

Celebrating John Curtin Day

In recognition of John Curtin Day this year, the JCPML hosted a special lecture and launched a new exhibition.

2001 marks the 60th anniversary of John Curtin's assumption of power and also marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Sir Thomas Blamey, the General who led Australian forces from the beginning of the war to eventual victory in 1945. The JCPML combined these two anniversaries in a very special event which saw JCPML Visiting Scholar for 2001, Professor Peter Edwards, deliver his lecture *From Curtin to Beazley: Labor leaders and the American alliance*, while the Governor of WA, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, launched an Australian War Memorial touring exhibition entitled *Soldier for a Crisis: Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey*.

In an intriguing lecture, Professor Edwards challenged one of the most popular 'myths' surrounding wartime Prime Minister John Curtin – that he was a principal founder of the Australian-American alliance. Professor Edwards has studied in depth the minutes of the Prime Minister's War Conference and highlighted for the first time important information that shed



From l to r: Vice Chancellor Prof. Lance Twomey, Chancellor Harry Perkins, Governor of WA Lt Gen. John Sanderson, Prof. Peter Edwards and JCPML Historical Consultant Prof. David Black

light on Curtin's subsequent behaviour to both the Americans and the British.

After the lecture the Governor launched the new exhibition which was open to the public until 11 November. *Soldier for a crisis* reveals the story of a general who attracted controversy but retained the confidence of prime ministers, upheld Australia's interests against British and American demands, and under whom the Australian Army was developed for the vital battles of the war in the Pacific.

'[Blamey's] was a life full of controversy,

but criticism about him was never about shirking responsibility or fulfilling his duty,' said the Governor. 'He always stood up and was counted, never letting personal ambition prevent him from doing what he thought was necessary. He was a great admirer and defender of the Australian fighting man, and a man who had as much to do with earning our nation the respect of the world as any in our history.'

To find out more about the John Curtin Day celebrations, check under 'what's on' in the JCPML website.



Digital partnership an Australian first!

In an Australian first, a worldwide developer of high performance software, Ex Libris, and a university library, Curtin University of Technology's Library and Information Service (LIS), have formed a partnership that will improve access to scholarly information and the delivery of other library services.

Noam Kaminer (centre) from Ex Libris is shown around JCPML by David Wylie and Lesley Wallace



This development partnership will provide a valuable means for Ex Libris to design, develop and test software and other products in close consultation with a library and information service that has special expertise in the area of digitisation and networked scholarly information.

'The establishment of the partnership recognizes our early adoption of a digitization strategy,' said Dr Vicki Williamson. 'Our work on the Electronic Research Archive (ERA) at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, LIS digital theses, web-based delivery of exam papers, and on-line information literacy programs has our staff well placed to make a significant contribution to the development work of Ex Libris.'

The partnership offers LIS and JCPML the opportunity to leverage their investment in scholarly information through the innovative use of technology to support flexible and online learning, and to become a reference site for other libraries and archives around the world through participation in the leading edge work of designing scholarly information systems for the 21st century.

Video sponsorship

With the generous sponsorship of MRG International, a promotional video of the JCPML has been created which will be used at conferences, exhibitions and other events. Managing Director of MRG International, well-known TV personality, Russell Goodrick, undertook the production of the video while Steve Graham was responsible for direction.

The video gives an overview of the facilities and activities of Australia's first prime ministerial library and will soon be available through the JCPML website to give visitors information about the JCPML as well.

Since its completion in August the video has been used at the Society of American Archivists meeting in Washington and at the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library Conference in Adelaide in October.

The video serves an important function in explaining the role of a prime ministerial library in Australia and we expect to use it many times.

JCPML wins prestigious award

On November 22 the JCPML was presented with a WA State Arts Sponsorship Scheme Prestige Award for *Best Industry Initiative Patron for 2000/2001*. The awards give recognition to corporate sector sponsorship of the arts, and over 100 nominations were received for the six Prestige Awards. Other nominations shortlisted in this category included the RAC, Water Corporation and Foxgold Pty Ltd.

The JCPML was acknowledged for its pro-active partnership with the Perth Theatre Company to develop a play about the relationship between John Curtin and Douglas MacArthur. Plans are in place to produce the play in Perth in 2002 followed by a tour to the Australian War Memorial.

Interactive education

As part of its commitment to education, the JCPML is undertaking an ambitious project of developing a range of interactive quizzes and activities for its digital publications. If you're feeling adventurous why not give it a go? Visit the JCPML website and check out the *Man of Peace, Time of War* online exhibition, *Visit John Curtin at Home* or look up the *Prime Minister and his People* digital project to sample the quizzes and activities. See how well you do!

Dream come true for Hazel Hawke Scholarship winner

As predicted by Hazel Hawke last year, Jennifer Sterry, the inaugural Hazel Hawke Scholarship recipient, has been making the most of this unique opportunity to study at Curtin University.

‘Attending university has always been a dream of mine, which I never thought possible until I learned of the Hazel Hawke Scholarship,’ explained Jenny, a mother of five. ‘Now that dream has come true, and my family will not have to suffer from lack of finances and will also benefit from my new educational interests and knowledge.’

The Hazel Hawke Undergraduate Scholarship is a collaborative effort by Hazel Hawke and the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, supported by major sponsors ALP National Secretariat, the ACTU, BankWest and Curtin University of Technology. The Scholarship will cover Jenny’s full-time HECS fees and provide an annual grant of \$4,000 for up to three years to help with other study expenses.

Jenny found her first few weeks facing a formal study situation after

more than 20 years out of school ‘daunting.’ She was not only coping with changes to her lifestyle, but so were her family and at times this was very distressing. ‘The scholarship was a real motivator to keep going through the difficulties,’ said Jenny. ‘Without having the support of the scholarship I might have been tempted to give up my dream.’

Now, at the end of a challenging first year of her education degree, Jenny faces her last exam ‘without concern’. She has learnt a lot and realised after her first few assignments when she received good marks that she ‘could do it’. It’s also been a learning experience for her children and Jenny has watched her teenage children growing more confident and independent, learning to take care of themselves.

Jenny has always been heavily involved in community activities,

particularly school and parent groups and says: ‘going into teaching is part of my community spirit. Otherwise I would have studied something like accounting or business! But I want to put as much of myself as possible back into the community.’

Jenny is looking forward to the summer break when she can spend as much time as possible with her children and give her neglected house a good spring clean before resuming studies in 2002.



Scholarship recipient Jennifer Sterry receives her award from Hazel Hawke

John Curtin features on air

During October JCPML Historical Consultant, Professor David Black, gave two radio interviews discussing wartime Prime Minister John Curtin.

On 7 October, the 60th anniversary of Curtin assuming the prime ministership, David talked with interviewer Steve Gordon about John Curtin’s life and political career on radio station 6PR. If you missed this interesting interview then don’t worry, because it will soon be available for listeners through the JCML website.

On 20 October ABC Radio National broadcast a Hindsight program discussing David’s latest book, *Friendship is a Sheltering Tree*, which was published by the JCPML in February. This book provides an intimate portrait of John Curtin through the publication of his personal letters. Producer Bill Bunbury brought John Curtin’s words to life by using actors to read aloud excerpts while David filled in the contextual background. The show was repeated later in the week and generated renewed interest in David’s book.

PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

JCPML bids farewell to Vicki

On 30 November Dr Vicki Williamson left Curtin University of Technology to take up a new appointment as Pro Vice Chancellor (Administrative and Academic Affairs) at the University of Ballarat. Vicki has been integral to the development of the JCPML since her appointment as University Librarian in 1992. Vicki took a few minutes to talk to us about her experiences over the past ten years.

How daunting was it to be faced with the prospect of developing Australia's first prime ministerial library?

Vicki: It wasn't daunting at all. It's only daunting in hindsight! Viewing the experience retrospectively, the task seems enormous. If you knew then what we were going to have to go through – the challenges, opportunities, despair – then you would have said, 'no thank you. I don't want to be in this.' But that's retrospectively. At the time the idea captivated me. I believed in the vision. I always thought it was credible and with good planning and taking it a step at a time, I knew that we could get there.

What's the happiest memory you have of your time with the JCPML?

Vicki: This is pretty easy because it's one of my enduring memories. It was 5 July 1995 when we opened the *John Curtin: Man of Peace, Time of War* exhibition in new Parliament House, Canberra. I had spent the entire day being followed around by the media, my mobile phone didn't stop ringing. The day culminated with the arrival of the Curtin family with the acting Prime Minister of the day, the Hon. Kim Beazley, the Director General of the National Archives, George Nichols, and the Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University, Professor John Maloney for the exhibition launch. It was just the most fabulous day. Throughout the entire evening I kept pinching myself to think that I was actually there and that we had managed to bring the idea of this major exhibition to fruition.

What do you feel saddest about in leaving the JCPML?

Vicki: I have to say I don't really feel sad at all. I feel a great sense of pride, a great sense of achievement and it's been a great privilege having worked with an outstanding team of people whose dedication and professionalism, their trust and support in me and in the vision and the concept has been nothing but outstanding. And while I will miss them greatly,

they will go on and the vision is secure.

In fact the vision of Australia's first prime ministerial library is now a reality and has been since the doors opened to the public in February 1998. That's quite an achievement. Do you feel the JCPML can now stand on its own?

Vicki: It's a great privilege and a very rare opportunity in anyone's professional career to have the capacity to take something from vision to reality but I think we've done it. The project started in a shoebox with a half-time assistant. Now we have a \$30 million complex. The concept is robust. It's reliable, credible and professional. You just have to see the recognition that we're getting, the research enquiries that are coming from around the world. We had a vision, we articulated it, we refined it, we were committed totally to it. I think we brought on board the right mix of professional expertise and the foundation of the library owes so much to Kandy-Jane Henderson's archival skills and abilities. Without her we may not have found ourselves where we are today.

What do you think about the future of prime ministerial libraries in Australia? There are a number of ventures under way. Do you think the JCPML has been the start of a new trend?

Vicki: It's a question I've always been interested in and I'll be watching very closely. I think that some people are keen to replicate the JCPML experience but are perhaps doing so at a superficial level. I think those that succeed will be the ones that create a credible and achievable vision.

What does the future now hold for Vicki Williamson?

Vicki: A new state, a new house, a new institution, a new job and a new set of political circumstances.

The JCPML staff joins with donors and supporters to congratulate Vicki and wish her well in her future endeavours.



PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Collaboration critical to success

In August the JCPML Archivist, Kandy-Jane Henderson, and Dr Vicki Williamson gave a paper on *Collaborative partnerships: Developing the Electronic Research Archive and public programs at the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library* at the Society of American Archivists 65th Annual Meeting in Washington, DC.

Kandy spoke about the role of collaborative partnerships being critical to the success of the JCPML. 'Such collaborations help us to maximise our potential and enable us to produce innovative products and services for specific projects,' she said. 'The JCPML has become a recognized resource for study and research, providing electronic access to unique and significant archival records through its Electronic Research Archive and offering a vital and extensive public program to the community.'

Kandy elaborated on how the strength and accessibility of the

research collection forms the basis of the public programs. 'Raising the profile of John Curtin

in the community at a local, state and national level, by exploiting the research collection, is a major focus for us. Collaboration is an important means of achieving this,' she said. 'Initially the JCPML actively sought collaborators for projects, now we are being approached because of our growing reputation. A vital delivery mechanism is through the JCPML website, but we are flexible in determining the best format for delivery to the community.'

Kandy's paper can be read on the JCPML website. Look under 'About us'. Representing the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library for the last time,



From l to r: Kandy-Jane Henderson with Sharon Fawcett from the Office of Presidential Libraries and Maggie Shapley from National Archives of Australia who were joint presenters at the Washington conference

Dr Vicki Williamson presented a paper at the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library Conference in October. The theme of the conference was *Someone special: Issues in the development of person specific libraries, archives and collections* and Vicki gave a paper looking at the 'New ways of working' that the JCPML had established in order to successfully run its programs and Electronic Research Archive.

'A central strategy employed by the JCPML to overcome the political, cultural, legislative and geographic challenges was to build productive and collaborative partnerships,' said Vicki. 'For the JCPML productive partnerships are key strategic and long-term relationships between organizations that share similar values.'

Vicki went on to explain that in all that we do at the JCPML, we have always looked to the vision, leadership and sense of community spirit demonstrated by John Curtin to guide our work. 'The JCPML seeks to fulfil its vision as Australia's first prime ministerial library by showing leadership within our professional practice and seeking to share our experiences with our professional and general communities,' she said.

JCPML inaugural team members (from l to r: David Wylie, Kandy-Jane Henderson, Vicki Williamson and Lesley Carman-Brown) with the JCPML's founder, John Maloney (2nd from right)



Prized books donated

Amongst the donations received at the end of 2001, were two books with special significance. Alan Shuttleton donated *Red Europe* by Frank Anstey, a book originally given to John Curtin in 1919 and inscribed: 'To John Curtin with the Publishers' compliments.' While Eric Silbert, a World War Two airman, donated a copy of his book *Dinkum Mishpochas* to the JCPML. In the book Mr Silbert recounts his experiences during a memorial service at Westminster Abbey for Prime Minister John Curtin.

'By chance I sat next to the senior naval officer. We were...without instructions and at the start of this service the naval officer and myself had to make a decision – when to sit and when to stand. This was quite a decision with my Jewish background...We held hasty whispered consultations along the lines of "This is a memorial service I think we had better stand", and with that all the Australian troops would stand...and the public behind them would follow... I never discovered whether or not our decisions had been correct.'

National History Challenge Winners

The National History Challenge (NHC) is a research-based competition for students in years five to twelve. It gives students a chance to be an historian, investigating their community and exploring their own past. It emphasises and rewards quality research, the use of community resources and effective presentation.

The theme of the 2001 challenge was 'Making our nation in Australian history' and the JCPML once again sponsored awards in the special category 'the life and times of John Curtin'. National Archives of Australia staff assisted with judging in other states and represented the JCPML in the awards presentations. The winning entries this year were all research essays.

ACT - David Boston, Holy Trinity Primary School, *John Curtin - an early republican*

NSW - Benjamin Weber, Shore School, *In*

what ways did the life and times of John Curtin influence the making of our nation?
Qld - Matet Lester, Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, *To what extent does John Curtin deserve to be hailed as Australia's greatest prime minister during his time in government from 1941 to 1945?*

SA - Jen Tan, Bethesda Christian College, *John Curtin - his life and the impacts he has had on our society*

Tas - Lewis Halliday, Hutchins School, *John Curtin - making our nation*

Vic - Nuala Bethell, Melbourne Girls' Grammar, *The life and times of John Curtin*

WA - Tobias Young, Prendiville Catholic College, *Australia is a chocolate nation*

Congratulations to all the winners and especially to Benjamin Weber from Shore School who was the overall national winner in the John Curtin special category.

Contributions and Support since August 2001

Barbara Davidson
Peter Edwards
Lynette Finch
Denis Fitzgerald
Alan Shuttleton
Eric Silbert
Gough Whitlam

JCPML Challenge Bank Reading Room Visitors

Tim Besley
Peter Botsman
Penny Carnaby
Greg Carne
Margaret Carnegie
Peter & Jacky Edwards
Valerie Harvey
Noam Kaminer
John Laurie
Ken & Anne MacDonald
Timothy McCabe
Julia McEntie
Ian D Rae
Frank Tonkins
Paula Williams

JCPML staff take this opportunity to wish all supporters a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year

John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library
Curtin University of Technology,
Kent St, Bentley WA 6102
GPO Box U1987 Perth WA 6845
Tel: 08 9266 4205 Fax: 08 9266 4185
Email: jcpml@boris.curtin.edu.au
Web: <http://john.curtin.edu.au>

