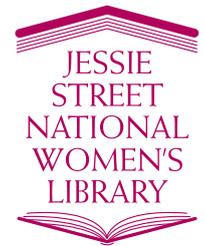


NEWSLETTER

To keep women's words, women's works, alive and powerful — Ursula LeGuin



Time to RECOGNISE!

'It's nice to think that Jessie Street might have counted me as a friend because, after four years of trying to change the constitution, you do lose a few along the way...' Tanya Hosch, guest speaker at the Annual Lunch at Parliament House dining room, began her talk with these poignant words, illuminating the struggle of the RECOGNISE Movement.

Tanya is an Ambassador for the Movement, which is part of Reconciliation Australia. This is the people's movement both to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution and make it free of racial discrimination. Until recently, she had served for four years as co-director of the RECOGNISE campaign, bringing the issue into communities around Australia. Tanya conceived the idea for the Journey to Recognition which has travelled more than 35,000 kms around Australia. In hundreds



of communities it has raised awareness of the need to end the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from the Australian Constitution and deal with its continuing racial discrimination.

Her new role is on the executive of the Australian Football League, leading Inclusion and Social Policy, which she saw as an opportunity too compelling to pass up. As only the third woman on the AFL executive, and first indigenous representative, she says she is still on a learning curve and she gave credit to the AFL for acknowledging the work to be done in addressing inequality in the code.

Although Sydney is not easy for Tanya to get to, with most of her work in Melbourne and Adelaide, she said it was an honour to be invited and agreed 'in a heartbeat'. Always a feminist and a fighter from her earliest days working on the Women's Information Switchboard in the South Australian Don Dunstan Government, she said that her nine-year-old daughter asked her only recently why there aren't more women leaders.

Tanya presented us with a vibrant picture of Jessie Street's extraordinary life. As a fighter, campaigner and feminist in struggles against inequality, she was pivotal to many of the social campaigns of the 20th century. Jessie Street's 'entirely establishment' background did not preclude her working with prostitutes and women and children in poverty. She fought for women's right to work after marriage, to stand for public office and to have safety and security throughout their lives.

She worked as a collaborator, building relationships and trust among disparate political groups. Tanya reminded us that although often unseen, these actions are the building blocks of our democracy.

It was Jessie Street's relentless pursuit of seemingly impossible goals that led to her appointment to the Australian delegation to the 1945 conference to found the United Nations. It was insufficient for its charter to promote human rights without distinction of race, language or religion. She campaigned to include 'sex' also. She knew that recognition was crucial. It is the naming, the identifying and the visible presence of disenfranchised groups within the establishment that leads to real change.

Never content when there was injustice around her, she saw the oppression of the first Australians and it made her angry. She learnt about indigenous people's relationship with the land and, just as she understood that women had to be visible to effect change, she understood that constitutional change was essential to this struggle. Her role in the movement to count indigenous Australians in the census was considered vital.

Now, nearly fifty years later, a campaign is underway to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our nation's rule book, to tell the whole story. Tanya talked of two key themes which have emerged from her travels around Australia, listening and talking about the RECOGNISE movement. One fear is that recognition will create 'two classes'. She quickly dispelled this. The constitution currently reflects our years of colonial settlement and then modern independence. Adding words in recognition of the people who lived here first, 40,000 and more years before, does not take away from its more recent history, or separate out the people who came afterwards.

Another issue she comes up against is: 'why now? Don't we want a treaty first? Don't we have other things to get on with?' The campaign does not believe that Australia can afford to wait any longer. Aboriginal Australians need to be recognised as the oldest continuing culture on earth with a profound connection to the land. It should happen in this generation, not the next. The RECOGNISE movement can lead and promote other struggles. Tanya reminded us that Jessie Street is the very model of being able to take on more than one thing at a time. After all, while 1967 may not have achieved a treaty, it was still worthwhile.

You can find out more and support the RECOGNISE campaign at their website and Facebook page:

www.recognise.org.au

www.facebook.com/RecogniseAUS

Report by Jessica Stewart

Contents

- 1 Time to Recognise!
- 2 YouTube additions
- 2 Annual Luncheon 2016: Raffle
- 3 Alice Cashin remembered
- 4 *Isabella the Play*
- 4 Changes to Lunch Hour Talks Program 2017
- 5 Myths of ageing
- 6-7 2016 Annual Luncheon
- 8 Living in America – Australian war brides
- 9 Accessing our posters
- 10 Peace Conference, History Week 2016

Jessie Street National Women's Library

Australia's National Women's Library is a specialist library, its focus being the collection and preservation of the literary and cultural heritage of women from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Aims

- To heighten awareness of women's issues
- To preserve records of women's lives and activities
- To support the field of women's history
- To highlight women's contribution to this country's development

Patrons

Quentin Bryce AD CVO; Elizabeth Evatt AC; Clover Moore Lord Mayor of Sydney; Professor Emerita Jill Roe AO; Laurence Street AC KCMG

Board of Management

Jozefa Sobski, Chair; Suzanne Marks, Vice Chair; Jean Burns, Treasurer; Michele Ginswick, Diane Hague, Robyn Harriott, Barbara Henery, Sherri Hilario, Beverley Kingston, Beverley Sodbinow

Editorial Team

Kris Clarke, Editor; Katharine Stevenson, Graphic Designer, with the assistance of Jessica Stewart and Jenny Drew

YouTube additions

The Library is moving into uncharted waters. We have uploaded videos to our YouTube channel so that our readers can become viewers. The videos demonstrate what our volunteers are doing and publicise our wonderful collection, our volunteers and the stimulating Lunch Hour Talks series. To see the videos, go to the library link at www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au, and find the link to the YouTube site on the right hand side of the page.

Recently Mel Mantle, a student at the University of Technology Sydney, volunteered to be an intern with our Library as part of a requirement relevant to her Global Studies degree. She was mentored by Lynne Morton who helped coordinate the project. Mel studied our website and our digital strategy in order to identify possible projects which would benefit both the Library and her studies. The outcome is a series of videos which will expand our web presence and reach out to a younger audience.

There is a video featuring Annie Flint, a Library user speaking about her experience of borrowing from the poster collection for a display for the Women's Health Network Summit held in May 2016 in Sydney.

Another video was made at the Lunch Hour Talk in May. The speaker was Gay Hendriksen, on the topic of the prison riot by women prisoners at the Parramatta Female Factory in 1836.

The three others include an interview with our archivist Beverley Sodbinow, about the history of the Library and her path to becoming an archivist; the Lunch Hour Talk on pioneering woman Isabella Mary Kelly, presented by playwright Maggie Young; and an interview with volunteer Sherri Hilario, a student of Library Technology at TAFE, who spoke about her interest in feminism and her work with the poster collection digitising and uploading photos of our posters to the KOHA catalogue. These videos are now live on YouTube. Please share far and wide with your friends.

Barbara Henery



The most popular post was Julia Gillard's Misogyny Speech fourth anniversary with a link to the speech on YouTube. With 1166 hits it obviously still resonates!

Annual Luncheon 2016: Raffle

Thank you to the individuals and organisations who donated prizes. Raffle tickets were drawn by students from each of the Sydney schools attending: Canterbury Girls High School, Cheltenham Girls High, Kambala, Holroyd High, Mosman High, The Forest High, St Clair High, Wenona and Chifley College, Mt Druitt campus (2 prizes drawn). Congratulations to all the winners!

1st Prize – Accommodation for two for two nights in a Grand Langham King Suite, Sydney, including full buffet breakfast, use of spa and Classic Takeaway Afternoon Tea, daily newspaper and wi-fi access. Total value \$1200, donated by Teachers Mutual Bank: won by Julia Gennison

2nd Prize – Sterling silver handmade brooch, value \$500, donated by Connie Dimas Jewellery: won by Anna Russell

3rd Prize – David Jones gift voucher, value \$350, donated by Marie Muir: won by Ellen McIlwain

4th Prize – Bray's Books Balmain voucher, value \$100, donated by Gail Hewison: won by Phillipa Leonard

5th Prize – Harbour Story Cruise for two, value \$78, donated by Captain Cook Cruises, Circular Quay, Sydney: won by Sue Comrie-Thomson

6th Prize – Signed copies of three titles by Cecile Yazbek, donated by the author with a bottle of wine: won by Claire Bowen

7th Prize – Signed copy of *The Summit of Her Ambition* by Anne McLeod, donated by the author with a bottle of wine: won by Hilary Taylor

8th Prize – Two bottles of wine: won by Chloe Mason

9th Prize – Two bottles of wine: won by Julia Fountain

10th Prize – Two bottles of wine: won by Judy Harrington

All wine produced by Mount View High School, Cessnock and donated by the NSW Teachers Federation.

CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

The Library will close on Friday 16 December 2016, and reopen on Monday 16 January 2017.

Best wishes for the festive season!

Alice Cashin remembered

On 11 October 2016, a bronze statue of Alice Cashin was erected by the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association in conjunction with Woronora Memorial Park in honour of all the nurses who have served their country. The statue shows the uniform of Matron Alice Cashin and displays the Queen Alexandra Imperial Nursing Service Reserve (QAINSR) Medal and Royal Red Cross 1st Class Medal with Bar.

Alice trained as a registered nurse at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. She was in England when World War I broke out and signed up with the British Red Cross. In July 1915, she joined the QAINSR.

Alice was awarded the gold Royal Red Cross 1st Class Medal on her first posting to Egypt with the QAIMNSR for her work and bravery. When the hospital ship *Gloucester Castle* was torpedoed in the English Channel on 30 March 1917, Alice became the



Jennifer Furness (right) with Coral Levett modelling the uniform at Woronora Memorial Park. Picture courtesy of Fairfax Media

first Australian to receive the Bar to her Red Cross Medal for her coolness and devotion to duty. Alice was Matron on that ship and refused to leave the ship until all 399 injured men and 33 nurses were safely on lifeboats. She left on the last lifeboat.

From May 1917, Alice, as Matron, was in charge of the 400-bed military hospital at Whittingham Barracks, Lichfield. Her contract ended in 1919 and she returned to Sydney, where she was crowned the Queen of Marrickville by the Marrickville ANZAC Memorial Club.

So why am I, Jennifer Furness, telling this story? Sometimes a family member is lost and, when found again, can change people's lives. Alice Cashin is my great aunt. I am a direct descendant of her father, Richard Cashin.

The Cashins arrived in Australia on 26 January 1838 from Tipperary, Ireland and Richard was born in 1841. The story of Alice was lost to my family for 75 years. It was an article in *The Sun Herald* in June 2015 written by journalist Tim Barlass with information from Kathleen Le Gras and her brother Vincent McGarry that told of the unmarked grave of Alice Cashin in the Woronora Memorial Cemetery. Kathleen was looking for her

Cashin ancestors and found mine.

I read the article and contacted Tim Barlass. We retrieved the medals that I had found in a wooden box kept by my aunt, Dorothy Burney and soon afterwards, *The Sun Herald* published a picture of my sister, Lyndell Ford and myself at the grave site with the medals.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives Association followed up. In honour of all the nurses who served their country, it decided to erect a statue on her unmarked grave.

The event to officially mark the Alice Cashin Memorial opened at the Woronora Memorial Park with a Welcome to Country by Fran Bodkin, Dharawal Elder. Former Governor, Professor Marie Bashir attended, with representatives from the Nurses and Midwives Association, St Vincent's Hospital, the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps and a representative of the NSW Premier.

I gave an address, informing those present that my family have donated Alice's actual medals to the ANZAC Memorial in Hyde Park for a new exhibition to be opened in October 2018. The ceremony closed with the cutting of the red ribbon by Professor Bashir and myself and a final prayer and blessing by Father Tim O'Toole from St Brigid's, Marrickville.

Professor Bashir said Alice Cashin would forever have a place in the history of modern Australia. She will be an inspiration, not only to nurses, but to doctors and all those who work in the caring professions.

Jennifer Furness

New Members

A warm welcome to our new members:

Judy Annear
Noel Atkinson
Robyn Arrowsmith
Anna Bellafont
Wendy Champagne
Lyndsay Connors
Jenny Drew
Anne M Gleeson
Margaret Hanley
Ann Juster
Cigdem Kaya
Kerrie Ann Kelly
Jenny McAllister
Joan McCarthy
Sandra McCormack
Catherine Miller
Jeanette Milne
Sonia Mrva
Rosemary Pynor
Neelica Raffel
Nadia Raffel-Dmithson
Jessica Stewart
Kate Walther
Betsy Wearing
Nastaran Yaghopour

Isabella the Play

When Maggie Young moved to Wingham, near Taree NSW two years ago, she was inspired by a display on the life of pioneer Isabella Mary Kelly in the local museum. Confronted by the misogyny that was evident she was incensed at the injustice suffered by this woman. Having read the book by Maurie Garland, *The trials of Isabella Mary Kelly* (2005) Maggie decided Isabella's story should be more widely known – hence *Isabella the Play* was born.



Isabella Mary Kelly, an orphan adopted by a wealthy family, came from Dublin to Australia in 1834. At auction she bought 895 acres of Crown land on the northern bank of the Manning River and built a house, bred horses and mustered cattle. Her success in managing a cattle station caused resentment among the male pioneers: they made her feel unwelcome. False rumours flourished that she whipped convicts in her charge. The men ganged up against her and in 1851 her house at Mt George was mysteriously burnt down.

Isabella had the misfortune to become acquainted with Charles Skerrett, a gentleman con man, who was intent on stealing her cattle. He bribed young William Turner to sign as witness for Isabella's forged signature on the forged receipt for the sale of cattle, also having as witnesses Skerrett's 14 and 16 year old daughters. In this bribery scene in the play the audience is asked to find a suitable wife for Turner among them – with hilarious results: on one occasion one of the women accepted the offer!

Even worse was the marriage proposal Isabella received from Henry Flett – obviously in his favour as all her property and goods would be assigned to him. In the play, Isabella's refusal is one of Maggie's best scenes: Henry visits her, flattering her for good management of the property. He suggests it would be wise to marry him to 'raise her station in life'. She responds by telling him she does not need a man who is heavily in debt. The audience, totally engaged, reacted with words of encouragement, 'Go, girl'. He swears to become her bitterest enemy.

It was Henry who saw to it that she was wrongfully gaoled for stealing her own cattle: as a local magistrate and MP, Henry had a lot of influence. At her trial in 1863, with only four jurors, she was found guilty of perjury and sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Darlinghurst Gaol. Isabella finally sold the property in 1865; her health was badly affected by prison life and she relocated to Sydney for convalescence. Thirteen months after receiving a meagre compensation for her wrongful imprisonment Isabella died, in 1897, heartbroken.

Ironically her final resting place in Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery is located near Skerrett's grave.

Basing her play on Garland's book, Maggie embellished it with humour, and included two 'gossips' that serve the function of a chorus to make comments on the action and keep the story flowing. When Isabella arrives in the Manning Valley, the women are not very accepting of her single status, and the gossiping refrain, 'not even married' resounds. The play also called for audience involvement, music and dancing.

The first performance of the play was at Wingham Memorial Town Hall in 2014. It was such a success that Maggie was asked to produce the play in Wingham again as a matinee. The Wingham community enthusiastically rallied; the local designer helped to produce period costumes, local amateur actors and the local band were engaged, and on opening night the 350 seat Town Hall was filled to capacity, with queues outside. The Tuncurry performance later that year was sold out and when the troupe moved on to Gloucester, a violinist accompanied the play in place of the band. Members of the audience from Sydney suggested a performance at Sydney's unique, historical Cell Block Theatre.

The staging at the Manning Regional Art Gallery raised funds for the Sydney performance. To Maggie's surprise, the location of the Cell Block theatre is in the notorious Darlinghurst Gaol, where Isabella was imprisoned. After five sold out shows Maggie felt encouraged and in April 2016 at the Sydney performance the audience was thrilled to know that Isabella's character would walk to her cell down the very steps that Isabella herself had walked!

The play may find other audiences in regional NSW or even Dublin; as Maggie says, 'It has legs.'

Transcription by Helen Ruby

Report by Kris Clarke

Maggie is generously donating the original script of the play, the poster and another social justice play to the Library.

Changes to Lunch Hour Talks Program 2017

For some years now, the Library has organised nine lunch hour talks a year, with a variety of speakers to cater to the interests of our members and the general public.

However, for 2017 we are making changes. At this point we can only inform you that the program will continue, but talks will be less frequent, and will take place quarterly. There will be four high-profile speakers and it is likely they will present talks in March, June, August and November.

Due to refurbishment at Town Hall House our current venue is unavailable. The 2017 venue has not yet been decided but we are looking at locations with a view to their convenience, size and accessibility.

As soon as speakers and venues are confirmed they will be posted on the Library's website, and of course there will be an update in the February Newsletter. We look forward to your support of the LHT program in 2017.

Myths of ageing

Life is about changing, and change occurs over a lifetime. In the Census the 60+ age group is one category — a concern for government's future planning — but there is a big difference between a 60-year-old and a 90-year-old.

By the time we are into our 60s there may be health issues due to wear and tear. Joan pointed out that while a cataract operation gives clarity of eyesight, double vision is a little known side effect. Another little known fact is that some fingers can lose sensitivity and make pastimes such as embroidery difficult. Joint pain is a common ailment, and requires making adjustments and changing activity, in Maureen's case from walking to kayaking. Joan has adapted to joint pain by training for body building competitions, with the advantage of building muscles to support the joints. Trainers have clients in their 20s, not those approaching 80, and often do not know how to advise them.

Often doctors do not know what to recommend to patients with chronic conditions. Joan and Maureen suggest finding an activity you enjoy — swimming is particularly good, combined with increased amounts of protein — or dancing.

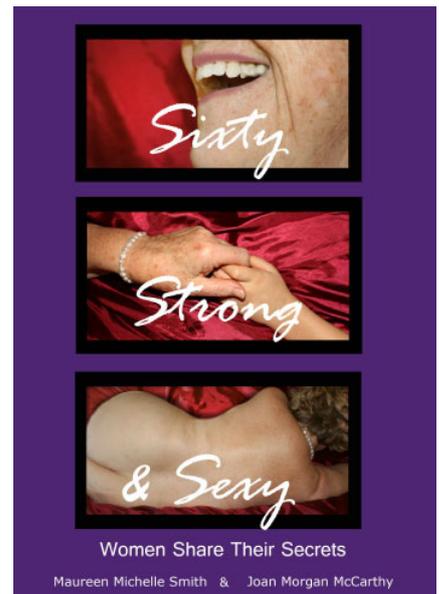
One of the positives about ageing is that without hormones racing through the body there is stronger emotional management. Deep thinking is another advantage as there are fewer distractions, and undertaking further study is good for the brain. Joan is pursuing her PhD in re-envisioning sexuality education, particularly the connection between sex and peace. Sex improves as women get older: there is time to get to know ourselves and our partners better, intimacy develops, trust and acceptance of who we are. Maureen has found her creative outlet in developing her writing skills.

Joan and Maureen collated a sample of 80 responses to their questionnaire, exploding the stereotypes of older women, resulting in their book *Sixty, strong and sexy: Women share their secrets* (2010). Maureen read an extract from the chapter titled 'Sassy, sound and saucy' where two women commiserate over the negatives and discover the 'positive energy' of becoming older, summarised below.

When she looked in the mirror she didn't recognise herself. She was dispirited to see the visible signs of an old woman. But there was much to be said for her wellness — despite minor complaints (arthritis, osteoporosis, skin cancers) — she has energy, friends and a zest for life. Women 60+ have much to contribute.

Maureen, a vegetarian, believes one of the secrets of maintaining wellbeing is an abundance of fresh vegetables. They discuss being yourself — not feeling compelled to use advertised skin products to look like the youthful 20-year-old models in magazines. Oprah Winfrey, in discussion with her TV audience, advises that wisdom, courage, and boldness are also part of ageing.

Investigating further, they interviewed 20 women in Australia and New Zealand, and gave each a chapter in a book titled *Glimpses into the lives of positive ageing women*. Older women become more diverse — each has a unique story: Ena, an Aboriginal mother of four born after the last massacre outside



Alice Springs, has no bitterness. She teaches children about the bush. City kids from Sydney and Melbourne schools come to Kings Canyon in the Northern Territory to learn about bush tucker and Aboriginal culture. Ruth, aged 100, lives with pain, but has no time for it, and works out at the gym.

To enliven their presentation, Maureen left the room on the pretext of meeting a friend and returned wearing a drab outfit. Telling Joan it was her birthday, she brings up the usual excuses, which Joan debunks:

Maureen: I'll end up in a nursing home.

Joan (who worked as an assessor of nursing homes): apparently only a small proportion end up there.

M: I'm too expensive and useless.

J: Take up volunteering — society would collapse without it.

M: You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

J: Why not take up French?

Confidence and appearance affect the capability to learn. Joan did a makeover of Maureen's clothing (including a sheep dog bra — rounds up, points in right direction) and added makeup.

It's all about attitude. Celebrity Joanna Lumley aged 70+ advises women, 'Be Brave!'

Joan continued to explore the journey into wisdom in her book *Crone's chrysalis* covering seven generations of her family, where she is photographed naked, as she unfolds from the foetal position to maturity.

Concluding their talk, Joan and Maureen held up a small package, a symbolic gift that we receive. Today is a gift — that's why it's called the present: a longer and healthier life than ever before in history — something we are given along with the choice of how best to use it.

Joan and Maureen have donated copies of their books to the Library.

Report by Kris Clarke

2016 Annual Luncheon

At the 22nd Annual Luncheon on 19 September 2016, at New South Wales Parliament House, supporters of the Library gathered to hear Tanya Hosch speak about the RECOGNISE movement (report on page 1). The Library Chair, Jozefa Sobski, welcomed all. Continuing a tradition of hearing the voices of the next generation, the Luncheon was attended by girls from Canterbury Girls High School, Cheltenham Girls High, Kambala, Holroyd High, Mosman High, The Forest High, St Clair High, Wenona and Chifley College, Mt Druitt campus.

The Luncheon was hosted by Pru Goward MP and Penny Sharpe MLC. Ms Goward spoke on the Library's continuing significance. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' she said, but one for both men and women and should be seen as a journey rather than a destination as the struggles are ongoing.

Professor Jakelin Troy, Director of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Research Office at the University of Sydney gave the Welcome to Country and warmly introduced Tanya as a 'leader for all of us'. Jakelin spoke briefly of Tanya's work in human rights in a range of fields, now in the Australian Football League, and her striving for reform. There was no doubt, she said, that Jessie Street would have agreed with Tanya that all rights are necessary, and added she was sure that Jessie would have counted Tanya as a friend.

Bev Sodbinow gave a full report on the Library's activities this year, noting the digitising of the poster collection and expansion of the online catalogue as significant achievements. The Library's social media presence is growing and reaching out to a younger audience, with a Facebook page regularly updated and receiving



increasing numbers of 'likes'. The Library was honoured to receive endowments of books from Dr Heather Radi who founded the Women's Studies program at the University of Sydney and Dr Robin Porter, formerly from the School of Education, Macquarie University. The Library continues to be an educational destination for university and TAFE library students.

Bev acknowledged the support of the City of Sydney which has renewed the lease of the Library's premises and recarpeted it, and of the volunteers and board members. The Library team were saddened by the untimely passing of Kris's co-editor Margot Simington earlier in the year who is much missed.

This year included a recruitment drive to boost our numbers and the Library welcomes new members who have joined us during the year.

A representative of Wenona School, Eliza Moore, closed the event with a vote of thanks to the speakers and all those who attended.



The photographs above are of speaker, Tanya Hosch, school group



s and teachers, Library members, volunteers and guests enjoying the Annual Luncheon.

Living in America — Australian war brides

After World War II, fifteen thousand Australian brides headed to the USA as the new wives of American servicemen. What happened to these women?

In 1999, Robyn Arrowsmith began a ten-year study to find out. Robyn was a research assistant for Professor Jill Roe when she attended the 19th reunion of the WWII War Brides Association in Nevada USA, bringing together women from Germany, Britain, France, Italy and some from Australia. Her interest generated more reunions and those first few became many, all excited by the prospect of recording their experiences. Robyn spent the next ten years travelling to America and interviewing many of the 150 surviving Australian war brides. It led to a doctorate and a published book, *All the Way to the USA: Australian WWII War Brides* (2013), and enduring friendships.



Soon after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941, there were 45,000 American servicemen in Brisbane and by the end of 1943, approximately 140,000 across Australia. Young Australian women found the well-mannered, well-paid and smartly uniformed American GI a dazzling alternative to the relatively unsophisticated Australian young man.

Women were expected to make their patriotic contribution at dances and socials for American troops. While relishing the chance to combine their love of dancing and carefree fun, they soon found themselves enmeshed in military bureaucracy and social expectations, preventing them fraternising outside the sanctioned canteens and dance halls. Those who ignored the rules were labelled 'good-time girls', 'one-night stands' and 'gold-diggers': perceptions which Robyn's research proved to be largely untrue. She found 'the Australian war brides to have strong characters, demonstrating courage, patience, determination, loyalty, resourcefulness and resilience in the face of adversity.'

Married life could not begin in America until well after the war. While wartime restrictions made wedding arrangements difficult for everyone, Robyn revealed 'extraordinary obstacles were put in the way of Australian-American weddings, and couples faced opposition from both Australian and American authorities'. Applications had to be made to a groom's Commanding Officer, who had final discretion. Joan Byer recalled documents required included 'birth certificates ... letters of recommendation from our superiors, character references...plus a citizen's report from the police'. In addition, the women had to submit a personal letter listing their reasons for marrying! Only after months of red tape and a compulsory six month 'cooling-off' period could the wedding take place.

Then their husbands were shipped home without

them, and some, now mothers, struggled to survive with no family support or military allotments. Robyn cited Jessie Street's campaign to assist them, writing to American First

Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt in June 1942 seeking clarification of their position. Her intercession resulted in some relief.

With peace, the US *War Brides Act*, December 1945, granted free passage on the 'bride ships' and thousands undertook the arduous two to three week voyage. Even before sailing, Western Australian women faced a seven-day trip across the continent to Sydney on the train, crowded with babies, dubbed 'the Perth Perambulator'. Once at sea, difficulties included crowded conditions, measles outbreaks, the danger of mines and sea-sickness. Dorothy Bourne recalled 'I was seasick the whole way. I had

my little girl tied by her harness on my wrist, sitting up on deck for ninety per cent of the way.'

Once there, new challenges arose: some were welcomed warmly by husbands and their families while others were resented by in-laws. Some felt 'outsiders' in European immigrant communities. All were categorised as 'aliens', unable to apply for US citizenship for a year, then often taken reluctantly for the sake of family unity, employment and enfranchisement. Other problems included American food, vocabulary, home-sickness, and widespread local ignorance of Australia. Sometimes their own sense of social alienation resulted in anxiety and depression. Most were unable to visit Australia for many years.

Although some were disillusioned, most made the best of it, with happy marriages, cherishing their partners and children and ultimately enjoying their lives in America. As enthusiastic, if unofficial ambassadors for Australia, they contributed to their local communities through events such as school-talks on Australian life. Few sought to return to Australia permanently but their nostalgia never waned.

Now in their eighties and nineties, the 'war brides' welcomed Robyn into their homes, celebrating their 'Australian-ness' with koala tea-cosies, devilled eggs, pavlovas and Vegemite sandwiches, while singing songs from their younger days. Robyn observed that 'all had an underlying shadow of home-sickness and deep longing for the families they had to leave behind.'

Robyn's talk revealed how her 'short' project became a life-changing journey as she shared her memories and experiences of researching, documenting and meeting these brave Australian women.

In 2007, the Australian Ambassador to the United States hosted an event in Washington in recognition of their endeavours as unofficial ambassadors. As Robyn observed, 'telling their stories, for the first time and in their own words, reveals a new perspective on an important part of women's history, in both Australia and America.'

Transcribed by Helen Ruby

Report by Valda Rigg

Accessing our posters

With the onerous task of digitising the poster collection on the Library's catalogue nearly complete, and excellent progress made on the full cataloguing of the posters, the librarians have been heartened by the overwhelmingly positive reaction to these improvements and the connections being built.

The NSW Women's Health 2016 Summit, 'What's Health Got To Do With It' exhibited a selection of the Library's corflute (a lightweight support) backed posters. Annie Flint, manager with the Greater Southern Area Health Service, had exhibited the Library's posters at the 7th Australian Women's Health conference in 2013 and, from her regional New South Wales location, was delighted to be able to access the poster collection remotely.

Our collection of corflute posters on a range of women's issues is specifically for lending to organisations for their exhibitions and we are hoping that the online access will encourage more women's groups to borrow these posters for their own temporary exhibitions. The Hunter Women's Centre in Mayfield identified a poster in the catalogue that it had donated to the library some years ago and borrowed it back as part of a 40th anniversary exhibition. The collection is available through an Advanced Search on the catalogue.

The Library was pleased to receive an unsolicited request from Arts: Search to include the poster directory in its upcoming international directory of online poster collections. The database is used by Sydney institutions including the University of New South Wales, the University of Technology Sydney, and the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences. Chris Mees, the editor of Arts: Search provided the Library with a bibliography of articles and web pages and the librarians added to it with links to relevant articles about Australian feminist posters.

The Library has recently hosted visits from interstate academics and a researcher for a proposed documentary on the early years of the second wave of feminism who all affirmed that the digitisation of the poster collection facilitates research. The librarians also found it invaluable

when they were seeking relevant material for the Library's NSW History Week exhibition (see article at page 10). As the theme of History Week was 'Neighbours', posters from the Women's Warehouse collective, which was located in Ultimo, were



an obvious choice for inclusion in the poster display in the Library.

'Volatile, feral and glamorous: A history of the Women's Warehouse 1979-1981', a project by an Australian feminist art historian and a casual academic at UNSW Art & Design has encouraged the poster librarians to consider how to enrich the Library's collection by seeking information from known poster artists. That endeavour will begin when the digitisation project is complete.

We would be grateful to hear from any reader who wishes to contribute to this growing body of knowledge about our expansive poster collection or to donate posters.

Lynne Morton



Charles Sturt University visit

The Library is always glad to host students, and the distance education students from Charles Sturt University have been regular visitors over the past few years. Their study visit to Sydney in October comprised a week of visits to libraries and museums, and for the first time they made a specialist visit to inspect our archives.

The 16 students who came are studying library and information management/information studies at an undergraduate or post graduate level, or are studying teacher librarianship at postgraduate level. While some had limited experience of libraries and information agencies, others are currently working in a variety of libraries at a range of levels, including some who are working as teacher librarians.

The mix of students made it a challenging task for Bev Sodbinow, who talked about the history of the Library and the archives, and Christine Smith, who is doing most of the work to change our finding aids from paper to electronic form, and entering archives items on to the catalogue. They were assisted in an explanatory tour of the Library collections by Valda Rigg and Jan Burnswoods.

The students were pleasantly surprised by our range of material, especially the Pine Gap collection of banners, posters, story boards and other items from 1983. We hope they gained a better understanding of the operation of a specialist library like ours, and also furthered their knowledge of feminism and women's activism.

Jan Burnswoods

Peace Conference

In August I travelled to Caux, Switzerland to attend the Living Peace Conference to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Creators of Peace. Initiated in 1991, this is a grassroots women's initiative, drawing together individuals with diverse beliefs, cultures and nationalities.

Two hundred people, mainly women, from 40 countries came to explore what it means to 'live peace' and how to transform stories from trauma and loss to forgiveness and reconciliation.

Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochi, UN Coordinator in Ethiopia spoke of the founding mothers' initial dream and what is needed now: 'We had this dream that this could be something u n i q u e and big. Something the world had never seen before. We had Maori women, Aboriginal women, women from South Africa [plus] the dynamism of that diversity and people acknowledging their common humanity despite their differences. Twenty-five years later there is a greater urgency.'



Suzanne Marks (right) with Mer Anyang from southern Sudan

We shared the pain and grief of those from countries steeped in terrible conflict. I held hands with a beautiful Syrian woman as she wept on hearing yet more tragic news from home, acutely aware of the difference from my own life, in Australia. Dr Lillian Cingo spoke of founding the South African Health Train which brings health services to the poorest regions. A Pakistani woman spoke of the obstacles involved in bringing education to girls.

Dr Gill Hicks spoke of how she lost both her legs in the London Underground bombing. As she lay in the mangled wreck of the train she said: 'Death came to me and it was female and it was this most beautiful voice that I've ever heard.' But in that moment she chose to fight for peace and not to die. She used her scarf to tourniquet her legs and survived. It was her rescuers who saved her from living in a state of perpetual anger. As they held her, she describes how she had her first real experience of humanity and unconditional love. Through her organisation MAD For Peace, Dr Hicks works with people who have become radicalised and the story of her rescue often strikes a chord with hardened extremists.

Jo Berry lost her father in an IRA bombing in 1984. Determined to find some meaning in the tragedy, she

eventually developed a relationship with Patrick McGee who had organised the bombing. Since then they have shared platforms advocating peace with justice. 'Once we find our own humanity, and we see the humanity in the other, then we are going to want them to have their human rights, their good housing, food, medicine, education and freedom to be themselves, to be safe and secure,' Jo said.

At Caux I saw and experienced the face and heart of courage, love and unrelenting resilience of women determined to exercise their right to live and grow in peace for themselves, families and communities. It is an experience that is still unfolding for me and I suspect it will be with me for a long time.

Suzanne Marks



History Week 2016

History is constructed through the telling and sharing of stories, both written and oral. Neighbours can be next door, across town or on the other side of the world. Individuals, families, friends, communities connected through shared experiences of courage, joy, pain, conflict, struggle, migration, survival, pride. As a member of the History Council of NSW, the Library was pleased to participate in its flagship event, History Week 2016. We were especially pleased to be working with City of Sydney Library's Ultimo branch, neighbours in the wonderfully diverse and vibrant Ultimo Community Centre neighbourhood.

We created a number of displays in the Library itself as well as using Ultimo Library's display cases. We were able to incorporate a range of resources, showcasing the diversity of our collections and their breadth and depth : books, badges, posters, newspapers, journals, newsletters, stories from the Tapestry project, DVDs and a banner from the 1972 International Women's Day march with the iconic 'the personal is political'.

The displays illustrated women's participation, activism and contribution in all areas of society: stories of Aboriginal women fighting and campaigning for social justice and human rights; those of pioneer, rural and country women; women's writing groups; and Sydney's villages. It included a group of books mentioned in Delia Falconer's article, 'A city of one's own: women's Sydney' on the Dictionary of Sydney website. There were stories of Chinese women in Australia and women in sport, including histories of women's netball and cricket associations.

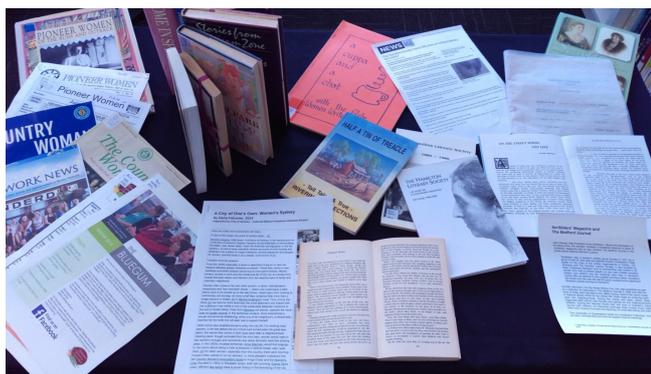
Women have long been active, as leaders, in industrial action and workers' rights campaigns, told through the power of story, both fiction and non-fiction. Of course, it included a display highlighting Jessie Street and Faith Bandler, tirelessly working to effect change. A selection

of displays was photographed and posted to Facebook each day during the week with background information. The History Council was impressed and appreciated our contribution. It included the Library on its homepage with a link to a summary of our displays: 'The History Council of NSW would like to thank the Jessie Street National Women's Library for their enthusiastic involvement in History Week 2016, and for sharing these amazing stories of neighbours and women alike.'

As co-curators, Lynne Morton and I were excited by the richness of the Library's resources. Participating in History Week also presented an opportunity for several volunteers to contribute time and ideas.

We invite you to delve into our collection of women's stories, rarely told or acknowledged.

Sherri Hilario



General donations since July 2016

Donations of money help meet day-to-day running costs:

Robyn Arrowsmith	Diane Deane
Trish Doyle	Jenny Drew
Elizabeth Evatt	Liz Fitzgerald
Maureen Galbally	Kerrie Kelly
Marie Muir	Mary O'Sullivan
Rosemary Pynor	May Steilberg
Susan Templeman	Barbara Wall
Janet Walsh	Betsy Wearing

Donations of material expand our collection:

Jo Bramna	Pam Bradley
Jude Conway	Paul Cooper
Jane Drexler	Maryellen Galbally
Joan McCarthy	Jozefa Sobski
Association of Heads of Independent Girls' Schools	
NSW Teachers Federation	Spinifex Press

Capital Investment Fund

Since it was launched in September 2009, the Capital Investment Fund has reached \$310,494. Our target is \$500,000, the interest from which will provide essential support for Library operations. If you would like to contribute, please indicate on the membership/donation form on this page.

CIF donations since July 2016:

Karen Banfield	Diane Deane
Sybil Jack	Kathleen Lamoureux

MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

I wish to: join the library renew my membership
 make a donation

Date:/...../.....

Title: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr/other

Name:.....

Address:.....

Tel: (h)..... (w)..... (m).....

Email: (Please print BLOCKLETTERS)

Please send newsletters by email instead of hardcopy.

Membership Category

Full Member \$60 Life member \$1,000
 Organisation \$120 Student \$20 (conditions apply)
 Concession \$30 (Pensioner/Centrelink Concession Cardholders)

A membership year runs from 1 January to 31 December. Members joining after 1 October are financial until 31 December of the following year.

Donations (donations over \$2 are tax deductible)

I wish to make a donation of \$.....
 to the Library for general purposes
 to the Library's Capital Investment Fund
 I am willing to have my name published in the Newsletter
 I wish to remain anonymous

Payment Details

CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: Westpac Bank is no longer accepting manual vouchers for credit card payments. Therefore, payments will no longer be issued the yellow credit card receipt. Credit card payments can still be made in the usual way and will be processed electronically. Please contact Jean Burns at the library if you have any questions.

Enclosed is my cheque/money order for \$.....
 (payable to Jessie Street National Women's Library)
 Please charge my MasterCard/Visa with \$.....
 Name of cardholder:.....
 Card no.....
 Expiry date/..... CCV_ _ _

Signature:.....

Auto Debit Authorisation

I authorise JSNWL to charge this, and all future membership renewals as they fall due, to the credit card number above on this form.
 I authorise JSNWL to charge \$.....annually to the above credit card as a donation to
 the Library for general purposes or to
 the Library's Capital Investment Fund.

Signature:.....

Become a volunteer

I would like to help the Library by becoming a volunteer. (You will be contacted for an interview.)

Please forward the completed form to:

Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656, Sydney NSW 2001

Jessie Street National Women's Library
GPO Box 2656 Sydney NSW 2001

ISSN 1838-0662
ABN 42 276162 418
Registered Charity No. CFN10255

Note: Please advise the Library if your contact details have changed.

Visit us:

523–525 Harris Street (cnr William Henry Street), Ultimo
Please use the intercom for admittance
Level access is via the Ultimo Community Centre in Bulwara Rd

Opening times:

The Library is open to the public Monday to Friday 10 am to 3 pm

Borrowing policy:

The public can access items using the interlibrary loan system. The public cannot borrow items but may use them in their library of choice. A loan collection is available to financial members

How to reach the Library:

There are several ways to travel to the Library:

- ▶ The Library is a 20 minute walk from Town Hall Station through Darling Harbour or from Central Station via the Goods Line walk or via Harris Street
- ▶ Bus 501 (Railway Square to Ryde/West Ryde) at Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre stop
- ▶ Bus 389 (Maritime Museum to North Bondi) at Harris and Allan Streets stop
- ▶ Light rail from Central Station or Dulwich Hill to Exhibition stop
- ▶ There is limited two hour street meter parking available



Postal Address:
GPO Box 2656
Sydney, NSW 2001

Telephone:
(02) 9571 5359

Email:
info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

Visit our website:
www.nationalwomenslibrary.org.au

 www.facebook.com/nationalwomenslibrary

