Our move into the new building has been the most exciting development since the last issue of the JCPML Information Update. The completed library and gallery building for the first stage of The John Curtin Centre is certainly impressive. The building contains four large galleries for exhibitions, a number of stack areas to store the archive collection and to house the John Curtin Gallery, a theatre with seating for 120, the JCPML reading room and seminar room. Our Archivist, Kandy-Jane Henderson, worked hard to ensure the transition from the project office to the new building went smoothly.

Looking to the 21st century

Now that we have completed our process of review we can confidently look forward to the next century, knowing that we have set the JCPML an effective and substantial direction for the next few years. We are currently preparing a series of documents for publication to explain our future program and strategies.

There is no doubt that an important part of our vision for the future is the electronic archive component and the launch of our digital project—John Curtin: A Prime Minister and his People—on the Internet is our first step in this direction. Our newly appointed Public Programs Coordinator, Lesley Carman-Brown, worked closely with the Australian Archives on this project, evaluating the currently available technologies to provide suitable digital storage and access.

Of course, technology is only part of the equation—the other part is the invaluable support and contributions we receive from our donors. Thank you one and all!

Inside this Issue

Moving into the new Building
Plans take JCPML into Next Century
New Staff
Collection Corner
Launch of Digital Project
Donors Acknowledged & JCPML Visitors

Building Progress

A view of the newly completed prime ministerial library and gallery

JCPML Director Vicki Williamson (left) with Archivist Kandy-Jane Henderson on site

The first stage of The John Curtin Centre building program, incorporating the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (JCPML), is now complete with the building being officially handed over to the Curtin University on May 16.

For details see inside story
Since the handover on May 16, the Archivist, Kandy-Jane Henderson, has been busy finalising details of the move into the new building. This has meant considerable time working with the Capital Planning & Projects Office regarding the new office furnishings for the staff work areas, the reading room, theatrette and seminar room.

As well, specially designed shelving has been installed in the archive stack, including wire racks for large artworks, special drawers to house photographs and compactus shelving for the bulk of the collection.

Special rooms have been set aside in the reading area to allow users access to oral histories and microfilm and video tapes without disturbing others. As well, there will be computer terminals available to users in the reading room, giving them access to the JCPML's electronic archives and other resources.

A large exhibition gallery on the second floor will house the JCPML's permanent exhibition, entitled *John Curtin: A Man of Peace, a Time of War*, and the Public Programs Coordinator, Lesley Carman-Brown, has been working with the exhibition designer to ensure its successful installation.

The exhibition will be launched in February next year when the JCPML opens to the public for the first time. Until then, JCPML staff will be well-occupied organising the collection in its new home and preparing the facilities for the public.

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**Plans take JCPML into 21st Century**

In keeping with the review process which the JCPML has undertaken in the first part of 1997, staff members have been involved in developing a Strategic and Information Plan for the JCPML to take it into the 21st century.

This process has now been completed and the result is substantial documentation which clearly identifies the JCPML's vision, mission and goals for the next three to five years. "Learning from the past to build a better community" is the motto that the JCPML has now adopted. "As Australia's first prime ministerial library our mission is to advance scholarship, enhance cultural awareness and provide a gateway for the community to learn about its past," said Vicki Williamson, JCPML Director.

Among the challenges listed in the Strategic Plan are the issues of locating material in private ownership and meeting the challenge of providing management and access to the electronic archive. A number of strategies and action plans have been identified to deal with these challenges.

The Strategic and Information Plan together with the new Program Statement are currently being prepared for publication and will be available later this year.

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**New Staff Member**

The dynamic duo of Vicki Williamson, JCPML Director, and Kandy-Jane Henderson, Archivist, has now been joined by Lesley Carman-Brown as Public Programs Coordinator.

Lesley has worked within the Curtin University Library and Information Service since 1987 and initially joined the JCPML project in 1994 as a research assistant to help develop the collection of memorabilia and material associated with John Curtin. As the Public Programs Coordinator, Lesley will work closely with Kandy-Jane to assist in the development, implementation and presentation of the JCPML's programs and activities.

In particular, Lesley has played a significant role in organising the JCPML's digitisation projects, including the joint digitisation project with the Australian Archives (see backpage story).
Two new oral histories relating to the history of The John Curtin Centre have been recorded for the JCPML collection.

Mr Ray Johnson, AO, Chairman of the United States Advisory Board of The John Curtin Centre, and former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Caltex Petroleum Corporation, and Professor John Maloney, former Vice-Chancellor of the Curtin University of Technology, have recorded for posterity their contributions to The John Curtin Centre.

In particular, Professor Maloney was involved with the inception of an idea of a memorial to Prime Minister John Curtin. The idea was first raised in 1988, soon after Professor Maloney became Vice-Chancellor of the University. The vision of John Curtin as a statesman and a man of integrity drew the attention, interest and support of many people from both sides of the political fence and the concept developed into the multi-million dollar building now reaching completion.

These two oral histories will shed an intimate and interesting behind-the-scenes view on the project, the decision-making process and the important milestones marking the project’s progress.

A significant contribution has been made to the JCPML collection by Mrs Barbara Ross, daughter of the late Mr Frederick McLaughlin, private secretary to John Curtin during his time as Prime Minister of Australia.

Among the items that Mrs Ross has generously donated is a family album of photographs taken during John Curtin’s visit to the United Kingdom for the Empire Conference of 1944, and several folders of material pertaining to Curtin’s three month overseas visit to the UK, USA and Canada including original itineraries, itemised personal expenses, correspondence and copies of Curtin’s speeches during the visit. As well, Mrs Ross has donated three suits belonging to her father and worn by him during this visit.

Many of the photographs show Curtin visiting airmen at RAAF sites around London, as well as meeting such well known figures as New York Mayor, Mr Le Guardia and British Prime Minister Churchill. Information from the folders reveals, for example, that amongst the personal expenses of the Prime Minister was the cost of ten shillings for the purchase of glasses to wear with a gas mask and $2.50 for breakfast on the train from New York to Washington.

Several of these items, including the suits, will be on display in the permanent exhibition due to be open to the public in February next year.
In July the JCPLM is launching its first digital project on the Internet to be available to the public. This web site has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Archives, who have made available a selection of letters written to John Curtin by ordinary Australians. The JCPLM feels this is an exciting and innovative step in providing world-wide access to material otherwise not available except by physically visiting the Canberra offices of the Australian Archives.

"International access is an important consideration for the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library because Curtin played a significant role on the world stage during the war, working closely with Churchill and Roosevelt, and forming the Australia-US Alliance," said the JCPLM Director, Ms Vicki Williamson.

The project addressed such issues as:

- How to enable greater access to unique material which otherwise would have only limited physical access;
- How the technology can assist in the capture, storage and preservation of archival material in digital form; and
- The feasibility of using technology to digitise material not held on site.

The digital project, John Curtin: A Prime Minister and his People, makes available nearly 500 documents from ordinary citizens—revealing their hopes, worries and fears as they opened their hearts to him during the crisis of World War II.

"Enclosed find my wedding ring and small piece of gold. Please accept it in the spirit it is sent. Sold, its proceeds may help one of our worthy causes," said one writer. To which Curtin replied, "...whilst I very much appreciate the sacrifice you are prepared to make in order to help your country, I feel I cannot accept the token forwarded, which must be very dear to you."

From July, John Curtin: A Prime Minister and his People can be accessed through the JCPLM homepage <http://www.curtin.edu.au/curtin/library/jcplm/>.

**JCPML Approved for Tax Incentives Scheme**

At its meeting on 9 May, 1997, the Taxation Incentives for the Arts (TIA) Committee endorsed the JCPLM collection policy and approved our participation in the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme.

The TIA Scheme encourages gifts of significant cultural items to libraries by offering donors a tax deduction for the market value of their gifts.

**Contributions and Support since March, 1997**

The JCPLM acknowledges the following individuals from all around Australia who have actively donated material to the collection:

- **Jessie Ayres**
- **Dr Steve Errington**
- **Jean Garner**
- **Joy Ingram**
- **Raymond Johnson**
- **Prof. John Maloney**

**Active JCPLM Supporters:**

- Touchstone DDF
- Scott Foul Colour Print
- Vaughan de Vocht
- Lindsay J. Peet
- Dr Carmen Lawrence

**Distinguished Visitors to the JCPLM:**

- **Curtin family members—**
  - John and Josephine Curtin
- **Associate Professor David Black, Curtin University**
- **Anne Marie Schwirtlich and Helen Nosworthy, Australian Archives, Canberra**
- **Roy Watkins and Alan Ralph, Australian Archives, WA**