taped interviews enhance and complement the local studies collection of print and illustrated materials. The information contained within this valuable collection of recordings describes the rich cultural heritage that is North Sydney. The collection is used for research, exhibitions and displays and publications. Between 1994 and October 1997 we were fortunate to receive sponsorship from the North Sydney Leagues Club to employ a part-time oral history co-ordinator who extended the existing collection, supervised interviews and documented the collection for public access. Today, a team of volunteers working with the historical services manager adds to more than 200 hours of recordings.

In order to complete the picture and produce *Down the Bay: the changing foreshores of North Sydney* (an oral and pictorial history launched in mid-1997) additional interviews were recorded. In total, thirty people were interviewed and their unique stories form

► the basis of the publication. Our interviewees were sought widely in the community via radio broadcasts, local press, community centres, Council community committees and by word of mouth. The oldest interviewee was born in 1905, the youngest in 1932.

Down the Bay describes the history of a specific place and provides access to a collective community memory. The project enabled the local community to communicate its feelings about the past of this place. The elderly respondents of *Down the Bay* are the only ones who experienced some important parts of this past, such as dramatic harbour fires, ferry accidents eighteen-footer boat races, infamous local characters and boat builders, and a visit by aviator Charles Kingsford-Smith. The recording of their memories helps to validate their experiences and helps us document and instil a 'sense of place'. In this way, and via the collection of recordings now on public access within Stanton Library, the

project's aims and objectives have been fully met. Not only do we have the recordings to listen to and learn from, but we also have a valuable publication available to the wider public.

Through our local studies and archive collections, our community museums and our wide and diverse public program of exhibitions, lectures tours and publications, Stanton Library's Historical Services Department provides access to a rich history and culture which is uniquely North Sydney, while at the same time ensuring that the community plays a role in its preservation.

Stanton Library's Historical Services Team consists of three full-time staff; the historical services manager, Margaret Park; a senior librarian, historical services, Léonie Masson; and historical services officer, Adriana Felet-Pezo; plus a team of fifteen community volunteers who assist with guiding at the museums/Rest Park, indexing local studies projects, and oral history interviewing. ■

Community heritage grants preserve future

Twenty-two community heritage organisations from every Australian state and territory have received grants totalling \$70 000 to assist them with the preservation of documentary heritage collections in their custody.

Representatives of the organisations were presented with their grants by the president of the Senate, Margaret Reid at a ceremony at the National Library of Australia on 2 October 1997. The Community Heritage Grants Program, which is administered by the NLA, provides grants of up to \$5000 to assist in the preservation of documentary heritage material of national significance.

Since the program's inception in 1994 more than eight communities have benefited from funds provided through Australia's leading grassroots documentary preservation initiative. In this time, a total of \$260 000 has been distributed to libraries, historical societies and community organisations to help them preserve, store, microfilm and digitise their valuable documentary collections.

Successful applicants this year include: Furneaux Historical Research Association on Flinders Island; Tranby Co-operative for Aborigines; Barnardos Australia; Maritime Museum of Townsville; Ngarinyin Aboriginal Corporation; Victorian Services for Deaf Children; Spastic Centre of New South Wales; Melbourne Hebrew Congregation; Friends of Goolwa and Kumarangk, to preserve the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Collection.

As a result of the Community Heritage Grants Program, future generations will have access to valuable documents and photographs which might otherwise have been lost due to the effects of age, light, dust, humidity and insects. The program recognises and supports the distributed national collection of significant documentary heritage materials — a collection which is located all over Australia, not just in the national collecting institutions of the capital cities.

For information on the Community Heritage Grants contact the National Initiatives and Collaboration Branch of the NLA, telephone 02 6262 1137, fax 02 6273 4535, niac@nlc.gov.au, <http://www.nla.gov.au/niac/chg> ■

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Australian Library and Information Association

ALIA Awards for Innovation in Victoria

Nominations are now being called for the 1998 award

These awards, first awarded in 1996, recognise innovative practices by library staff in Victoria in any aspect of library activity — for example, design of a brochure or world wide web page, or for teamwork. An award is made in each of the following categories: academic (universities and TAFE); public libraries; school libraries; special libraries; law libraries; and health libraries. The awards are open to library staff at all levels who are personal ALIA members.

Application information is available ALIA National Office, PO Box E441, Kingston 2604 phone 02 6285 1877, fax 02 6282 2249 e-mail awards@alia.org.au

URL <http://www.alia.org.au/awards.html>

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