

## ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT CURTIN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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### **Abstract**

The article briefly outlines the history and vision of the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (JCPML) at Curtin University and provides an overview of its archival and special collections holdings. The primary focus of the JCPML is the life and times of John Curtin (1885-1945), Australia's wartime prime minister, and by extension the Australian-US relationship, post-war reconstruction, foreign policy, social and political history, and the prime ministership as an office. Other collection areas include post-war Australian political history, women's health, sexology, folklore in Western Australia, architecture, East Africa during the period of decolonization, and library studies. The JCPML also hosts material relating to yachtsman Jon Sanders' solo triple circumnavigation of the world in 1986-1988, and the Elizabeth Jolley Research Collection, as well as a collection of rare books and maps.

## **ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT CURTIN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**

Curtin University Library has significant archival and special collections, which are housed in the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (JCPML) towards the west side of the university's Bentley campus (fig.1). The present article gives a brief overview of the archival and special collections, highlighting the range of different materials that we hold. More detailed information is available from the JCPML and special collections websites.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of the Library's special collections has been highlighted as a result of the current large-scale refurbishment project which is taking place in the main, T.L Robertson Library building. As part of this exercise we have been looking closely at our physical holdings with a view to, for example, removing superseded textbooks, items which are duplicated electronically and some items which are no longer related to Curtin's teaching or research. In the course of this evaluation, some rarer material has been transferred to the JCPML, and in general we have become much more aware of the range of special collections material held by the Library and have been taking steps to document and promote it.

The JCPML concept was initiated shortly after the Western Australian Institute of Technology became Curtin University of Technology at the beginning of 1987, drawing on the model of the presidential libraries in the United States. The purpose-built archive and reading room were opened to the public in February 1998.<sup>2</sup>

### **John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive**

At the core of the JCPML is an archive of material relating to the life and times of Australian wartime prime minister, John Curtin (1885-1945). Although Curtin grew up in Victoria, he

moved to Perth in 1917 to take up the position of editor of the newspaper of the Australian Workers' Union, the *Westralian Worker*. He was elected Labor member of the House of Representatives for Fremantle between 1928 and 1931 and again from 1934, and became prime minister after the fall of the Menzies government in 1941. He is perhaps most remembered for his fostering of the alliance with the United States in the Pacific War, and died in office shortly before the allied victory over Japan in 1945.<sup>3</sup>



*Fig 1. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. Photo: David Wells*

The John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive began with a collection of about 60 books from Curtin's personal library and other memorabilia which had been donated by the Curtin family to the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1975 on the occasion of the opening of their new headquarters in Canberra, and the JCPML has continued to maintain close links with both the Curtin family and members of the ALP. These first acquisitions were quickly supplemented by further donations of Curtin-related items following an appeal from the Library, and were expanded by two further initiatives: to make copies of archival materials on Curtin held by other collecting agencies both in Australia and overseas; and to create oral histories of the by then fast decreasing number of people who had known Curtin personally. Interviews include several with members of Curtin's staff, notably Adele Hodges, his secretary from 1939 to 1941 (JCPML00211/1), Hazel Craig, stenographer to four prime ministers (JCPML00209/1), Don Rodgers, Curtin's press secretary (JCPML01106/1), and Private Secretary Fred McLaughlin (JCPML00163/1). Also represented are other

contemporaries including members of the press gallery and political colleagues. Of particular value to biographers are the recollections of Curtin as father by son John Francis Curtin (JCPML00855/1), and daughter Elsie Macleod (JCPML00012/1).

In building the JCPML collection, from the outset one of the leading principles was accessibility of material for researchers. Digitisation was a major focus from an early stage, as was linking to digital records held elsewhere, and the use of optical character recognition (OCR) software to create searchable texts. The idea that the collection was an Electronic Research Archive was crucial,<sup>4</sup> and this concept has been supported by several software solutions over the years. Currently access is provided through the Library's Ex Libris Alma/Primo infrastructure.

The John Curtin material continues to grow, although by now the rate of new acquisitions has declined. The collection includes 'personal records of the Curtin family, books from the Curtin family library, ephemera, objects, photographs, oral histories, audio-visual material and copies of official unpublished records',<sup>5</sup> as well as private papers and memorabilia donated by more than 3000 individuals and organisations. The three photographs here illustrate different aspects of Curtin's life and activities which are reflected in the archive. The first shows Curtin with his wife and young family in 1922 (fig. 2);



*Fig 2. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive. John and Elsie Curtin and Family, 1922. JCPML00617/65/1*

the second shows Curtin as orator, making a speech at the opening of South Beach in Fremantle in 1928 (fig. 3);



*Fig 3. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive. John Curtin speaking at opening of South Beach, Fremantle, 8 December 1928. JCPML00376/160*

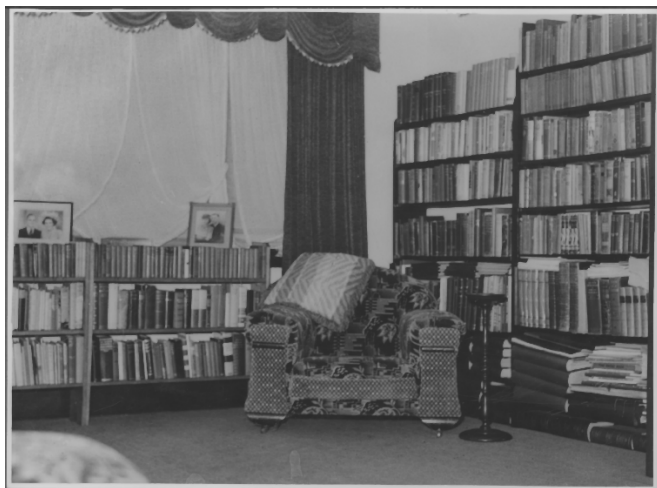
and the third is of Curtin the world statesman, walking in Canberra in 1942, with the American General Douglas MacArthur, military leader of US forces in the southwest Pacific (fig. 4).



*Fig. 4. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive. Curtin and MacArthur. JCPML00376/114.*

The collection focus on John Curtin's life and times also provides a springboard for a range of other themes: These include the Australian-US relationship, post-war reconstruction, foreign policy, social and political history, and the prime ministership as an office.

Personal items include a letter written by John Curtin on Australia Day 1916, while travelling in rural Victoria as part of his work for the Australian Workers' Union, to his fiancée, Elsie Needham (JCPML00402/11); a pocket watch presented to Curtin on the occasion of his departure from Perth to attend the 1924 International Labour Conference in Geneva, and which he continued to use for the rest of his life (JCPML00287/4); and the Christmas telegram John Curtin sent in 1941 from Canberra to Elsie, now his wife, in Perth not long after he became Prime Minister (JCPML00402/39). The books from Curtin's personal library include underlinings and other marks which provide valuable insights into Curtin's thought and are reflected in his speeches and journalistic writings (fig. 5).<sup>6</sup>



*Fig.5. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive. The front room, 24 Jarrad Street, Cottesloe, 1943 (the Curtin Family home). JCPML00376/35*

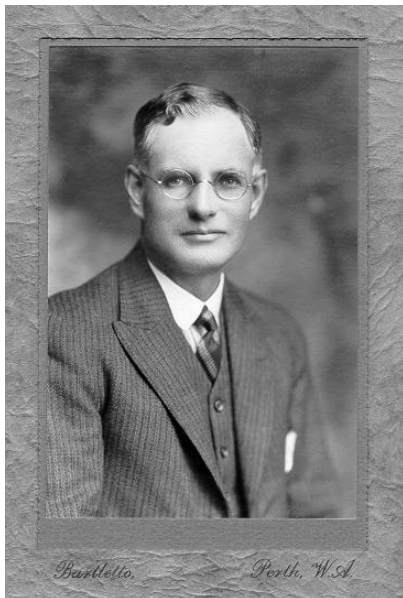
The JCPML also holds gramophone recordings of Curtin's wartime speeches, including his announcement of war with Japan in December 1941 (JCPML00406/1-9).

The most recent Curtin related acquisition is a portrait of Curtin painted in the 1940s by the New South Wales artist Miriam Macrae, who was a finalist in the Archibald portrait competition in 1944, 1945 and 1950 (fig. 6)



*Fig. 6. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive. Portrait of John Curtin by Miriam Macrae, 1946[?]. JCPML01330.*

It is not clear exactly when this portrait was painted, but although it appears to depict an older man, the composition at least is very similar to a studio photograph of Curtin taken in 1937 (fig. 7). It is likely that this photograph or one similar was used by Macrae as a model.



*Fig. 7. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive. Mr Curtin, aged 52 – Federal election 1937. JCPML00376/140*

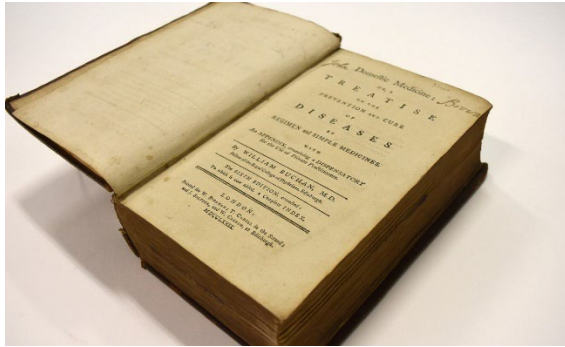
The history of the portrait is also unknown but it was donated to the JCPML in 2019 by the National Union of Workers and had previously been owned by the Federated Cold Storage and Meat Preservers Union.

### **Women's Health Collection**

The John Curtin Prime Ministerial Archive, however, is not by any means the only special collection that we have. Indeed, the idea that Curtin University Library should house rare books and specialist collections to support research goes back to the beginnings of the institution in the 1960s, and was central to the vision of the foundation principal librarian appointed in 1967 to the then Western Australian Institute of Technology, the late Geoffrey Allen.

Early collection development activity focused on printed items, notably the purchase in 1983 of some 500 items on the subject of women's health – mostly published in the 1920s and 1930s, but also including publications from the nineteenth century and earlier. These were supplemented in 1984 by a further 110 items from the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> The Women's Health Collection covers all aspects of women's health, including marriage, sexuality and birth control, and documents changing attitudes on women's place in society. The oldest item in the collection is the sixth edition of William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, published in London in 1779 (fig. 8), and the collection is particularly strong in works by pioneering figures from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the champion of women's rights and birth control, Marie Stopes (1880-1958), the nurse and campaigner, Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), and the sexologist, physician and social reformer, Henry Havelock Ellis (1859-1939).





*Fig. 8. William Buchan, Domestic Medicine, 6<sup>th</sup> edn., London, 1779. JCPML Stacks 610 BUC*

Along with the women's health items Curtin also obtained around 200 volumes from the personal library of Havelock Ellis and his partner Françoise Lafitte-Cyon (1886-1974), together with some of their correspondence from 1907-1929, which was found inserted into some of the books. Other items from Ellis' library are held at the University of Birmingham in the UK.<sup>8</sup>

### **Jules Black Sexology Collection**

Health has remained a strong focus as we have continued to develop the special collections. In 2010 we accepted a related collection of some 300 items from Dr Jules Black, an internationally noted sexologist. This comprises numerous published items by post World War II experts from around the world as well as a few earlier items. Collection themes cover the theory and science of sexology, sexual behaviours, relationship counselling, clinical and therapeutic sexology and erotica. As well as published material there is extensive coverage of Australian and international conference proceedings and also a collection of Dr Black's personal papers.



the late-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – its complicated plot involving princes and princesses, kidnap, torture, tangled romances and evil potions clearly captured the imagination of readers. The seventeenth-century paper is quite well preserved. The binding dates from much later and is probably from the nineteenth or even twentieth century.

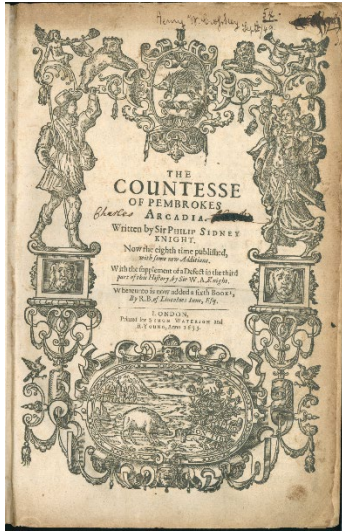


Fig. 10. Philip Sidney, *The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia*, London, 1633. JCPML Stacks Q 823.3 SID

As well as individual items, we have several distinctive groups of books around particular themes. We have, for example, a number of textbooks from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early twentieth centuries which originally belonged to the Perth Technical College – one of Curtin University's ancestor organisations.<sup>9</sup> These are often notable for their fine line drawings: for example, Gallencamp's *Illustrated Catalogue of Scientific Apparatus & Instruments for Educational Purposes* issued in the late 1920s (JCPML Stacks Q 371.66 GAL). We also have a collection of items from the libraries of the distinguished Asianists Hugh Owen and Harry Benda – particular emphases here respectively are on India and on the economics and politics of the former Netherlands East Indies (present-day Indonesia) before the second world war, including many titles in Dutch and French as well as in English.<sup>10</sup>

We also have a collection focus on early travel writing. We have for example a late nineteenth-century edition of James Cook's journals from his first voyage around the world.

This was the first edition to be based directly on the manuscript journals which were sent back to London periodically through the voyage and was edited by William Wharton, Hydrographer of the Admiralty, in 1893.<sup>11</sup> Other works include John Hunter's account, published in 1792, of the First Fleet landing at Sydney Cove.<sup>12</sup> Hunter was post-captain of the ship *Sirius*, and was responsible for much of the early charting of the bays and coves of the central New South Wales coast. These works have recently been supplemented by other items kindly donated by Professor Mike Daube, including a seventeenth-century natural history of Oxfordshire.<sup>13</sup>

## Maps

As well as early books, we have a significant collection of old maps. The earliest of these is an 1842 map of India, produced by James Wyld, a second-generation mapmaker and official geographer to Queen Victoria (fig. 11). The map shows British civil and military stations, and the administrative districts (collectorates and zillahs) into which the provinces were divided for administrative purposes, and includes a listing of the size and population of the British territories, allies and tributaries as well as the independent states, as well as a table of distances.



*Fig. 11. James Wyld, Map of India, London, 1842. JCPML Map Collection*

We also have early geological, geophysical and topographic maps covering Western Australia and other Australian states and territories. Some of these reflect early exploration activity carried out in the 1800s. Notable is a map created by Harry P. Woodward, the Western Australian government geologist between 1887 and 1895.<sup>14</sup> As part of his work he visited every goldfield in the colony and produced numerous reports and maps. His map highlighting WA goldfields and other mineral deposits as they were known in the 1890s, like Wyld's map of India is dissected and mounted on linen to allow it to be folded and transported. Its full size is 90.4 x 62.3 cm.

Also of note is an early geography textbook by Thomas Keith, published in London in 1799.<sup>15</sup> This contains a fold-out map which shows the newly identified territory of "New Holland", but with Tasmania shown as part of the Australian mainland. The circumnavigation of Tasmania by Matthew Flinders and George Bass had only been completed the previous year.

### **Project Endeavour**

As well as published items, Curtin's special collections also include extensive holdings of original archival material. Project Endeavour documents the solo non-stop triple circumnavigation of the world undertaken by yachtsman Jon Sanders between May 1986 and March 1988 (fig. 12). This was conceived as an Australian Bicentennial Activity, funded by the Parry Corporation, with the aim of drawing attention to the pioneering role of James Cook in ocean navigation, to emulate his achievements in the field of navigation and to complete scientific research which would complement that done by Cook. The project was managed by the Centre for Marine Science and Technology at Curtin. The archives include records of the design work on the vessel used, the *Parry Endeavour*, the log books from the triple circumnavigation, charts and maps from the expedition, sound recordings of whales and other

wildlife recorded during the voyage, correspondence, scrap books and other documentation of the project.



*Fig. 12. Project Endeavour: John Sanders Collection. John Sanders Writing Log, May 1986. CUL00039/7/1*

## **Architecture**

Architecture is another archival focus. At the core of this is a collection representing the architectural practice run by three generations of the Summerhayes family, Edwin, Reginald and Geoffrey Summerhayes, whose buildings are to be found across Perth and Western Australia. The Library has approximately 500 architectural drawings and over 1,500 photographs relating to the firm's design work. Summerhayes buildings include the Subiaco hotel, originally designed in 1896 with a spire and first story verandahs, which are no longer extant (fig. 13).<sup>16</sup> Other, later, Summerhayes buildings from the 1930s include the Crematorium in Karrakatta Cemetery (now demolished) (CUL00112/1/16), the Claremont Municipal Chambers (CUL00112/1/12), designed by Edwin and Reginald Summerhayes, and Lawson Flats, located on the Esplanade in Perth CBD (CUL00112/1/18). This building was designed by Reginald Summerhayes and is believed to have been the first residential block of flats in Perth when it was built in 1937.



*Fig. 13. Hotel Subiaco, 1896 (detail). CUL00111/1/1*

At present most of the architectural drawings are not publicly available online, but we are hoping to be able to digitize them in the near future through the Digitisation Centre of Western Australia.

### **Australian Literature**

As well as good representations of printed Australian adult and children's literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Curtin holds the papers of the late Professor Brian Dibble, who established Australia's first creative writing degree in 1972 as foundation head of English at the Western Australian Institute of Technology. The Dibble papers (JCPML Stacks F 825.1 DIB) include manuscript poems by Australian poets, Dorothy Hewitt, Merv Lilley, Fay Zwicky and Hal Colebatch. Professor Dibble was perhaps best known for his biography of novelist Elizabeth Jolley published in 2008.<sup>17</sup> (Jolley also taught creative writing at Curtin and was awarded an honorary doctorate 1987 (fig. 14)). JCPML hosts the Elizabeth Jolley Research Collection, created by Brian Dibble and Barbara Milech, which is a searchable database documenting Jolley's own publications, adaptations of her works by others in multiple formats, including film and stage versions, interviews with Jolley, and works about her both of a biographical and a literary critical nature.



*Fig. 14. Elizabeth Jolley receiving honorary doctorate from Curtin University, 1987.*

*Photo: Curtin University Archives*

### **Western Australian Folklore**

The Western Australian folklore collection includes the outcomes of student fieldwork projects conducted between 1985 and 2001 through Curtin's Centre for Australian Studies and later through the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage. There are around 170 projects represented covering all aspects of WA folklore including: 'Perth urban legends, graffiti, folklore of pregnancy and childbirth, brothel-lore, folklore of isolated communities, weddings, cemetery lore, droving traditions, kitchen traditions, drinking games, folk medicine, religious lore, folklore of place, superstitions, dancing and migrants'.<sup>18</sup> The WA Folklife Project which ran between 2004 and 2009 as a collaboration between the National Library of Australia, the Australian Folklore Research Unit at Curtin and the Australian Folklore Network has also collected a substantial body of material which is documented through numerous reports, oral histories and photographs.



## Western Australian Topography

As part of the John Curtin archive we hold the papers of several of his associates, including, for example, the state unionist and parliamentarian Alexander McCallum (1877-1937). As Western Australian Minister for Public Works, McCallum travelled extensively through the state, and in 1926 he led an official party through the north-west taking in Meekatharra, Nullagine, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Ord River Station, travelling 600 miles by train, 3,000 by car and 1,300 by boat. This trip is recorded in the diary of McCallum's secretary, W.L. Andrew, and in an album of some 100 photographs illustrating aspects of the trip (fig 15).



*Fig. 15. Alexander McCallum Collection. A Kimberley Camel Train, 1926.*

*JCPML00823/2/72.*

## Australian Politics

Complementary to the John Curtin material, the JCPML also holds collections relating to other Australian political figures. In addition to the photographs noted above the **Alexander McCallum** Collection includes personal papers, correspondence, realia and items from McCallum's personal library. We also hold books from the library of **Paul Hasluck** (1905-1993), journalist, politician and writer, who was elected to the Federal Parliament as the first member for the seat of Curtin (1949-1969), and later became governor-general of Australia

(1969-1974). The political careers of several more recently prominent Western Australians are also represented. We have published and unpublished items and personal effects belonging to **John Dawkins**, federal member for Fremantle from 1977 until his retirement in 1994. Dawkins served as a minister in the Hawke government, notably in Employment, Education and Training (1987-1991), and was Treasurer in the government of Paul Keating, 1991-1993. The **Hazel Hawke** collection mainly relates to Mrs Hawke's activities as wife of Prime Minister Bob Hawke (in office 1983-1991) and reflects her interests in social issues, music and the arts. As well as records relating to her official duties it includes private papers, family photographs and items from her personal library. We hold an extensive collection relating to **Geoff Gallop**, premier of Western Australia 2001-2006, and subsequently professor and director of the Graduate School of Government at the University of Sydney. The collection focusses on his years in the WA parliament, reflecting his interest in Labor Party history, electoral reform and the republican movement. The **Carmen Lawrence** collection documents the activities of the first woman premier of Western Australia (1990-1993).

## **Africa**

The Library's most recent large archival acquisition relates to Africa, specifically to politics and society in East Africa, particularly Kenya, Zambia and Uganda, between 1949 and 2015, and is especially relevant to the topic of African decolonization. The collection was given to us through the will of Professor Cherry Gertzel, a leading Africanist who was a member of staff at Curtin from 1993 until her retirement in 2010. The core of the collection comprises around five metres of hand-written journals containing research notes, records of political meetings and conversations as well as other observations from Prof. Gertzel's numerous trips to Africa, thus providing a unique insight into a period of great change in the countries

concerned. The written material is supplemented by a significant number of photographs, which we are in the processing of digitizing (fig. 16). Work on the archival arrangement of the first part of the collection has been completed and records will be available through our special collections catalogue in the near future.



*Fig 16. Cherry Gertzel Collection. Kaduna River Ferry, Nigeria, 1953.*

*Uncatalogued.*

### **Library Studies**

We have systematically collected items related to the history of Curtin University Library – including pioneering work done in the 1960s and 1970s in the area of library automation. The collection includes printed and unpublished works, photographs, audiovisual resources and artefacts. Our most recent acquisition is the WAIN Email Archive Collection. WAIN (Western Australian Information Network) has been an important forum for all matters relating to the library and information profession in Western Australia from 1994, and the archive, donated by WAIN’s founding moderator, Peter Green, is a major resource for recent library history in the state. This is our first born-digital archival collection and as such presents particular challenges for organization and access, but will provide a model for digital special collection development in the future.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> ‘John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library’, <https://jcpml.curtin.edu.au/> (accessed 29 November 2021); ‘Special Collections’, <https://library.curtin.edu.au/find-resources/special-collections/> (accessed 29 November 2021).
- <sup>2</sup> On the history of JCPML see Karen Tang, ‘JCPML: a History: Looking Back on the Foundation and History of the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library’, <https://jcpml.curtin.edu.au/jcpml-history/> (accessed 18 January 2022).
- <sup>3</sup> On Curtin’s life see David Day, *John Curtin: a Life*, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2000.
- <sup>4</sup> Susan Hart, *Look Ever forward: a History of Curtin University 1987-2012*, Curtin University, Perth, 2014, pp. 117-118.
- <sup>5</sup> John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, ‘Collections’, <https://jcpml.curtin.edu.au/collections/> (accessed 16 January 2022).
- <sup>6</sup> See Toby Davidson, *Good for the Soul: John Curtin’s Life with Poetry*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2021.
- <sup>7</sup> See Helen Dawes, *Catalogue of the Special Collection on Women’s Health in the T.L Robertson Library*, Curtin University of Technology, The Library, Bentley, 1989.
- <sup>8</sup> University of Birmingham, ‘Henry Havelock Ellis Collection’, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/rarebooks/havelockellis.aspx> (accessed 29 December 2021).
- <sup>9</sup> On the early history of Curtin University Library and its predecessors, see Haydn S, Williams, ‘In the Beginning’, in G.G. Allen and I. Zoll (eds), *Coming of Age in Librarianship: A Festschrift for the 21st Birthday of WAIT Library*, The Library, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, 1990, pp. 13-26; T.E. Oakley, ‘Twelve Years Before WAIT Library: Practically an Autobiography’, *ibid.*, pp. 37-45; G.G. Allen, ‘A Brief History of the WAIT Library’, *ibid.*, pp. 47-66.
- <sup>10</sup> On Benda, see Ruth T. McVey, ‘Harry J. Benda’, *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1972, pp. 589-590.
- <sup>11</sup> W.J.L Wharton (ed.), *Captain Cook’s Journal during his First Voyage round the World Made in H.M. Bark ‘Endeavour’ 1768-71: a Literal Transcription of the Original MSS.*, Elliot Stock, London, 1893. JCPML Stacks 910.92 COO.
- <sup>12</sup> John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, with the Discoveries which Have Been Made in New South Wales and in the Southern Ocean*, John Stockdale, London, 1792. JCPML Stacks 994.4 HUN.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Oxford-shire, Being an Essay toward the Natural History of England*, Oxford, 1677. JCPML Stacks F 508.4257 POL.

<sup>14</sup> Harry P. Woodward, *Geological Sketch Map of Western Australia*, W.H. Barker & Co., London, 1894. JCPML Map Collection.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Keith, *A Short and Easy Introduction to the Science of Geography*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, London, 1799. JCPML Stacks 910 KEI.

<sup>16</sup> The drawing is by Henry Trigg. Edwin and Reg Summerhayes both worked on later alterations to the hotel.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Dibble, *Doing Life: a Biography of Elizabeth Jolley*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Curtin University Library, 'About the Western Australian Folklore Archive', <http://john.curtin.edu.au/folklore/about.html> (accessed 16 January 2022).