From the Director's Desk

July was a very special month for the JCPML. We held our inaugural anniversary function on the 5th to commemorate the death of John Curtin. Our distinguished guest for the occasion was former prime minister Gough Whitlam who gave a stirring speech on Curtin's legacy to Australia.

Patron for JCPML
The occasion was made even more special by Mr Whitlam's acceptance of our invitation to become Patron of Australia's first prime ministerial library. Having a former prime minister as our Foundation Patron will add further credibility to the concept and development of the JCPML. Mr Whitlam's personal involvement with cultural heritage institutions is long-standing and he is a previous recipient of the Redmond Barry Award, conferred by the Australian Library and Information Association in recognition of his outstanding service in this area.

The middle of the year also allowed us to pause briefly to review the statistics and consider our achievements since opening on February 20 this year. Our major exhibition, John Curtin: A Man of Peace, A Time of War, has had a very successful launch with more than 6,000 visitors to the end of June while the JCPML staff have been kept busy answering over 400 reference enquiries which have been received via phone, fax, email and in person.

Continuing our commitment to the general community we have developed and piloted two outreach projects: an educational program for year 12 history students; and an exhibition program aimed at older citizens. Both have had a very successful trial period and will continue to run during the second half of this year and throughout 1999.

We also pay tribute in this issue to another respected Australian, the late Dr Geoffrey Serle, who, in his unassuming way has influenced a great many people through his scholarship and ideals. The JCPML is very grateful to have had the opportunity to publish Dr Serle's last work, For Australia and Labor: Prime Minister John Curtin, which gives a compelling glimpse into the life and times of our wartime prime minister and serves to introduce a new generation to a great Australian leader.
What the students said:
"The role play was a different way of learning compared to just lectures."
"...We could voice our opinions."
"I found the simulation game most beneficial because having to interact with other 'characters' made me think and consider all the points of view."
"...I understood it better than from a text book."
"Provided deeper insight into the inner understandings of motives behind many actions."
"The role play enabled us to learn how hard it really was for the delegations to make decisions and come to resolutions."

What the teachers said:
"Worth the excursion."
"...An enjoyable and useful program. Resource materials excellent."
"Overall I was impressed. Provided students with the opportunity to excel and be stimulated."
"Exceeded my expectations."

Successful Launch for JCPML Education Program

During second term more than a hundred students from four different schools trialled the JCPML Year 12 history education program with both teachers and students pronouncing it a resounding success.

The program aims to help students develop skills in analysis; argument; communication (including working cooperatively in groups) and research. A feature of the program is the simulation game, An Extraordinary Allied Nations' Summit Meeting, in which students enact the roles of Winston Churchill, Douglas MacArthur, John Curtin and their aides in order to discuss the grave situation in the Pacific and Europe during April 1942.

Using information from the JCPML exhibition, John Curtin: A man of peace, a time of war, and sources from the JCPML collection—cablegrams, letters, newspaper articles and oral histories—students are encouraged to respond to the historical situation and make crucial decisions based on their own interpretation and judgement.

Following on from this successful launch of our education program, the JCPML is currently developing a program for year 9 and 10 society and environment studies. More information and booking forms for the year 12 program can be obtained by contacting the JCPML office on (08) 9266 4205.

COSTUMES PLEASE!
The most requested plea from students was for the JCPML to provide costumes for them to dress up in and so enhance their experience of 1942. Items which we are seeking from the war include: civilian hats and jackets, military caps and jackets, and round spectacle frames (similar to those worn by John Curtin).

If anyone has such items which they are willing to donate for this purpose, please contact the JCPML office on (08) 9266 4205.
The Prime Minister and the Press

In the wake of general interest in Michelle Grattan’s opening speech for the JCPML permanent exhibition, *John Curtin: A Man of Peace, A Time of War*, the JCPML has published an expanded version of her talk. Entitled: *The Prime Minister and the Press: A Study in Intimacy*, the paper examines the relationship developed by John Curtin with the wartime “press circus” and how this may have been influenced by Curtin’s own experience as an editor and journalist and the wartime contingencies of censorship and secrecy.

Drawing on her extensive personal experience as a political journalist and editor, Michelle then compares Curtin’s media relations with the modern day press gallery.

Given that Curtin began his published writing career in 1906 and his career before entering politics was in journalism as editor of the *Westralian Worker* newspaper, Michelle’s paper provides a different perspective of our wartime prime minister and his belief in the power of the press.

NOTE: Limited copies of this paper are available on request from the JCPML: Ph (08) 9266 4205 or fax (08) 9266 4185.

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For Australia and Labor: Prime Minister John Curtin

Written by distinguished historian, author and Curtin biographer, Dr Geoffrey Serle, AO. *For Australia and Labor* gives a glimpse into the life and times of Australia’s wartime prime minister.

Cost: $10.00 per book (plus postage & handling $4.00 Australia or $8.00 ex-Australia). Payment must accompany order.

Please make cheques payable to: Curtin University of Technology and send your order to: Corporate Services, Library & Information Service, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth 6845

Enquiries to: Phone: (08) 9266 2415 Fax: (08) 9266 3213

Published by John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, with the assistance of the Library & Information Service, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA

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New Patron gives Anniversary Speech

To commemorate the death of our wartime prime minister, the JCPML held its inaugural Anniversary event on 5 July this year with a public lecture by the Hon. Gough Whitlam. Mr Whitlam, who has been a long-time supporter of the JCPML, recently accepted the invitation to be its Foundation Patron.

The public lecture was fully booked and Mr Whitlam freely gave his time to talk with visitors and sign autographs before and after the lecture.

Speaking to the theme *John Curtin: Party, Parliament, People*, Mr Whitlam expressed his views on the legacy that Curtin had left all Australians, touching upon the issues of parliamentary democracy, the modernisation of the Australian Constitution; racism and federal finances.

In a moving conclusion, Mr Whitlam stated: ‘As with the man, so with the nation. We best measure the Australian achievement, not by glossing over the truths about sectarianism, racism and dispossession in our history but by our courage in confronting them. In calling for “less nationalism, less selfishness, less race ambition”, John Curtin gave a message to his party, the Parliament and the people as relevant in 1998 as it was radical in 1945.’

NOTE: The Anniversary lecture will soon be available on the JCPML web site. Look for it at <http://john.curtin.edu.au> at What’s New.
A New ERA comes to JCPML

In August, the JCPML Director, Vicki Williamson, and Archivist, Kandy-Jane Henderson presented a paper at the Australian Society of Archivists' 1998 Conference: Place, Interface and Cyberspace: Archives at the Edge. Their paper focused on the Electronic Research Archive (ERA) being developed by the JCPML, chronicled the background research into technology, software and information systems which has enabled the JCPML to bring this leading edge concept to reality and elaborated on the features and functionality of the JCPML electronic archive.

"ERA is about enhancing access to the JCPML collection," said Kandy-Jane Henderson. "We have made innovative use of commercial off-the-shelf packages which deliver the functionality we require."

The search retrieval software selected—Electronic Filing System (EFS) produced by Excalibur Technologies—was chosen primarily because its "fuzzy" logic eliminates the need for clean text for search purposes. Because the majority of material being collected by the JCPML is more than fifty years old, the documents are typed or in manuscript as opposed to modern word processed material, and EFS allows this material to be digitized as an image and then converted to a text file via Optical Character Recognition (OCR).

When users type in words or phrases to be searched the entire content of the document is searched—not just indexed terms or titles. The fuzzy logic overcomes the problem of typos, differing spellings and a less than 100% OCR conversion rate.

"It is the success we have experienced with our digital projects that has enabled us to move forward into this new phase of creating the electronic archive," said Vicki Williamson. "Our guiding principles in this ground-breaking endeavour have been the values that John Curtin stood for: vision, leadership and a sense of community."

Considerable progress has already been made in systematically processing the JCPML collection for digitization with descriptions of more than 3,000 items now completed by Archives Technician, David Wylie. The Electronic Filing System (EFS) software is currently being tested and representatives from Excalibur Technologies US office visited the JCPML in June to review operations and answer questions.

The JCPML hopes to have ERA operational to the public by the end of the year.

Kandy-Jane Henderson (left) with Vicki Williamson

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