

VICTORIAN LIBRARIES COLLABORATING TO COMMEMORATE WORLD WAR I



A soldier repairs his shirt, Gallipoli Peninsula, WWI.
All images courtesy of State Library Victoria.

Victoria's public libraries and the State Library Victoria have come together on two important state-wide initiatives in commemoration of the centenary of the First World War.

DIGITISING COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

State Library Victoria and Victorian public libraries have worked together over the last three years to digitise and make available to everyone most of Victoria's community newspapers of the World War I era, adding over five million articles to the Trove website of the National Library of Australia.

The project had a strong focus on defunct regional and suburban newspapers. These local papers looked at the war at a more intimate level and often contained personal stories of local bravery and loss. It was not uncommon for the papers to publish personal letters from soldiers or nurses, giving the reader a very real sense of what those serving were experiencing on foreign war fronts.

CEO and State Librarian Sue Roberts said the digitised newspapers are an incredible research tool.

'Few published documents capture the immediacy of history in the way newspapers do,' she said. 'Here are over 200 of Victoria's newspapers titles, covering every corner of our state, telling the story of life at war and at home during the most deadly conflict Australia has ever engaged in'.

It is anticipated that this resource will be widely used throughout the Anzac Centenary. Families looking for information about ancestors, history buffs wanting to know more about a place or key event, and schools, sporting and community groups wanting to gain a greater understanding of the role their organisations played during the war are expected to be enthusiastic visitors to the site (slv.vic.gov.au/Victorian-Anzacs).

Victoria’s public library staff are already playing a significant role in promoting and assisting customers with the use of this resource. Staff have been directing customers to the Trove website, as well as helping those with lower levels of digital literacy to obtain the information for which they are searching. It is anticipated that demand for this information will increase as we approach key commemorative dates such as Anzac Day, the Gallipoli landing and Remembrance Day.

WRITING THE WAR EXHIBITION

Over 2014–2017 State Library Victoria, in collaboration with Public Libraries Victoria Network, will commemorate the Anzac centenary with a fascinating new travelling exhibition called *Writing the War*.

Showcasing text and graphics from State Library Victoria’s collection of journals, photo albums, diaries and correspondence, as well as items supplied by each of the public libraries that it visits, the exhibition will travel from July 2015 through to June 2017 across metropolitan and regional Victoria.

With the wealth of World War I, local history and family history materials already provided by public libraries, an exhibition like this provides a major opportunity to engage local communities and bring in new visitors, giving Victorians the chance to discover what the war meant to them, to their family and to their community.

The exhibition focuses on seven individuals, each of whom had a different experience and perspective of the war. The stories of nurses Alice Kitchen and Jessie Traill, soldiers Percival Langford, Eric Chinner and George Auchterlonie, photographer Keith Murdoch and staunch pacifist



Australian soldiers embarking for the Front, WWI.



22nd Battalion gathered at the Great Sphinx, Egypt, WWI.

Vida Goldstein will be told, using their own words found in diaries, letters and other manuscripts.

These joint initiatives were part of the 2011–2014 triennium and 2014–2017 triennium of state-wide Public Library Development projects. These projects have been the cornerstone of collaboration between State Library Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network, focusing on development, marketing, research, advocacy and business improvement initiatives and a diverse array of community engagement programs, ranging from travelling exhibitions to literary programs and digital initiatives.

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