



*Glasgow librarian Kirsten McCormick is busy right now capturing and recording the Glasgow Commonwealth Games for posterity. A travelling scholarship enabled her to visit Australian colleagues last year and find out what Australian libraries have been doing to document major events and how they have been doing it.*



**RELAXING AT THE WATERFALL IN OTWAY NATIONAL PARK.**



**ON THE BALCONY AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY AUSTRALIA.**

Last year, just two days before the closing date, I spotted a travelling scholarship opportunity for librarians. Eager to apply, I needed a study proposal fast. For the first time since its inception, the award could be used to travel anywhere in the Commonwealth and not restricted to the US as it had been previously. Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games were on the horizon – boom! I had a ready-made focus that was topical, of global interest and dare I say it, even a little bit sexy.

I had been in my current job as a librarian at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow for just a year. The Mitchell is a large public library and major centre of social history resources. I wanted to gather knowledge that would potentially inform what we do operationally to acquire, build and manage collections around major events, like the Commonwealth Games (CWG).

My application was successful and in October I set off on my first overseas continuing professional development opportunity.

Touchdown was in Brisbane, where I wanted to learn about the remarkable political events that took place in Australia during the 1982 Commonwealth Games and how they were documented and preserved for the social record.

At the State Library of Queensland I spoke to the curator of the 2012 State of Emergency Exhibition which marked the 30th anniversary of the Brisbane Games. I also visited the Fryer Library at University of Queensland where I was able to examine some political ephemera produced by protest organisations including the Black Protest Committee, Coalition against Racism and Repression, The Committee of Fifty and the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action.

Today, anti-games alliances and pressure groups are an expected feature of the social and political landscape of a host city. Glasgow is no exception and the archives of our own home grown anti-games alliances are amongst our collecting aspirations. The best known of these in Glasgow have agreed in principle to transfer ownership of their archive to the Mitchell library but the political position that we occupy as an organisation and the legal detail of the required documentation mean that this is not yet a 'done deal'.

Sydney was the second stop on my journey and I arrived during the worst bush fires in New South Wales for over 50 years, with smoke from the Blue Mountains clearly visible from the city. My itinerary comprised visits to the State Library of New South Wales, the Mitchell Library, the Powerhouse Museum and the Australian Centre for Olympic Studies within the University of Technology, Sydney Library.

Many of my conversations with staff were focused around planning collections: what and how to collect, issues around deposit, identifying materials (especially small ephemeral publications) and archiving the cultural program. Mapping collections was also a recurring theme.

Because of legal issues around deposit and the practicalities of budget and resources, it is unlikely that any one institution will ever hold the comprehensive record of the Games.

Our responsibility as librarians is to map collections and have the ability to signpost researchers appropriately.

At the National Library of Australia, I was really excited to hear how social media was being used for targeted collecting and extending the reach of the library in canvassing federal election ephemera. With CWG ephemera high on my own agenda for addition to our Glasgow Collections, this was valuable experience to bring back home and start planning a campaign. At the end of June we launched our Your Games, Our History campaign to invite donations from CWG staff, the public and local businesses.

## HAVING THOSE DIRECT CONVERSATIONS WITH OVERSEAS COLLEAGUES FROM A RANGE OF DEPARTMENTS AND TYPES OF LIBRARY REALLY RAISED MY OWN ASPIRATIONS.

Melbourne proved to be a fitting farewell for my trip. From the grid layout of the CBD to the industrialised environment of the docklands, the massive student population and decidedly bohemian culture; it was absolutely the Australian city most reminiscent of Glasgow.

Librarians and museum workers in Melbourne spoke more about legacy and community engagement than in the other cities I had visited and those are the hot themes in Glasgow right now. It was interesting to hear how libraries are crowdsourcing content to develop collections like the Victoria at the Games Photo Archive and to encourage engagement.

Having those direct conversations with overseas colleagues from a range of departments and types of library really raised my own aspirations around what and how to collect in relation to Glasgow 2014. Since coming home, I've been heavily involved in developing our CWG collection plan which will feed into a wider collection policy for major events.

Of course, we don't need to travel any great distance to share experiences with librarians from across the globe and inform our own practice in libraries. That said, I'm pretty sure my diary is clear in the run up to Gold Coast 2018 and I'd be delighted to come and share any pearls gained from events in Glasgow this summer.

The Travelling Librarian Award is sponsored in the UK by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals and the English Speaking Union.

You can still read the blog that I maintained during my trip at: [www.travellinglibrarian2013.wordpress.com](http://www.travellinglibrarian2013.wordpress.com).

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