CREATIVE ACTIVATION OF THE PAST: MECHANICS' INSTITUTES, GLAM, HERITAGE, AND CREATIVITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This is an interdisciplinary, mixed-method thesis that explores contemporary curation as a means to creatively activate heritage collections and places. The central case study is Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute (BMI), in Ballarat, Australia, where practice and action-led research was undertaken by the curator over the three-year period 2016–2019. Creative connections between five interlinked areas are critically examined: heritage; curatorial practice, by which heritage sites, collections and experiences are managed; historic cultural organisations; their city contexts; and the ways in which such cultural work is valued. The framework for analysis encompasses museology, critical heritage, and approaches to cultural value.

Contemporary urban Mechanics' Institutes (MIs) are placed in the museum context both through historic parallels and their contemporary positioning in the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) industry sector. This is in order to ask how heritage collections, and the organisations that house and present them, can creatively connect with the publics they serve with greater connectivity and relevance. Exhibitions and events held at BMI within Ballarat city are treated as case studies. Together with qualitative interviews with staff in the Ballarat GLAM sector and urban MIs, insights derived illuminate the role and challenges of such cultural organisations in the twenty-first century.

It is argued that, when employing the practice and energy of the curator, creative activations have the potential to open new points of entry to, and provide alternative perspectives upon, heritage places and collections. This is achieved through arts practice, organisational thinking, and bringing to life the links between past, present and future. In this process, new and dynamic measures of value can be explored and create dialogic encounters between people, heritage and ideas.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except when explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and the bibliography of the thesis.

Signed

Amy Tsilemanis

ETHICS APPROVAL

Approval
Human Research Ethics Committee

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Please note: Ethics Approval is contingent upon the submission to the Ethics office of annual progress reports on the anniversary of the approval date and a final report within a month of completion of the project. It is the responsibility of researchers to make a note of these dates and submit reports in a timely manner as per the Standard Conditions of Approval listed on page 2.

COMMENT: The Committee suggested the inclusion in the Plain Language Information Statement of the age requirements for participants contacting Headspace.

COMPLIANCE REPORTS TO HREC:

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Fiona Koop
Ethics Officer
15 June 2017

Please note the standard conditions of approval on Page 2:

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For all those who see the value in heart, ideas and creativity, and for those who might not know if they understand but show up anyway. In loving memory of Victor Tsilemanis.

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[1] Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat, "Make Your Own History at the BMI Ballarat," http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/news/BMI.php.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BMI	Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute
MI	Mechanics' Institute
GLAM	Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums
HUL	Historic Urban Landscape
CoB	City of Ballarat
RMT	Reinventing the Museum tool
ICOM	International Council of Museums
AGB	Art Gallery of Ballarat
SHMA	Sovereign Hill Museums Association
MADE	Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka
SMSA	Sydney Mechanics' School of Art
PMI	Prahran Mechanics' Institute
BIFB	Ballarat International Foto Biennale
MIV	Mechanics' Institutes Victoria

Introduction

> Thinking of heritage as a creative engagement with the past in the present focusses our attention on our ability to take an active and informed role in the production of our own future.
>
> -Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*

This thesis explores my three years as curator at the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute (BMI) in Ballarat, Australia in 2016–2019.[1] It investigates the ways in which creative connections can be made between five interlinked areas: heritage; curatorial practice, by which heritage sites, collections and experiences are managed; historic cultural organisations, where this management occurs; their city contexts; and the ways in which such cultural work is valued. Exhibitions and events held at BMI during the curatorial period will be treated as case studies in the exploration of these connections. The insights derived through case studies and qualitative interviews will illuminate the role and challenges of the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) sector and its relationship to contemporary urban Mechanics' Institutes (MIs).

Figure 0.1: AVAT01 BMI building exterior, a still from 2016 promotional film Make Your Own History at the BMI produced by Yum Studio[2]

For the purposes of this thesis heritage refers to collections and materials from the past (tangible, intangible, and their overlap) as they are experienced in the present. Curatorial

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[1] The double aa spelling is the original city name Ballaarat, derived from two Indigenous Wadawurrung words 'Balla' and 'Arat'; meaning resting place or bended elbow. See William Bramwell Withers, *History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences*, ed. Services Ballarat Heritage. Ballarat, Vic.: Ballarat Heritage Services, 1999. 10

[2] Multimedia Link 0: "Make Your Own History at the BMI Ballarat," Historic Urban Landscape, Ballarat, accessed 25th May, 2020, http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/news/BMI.php

practice describes the work done in GLAM cultural organisations to tell stories of the past via collections and programming, and includes creative collaboration with artists and communities. The history and operating structures of organisations responsible for such collections and their curating has a direct bearing upon their function today and their relationship with local stakeholder networks. Finally, questions of value relate to the balancing of social, economic and cultural outcomes and the implications of intrinsic, instrumental and institutional worth.[3]

The key problems that this thesis addresses are a lack of relevance, diversity, creativity and institutional innovation in some areas of GLAM and MI operations, along with a problematic focus on economic value within the creative and museology sectors. As a result, the central research question in this study is how can heritage collections, and the organisations that house and present them, creatively connect with the publics they serve more effectively? This encompasses study of creative activation in three aspects. These are: openness to organisational thinking that is adaptable and dynamic; engagement with artistic forms such as visual, aural and performative; and finally, the conceptualisation of what it is that heritage collections might do in creatively linking past, present and future. The research accepts and builds upon Rodney Harrison's notion of "heritage as [being] inherently dialogical", and its potential future linked to the imperative to become "more open, diverse, inclusive, representative, and creative".[4] Sub-questions that extend from this are: what value does creative activation work produce beyond the economic? and what is the organisational capacity for change towards these more open and inclusive ends? The concepts of a traditional museum and reinvented museum model are used to discuss potential shifts (outlined further in the theoretical framework below) and are trialed through practice. The impacts of historical legacies that feed contemporary challenges are considered in the context of organisational articulation of purpose and value, succession planning, public profile, and an ability to adapt and enable new leadership and ideas that engage with city contexts and broader museological and cultural shifts.

This thesis argues that by creating an interdisciplinary framework across critical heritage, museology, cities, and value, the capacity for creative activation work and its supporting organisational structures can be fruitfully tested and assessed. It will be argued that through the practice and energy of the curator, activations have the potential to open new points of entry to, and alternative perspectives upon, heritage places and collections. In this process, new and

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[3] John Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy," (London: Demos, 2006). 15.

[4] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013). 230.

dynamic measures of value can be explored. These centre upon the nuances of cultural value, a concept that goes beyond utility and function and that is engaged in dialogic encounters between people, heritage and ideas.

The role of the curator is at the heart of creating these dialogic and relational links. The curator, in this sense, acts as connector between collections and audiences for example, through projects that work with artists and other participants with differing models. This work can shift focus from the tangible heritage of buildings and collection items (conventional heritage practice that focuses on physical fabric, "especially the exterior fabric and appearance of historic buildings",[5] Figure 1.2) to forms of meaning-making that creativity and artistic practice are uniquely placed to facilitate. Here heritage material culture can be re-organised and presented in exhibitions to achieve different meanings and affective experiences.[6] These go beyond traditional historical narratives, and take into account the negotiations and multiplicity involved in heritage production and experience.[7] As a result, the double aims of organisational sustainability, as well as connectivity and relevance in their relation to various publics, might be reached in the bringing together of creatively activated heritage in unique and critical ways.

This introduction now turns to the origins of the project, its theoretical framework and methodology, leading into the literature review chapter that follows.

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[5] Steven Cooke, Kristal Buckley, and Susan Fayad, "Using the Historic Urban Landscape to Reimagine Ballarat: The Local Context," in *Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability: International Frameworks, National and Local Governance*, ed. Sophia Labadi and Logan William (Abington, England: Routledge, 2016). 106.

[6] See exhibition examples in Andrea Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28, no. 3 (2013). 255–71.

[7] Laurajane Smith, "The 'Doing' of Heritage: Heritage as Performance," in *Performing Heritage: Reserach, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation*, ed. Anthony Jackson Jenny Kidd (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011). 71.

Origins of the Project

Figure 0.2: AVAT02 Amy Tsilemanis out the front of the BMI during *Talking Shop*, 2019

In 2015, I was working as an artist and creative producer in Ballarat, and began to volunteer at the BMI. I was inspired by the Institute's history, and its potential as a key part of the city's cultural life. Its unique position as an almost 160-year-old cultural hub intrigued me: an independently-run organisation built on ideals of knowledge for all, and its contemporary form containing aspects of library, museum, archives, and event space. Through this volunteer work, I met the Haymes family—local business owners and philanthropists—who had contributed to the BMI over past decades as volunteer board and committee members, and as financial supporters. The opportunity arose for the family to purchase the "Max Harris Photography Collection", a large selection of negatives, prints, and digital images of Ballarat in the 1860s–1960s. The collection had been assembled by Ballarat collector and photographer Max Harris over the previous forty years.

Through discussions with Frank Hurley (current BMI patron and past president), the Haymes Family Foundation made the decision to purchase the collection and gift it to the BMI. In addition, the Foundation provided funds to finance a part-time curatorial position, undertaken in tandem with this doctoral study. Their hope was that the addition of the gift to the already significant heritage collection and building would act as a drawcard, and that the curatorial role would invite new activity and greater engagement with the Institute, enabling ongoing viability.

This PhD was undertaken in Federation University's Arts Academy and the Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History. It allowed me to address the problems that this thesis investigates of relevance, diversity and creative engagement on a highly practical and specific level, whilst researching and analysing how these issues were also playing out on a broader level in the GLAM sector. Specific issues at the BMI during this early stage included the need for renewed connections between the organisation and its heritage assets, as well as with the city and its various publics. The curatorial role was seen as important to this process. Challenges included an aging demographics, limited public profile and access, and as would emerge, leadership and strategy challenges that had their origins in the institute's history (for example exclusivity, access, internal communications/morale and risk-adversity).

The 2016 curatorial role description, written by Hurley, read as follows:

> The BMI as an organisation, its buildings, collections of print materials, artefacts and archives and its stories are significant community assets. Restoration of the buildings over the past 12 years has been widely acclaimed. Restoration has enabled multiple use of BMI spaces. This has greatly enhanced public access to and awareness of the BMI. Public accessibility to the Heritage Reading Room (former Old Mining Exchange) and to the non-building assets—the heritage listed print collections, artefacts, archives and stories of the BMI and, through these, to wider stories and interpretations of life and past times in Ballarat—remains limited. The purpose of this position is to develop and promote modes of public access to these assets. It will involve both research into the collections and stories of the BMI and development of presentations of research outcomes in publicly accessible displays, performance and digital media platforms. Creation of this part-time position at this time is made possible through funding provided by a private benefactor.[8]

A curatorial role had never existed in this form before. I was invited to take on this role, building on similar work I had done on creative heritage projects for the annual CoB event, Ballarat Heritage Weekend, and with the Ballarat HUL's online portal.[9] Ballarat was an ideal testing ground for the bringing together of innovative heritage and creative practice, having signed on in 2013 as the first pilot city for UNESCO's HUL approach. This is a human-values-centered approach to change in historic cities, appreciating them as "integrating natural and manmade elements in an historical continuum, representing a layering of expressions throughout history".[10] Ballarat has worked to build various

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[8] BMI Curator role description 2016.

[9] "HUL Ballarat Web Portal".

[10] Francesco Bandarin and Ron van Oers, *The Historic Urban Landscape Managing Heritage in an Urban Century* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2012). 72.

collaborative tools in the search for "creative and innovative solutions to enable sustainable and equitable change"[11] in the city. BMI, as part of this moment in the city's development, was simultaneously reckoning with its own relevance and potential.

Figure 0.3: AVAT03 The Miner February 2016 'Haymes family turn to philanthropy'

Frank Hurley, in a paper for the 2004 Worldwide Mechanics' Institutes conference, stated:

> Recognition of the value, economic and psychic, of Australia's cultural heritage of buildings and stories is relatively new. The case for restoring the BMI and making accessible its 19th century collection of newspapers, journals and books would have been unmarketable until the last ten years or so. Now their time has come.[12]

This extensive restoration was funded through local and state government and philanthropic sources. Twelve years later, I began building on work done by a passionate team of volunteers on the BMI restoration and their care for the heritage collections (see articles in Figure 0.4 capturing the case for restoration as the soul of Ballarat and city's best kept

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[11] "HUL Ballarat Web Portal"

[12] Frank Hurley, "Useful Survival: Reflections on a Mechanics' Institute in the 21st Century," in *Buildings, Books and Beyond: Mechanics' Institutes Worldwide Conference* (Prahran Mechanics' Institute Press, Prahran, 2004). 223.

secret). This involved the added momentum from the Haymes' gifts of the photographic collection and curatorial appointment.

Figure 0.4 Collection of articles, late 1990s and early 2000s prior to restoration work. (BMI collection)

At the same time, opportunity could be seen in the heightened interest in heritage, that Hurley alludes to, and the growing importance of critical perspectives on this. Melbourne Athenaeum business manager, Sue Westwood, has noted that in "growing urban density and the quest for authentic experience…people are constantly looking for community in the broadest social sense".[13] In a growing city this is important, and not only in metropolitan but also within regional places such as Ballarat— a city whose mid-nineteenth century gold-rush era heritage and contemporary creative status provides fertile ground for this research. This potential was backed by industry funding for the research project from the local not-for-profit organisations, the Ballarat Arts Foundation and Sovereign Hill. They could see the value of investigating the link between creativity and heritage as part of the city ecology of GLAM organisations, council, artists, tourists and other players. Investment from Federation University also reflects acknowledgement of practice-led research in its contribution to Australia's "growing creative industries and innovation ecology".[14] Robin Nelson noted two 2009 government reports "highlighting that artists in the academy are part of a larger vision for a more educated and creative nation".[15] The way that creative and heritage work is valued within changing policy contexts will be discussed in later chapters, but the shared interest

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[13] Sue Westwood, "Beneficient Neutrality: The Cultural Common Ground at Melbourne's Athenaeum" (paper presented at the International Conference of Independent Libraries & Mechanics' Institutes. Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century, San Francisco, 2016). Note that 'Schools of Art' and 'Athenaeums' were alternative names for Mechanics' Institutes.

[14] Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts : Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). 138.

[15] Ibid.

in linking theory and practice across the various methodologies and theoretical fields of this study is significant.

The first year of the study involved the practice-led production of a BMI Open Day and three-day *Spring Celebrations* event, produced as part of the launch of the Max Harris Photography Collection at the BMI. The event showcased some of the possibilities of the new curator role, and renewal of the organisation, in response to the research problems. This message of renewal was seeded in the promotional material reproduced below (Figures 0.5 & 0.6). The *Spring Celebrations* event included exhibitions: 'In the Picture' featuring 1960s images linked with contemporary local photography from the social media account @theballaratlife; an associated street photography workshop (supported by a CoB Community Impact grant)[16]; and the 'At the Pictures' exhibition and programming around the BMI's cinematic history. As part of this, the BMI commissioned Ballarat filmmaker Erin McCuskey (an in-kind exchange) to produce a new work titled *Silver Rememberings*[17] using archival footage with an associated screening event. These various components of the *Spring Celebrations* led to improved community engagement and development of stakeholder involvement,—an example of which was the partnership formed with the Regent Cinema who promoted the event.[18] (Watch Multimedia Link 0 to gain a sense of the BMI at this time.[19])

The curator/researcher approach deployed throughout the project was to work closely with the staff and volunteers, not imposing from above but working alongside. This involved introducing new ideas and skills around creative practice as well as new ways of working with the heritage collections and buildings. It also involved close listening to the existing frustrations that existed around poor links between the day-to-day activity on the ground and the BMI board. It was evident that building up internal capacity was key to ongoing sustainability. This was factored into the projects that trialled creative activation across the three levels of arts practice, organisational thinking, and what heritage can achieve in building on and challenging the legacies of the historic cultural organisation (discussed further in chapter two).

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[16] Multimedia Link 1: AVAT754 Aldona Kmiec Street Photography Workshop September 2016, participant images shown at BMI Open Day (funded by CoB community impact grant). Available in BMI archive.

[17] Multimedia Link 2: AVAT753 Erin McCuskey, Yum Studio: *Silver Rememberings* film 2016. Available in BMI archive and at http://yumstudio.com.au/portfolio/silver-rememberings/.

[18] Multimedia Link 3: AVAT755 Erin McCuskey, Yum Studio Spring Celebrations promotional ad for Regent Cinema. Available in BMI archive or at https://vimeo.com/180137277.

[19] Multimedia Link 0: "Make Your Own History at the BMI Ballarat," Historic Urban Landscape, Ballarat, accessed 25th May, 2020, http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/news/BMI.php

Figures 0.5 & 0.6: Promotional postcard, *Spring Celebrations* 2016

This event initiated the practice-led study into creative activation that was facilitated by the work of the curator. In a 2016 interview recorded for the BMI Open Day, Max Harris[20] spoke of how his love of photography grew from training as a photographer in the RAF and as a photographer in Ballarat that led to the development of his collection of approximately 3000 historic Ballarat images. As part of the launch of the photography collection being permanently housed at the BMI, Harris discussed his contemporary recreation of 1870s Ballarat city panoramas to show the then and now appearances of different central city views. These then and now panoramas were displayed at the Open Day and became a central and popular part of the exhibition space in the BMI library throughout the period of the curatorship. Harris also created a piece—Through Minerva's Eyes—using drone technology that showed the view from the top of the BMI building looking out over the street pictured alongside historical images of the same streetscape. (Figure 0.7)

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[20] Multimedia Link 4: AVAT752 Max Harris discusses the photography collection for Open Day 2016. Available at figshare link- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.
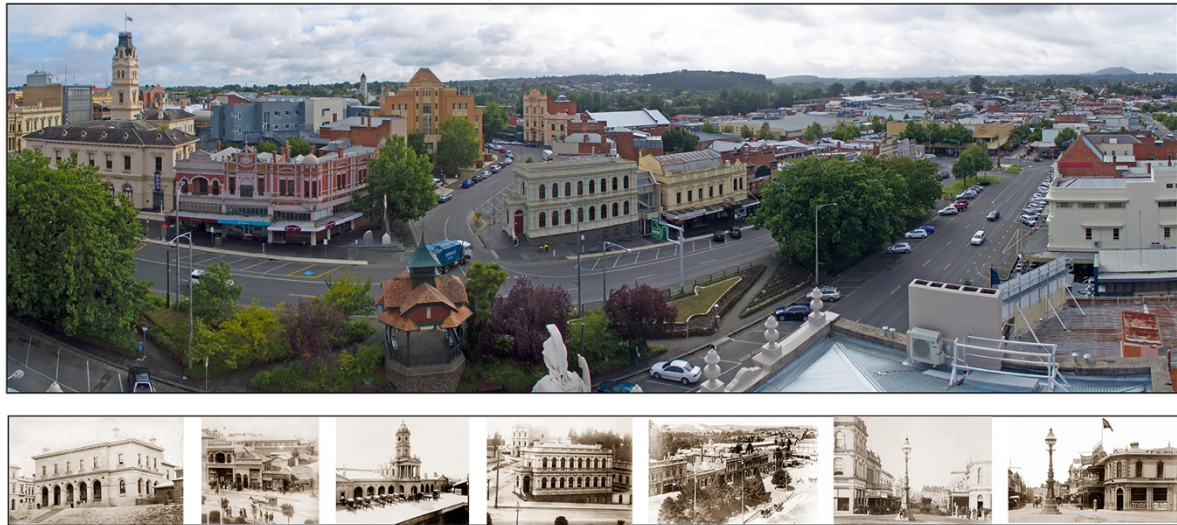
Figure 0.7: AV18 Panorama Through Minerva's Eyes 2016 (created Max Harris)

These projects offer a kind of creative activation, albeit a more traditional museological approach, that use contemporary technologies to contrast the city of then with now. They invite people in, using their personal connections, to contemplate changes. This invitation to focus on what has gone before is helpful in the HUL approach of managing change, as well as connecting past, present and future in people's minds. Here Harrison's "thinking of heritage as a creative engagement with the past in the present"[21] allows focus on how this might also come to influence the future. This involves the activation of creative thinking within organisations as well as fostering connections between various public groups within a city ecology, including artists, historians, community participants, visitors, and businesses. The role that links these in this research is that of the curator, who brings the specific collection knowledge of the traditional museum along with the facilitatory role of, what will be discussed further in the literature review, the reinvented museum model.

At the BMI, the Max Harris Photography Collection was used as a springboard to new creative works and perspectives. Art forms such as film, music, theatre, and installation were used. This built on Witcomb's ideas of heritage and affect, which focus on the relational experience with and between audiences and institutions, producing "affective rather than cognitive knowledge".[22] It is argued here that this approach facilitates the revitalisation of historical organisations, while also responding to cultural calls for greater diversity and inclusivity across

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[21] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 229.

[22] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 260.

the fields of art, heritage and GLAM. These are captured in Harrison's call for dialogical heritage, and in the reinvented museum shift toward multiple viewpoints, civic engagement, broad representation, and operation with values of shared leadership and inclusiveness.[23]

As the curatorial work progressed, I became increasingly aware of the link between operational structure and capacity, and the creative activation projects I sought to explore. More specifically, it became clear that this link involved dimensions of the BMI organisational structure whose effects I had not fully anticipated. Issues of personality, politics, different understandings of heritage, and of attitudes to change all came into play. In response to these issues, it became necessary to expand the scope and methodology of the doctoral project into action research, whereby my dual roles of curator and researcher, working towards active change, could be better supported. This led the research and practice rationale of collaboratively trialing and assessing solutions to the problems of greater connectivity with various publics and moving the organisation towards greater inclusivity and relevance. While some progress was made, the challenges of this process were marked by inexperience from both sides, and from the nature of insider action research being what Coghlan and Tulloch have described as inherently political and consequently may be considered subversive.

The curator role itself, being new and unfamiliar, raised both enthusiasm and confusion at times with long-time staff, volunteers (including the board) and BMI members. In my role as curator I initially worked directly with board members causing communication difficulties that were largely addressed by the introduction of an executive manager in 2018. This management role provided the link between the various parts of the organisation and showed greater understanding of my practice and action-led PhD project. As Graeme Sullivan states: "facing the unknown and disrupting the known is precisely what artist-researchers achieve".[24] The challenges of seeking to realise change from within using both practice-led research and action research are discussed in the case study chapters and extensively in chapter seven and produced new knowledge in bringing together these threads of creative activation and organisational cultures.

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[23] Gail Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2012). 3–4.

[24] Graeme Sullivan, "Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-Led Research," in *Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*, ed. Hazel Smith (Edinburgh University Press, 2009). 62.

In the second year of the evolving project, a BMI board member suggested I create a diagram to demonstrate the full reach of my multi-functional role. Figure 0.8 sets out, in simplified form, its interconnected elements and its use of multiple methodologies. These elements are discussed in more detail in the methodology section to follow.

AMY TSILEMANIS ROLE: CURATOR/RESEARCHER 2016-2019

Federation University Researcher

F/T PhD @ FedUni at the Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History (CRCAH) and the Arts Academy University Scholarship (with added contribution from Ballarat Arts Foundation)

Creative Activation of the Past: Arts, heritage and engagement in cultural institutes and their regional contexts

Taking BMI as a key case study, how can historic places and collections be creatively activated as a means for connection and contemporary relevance in their regional contexts?

BMI Curator

10hrs per week **Funded by Haymes Family, administered through CRCAH as a Research Associate on 12 month contracts**

Working with BMI collection including establishing the Max Harris Collection at the BMI.

Practice Led Research: Curatorial projects at the BMI, exhibitions and events (research and public programming activating the BMI and collections) CASE STUDIES

Action Research: The Curatorial role as part of organisational structure and change: 'GENERATING DATA' through active learning; CURATING OBSERVING JOURNALLING COLLABORATING TRIALLING

Figure 0.8: 2017 Diagram of the structure of the curatorial and research role

As the PhD project evolved, it became clear that placing BMI in the broader GLAM conversation would be a fruitful way to explore aspects of how heritage collections and buildings can be reframed through creative means, and to investigate their role as part of broader cultural networks. Drawing the link between the future of MIs with that of museums and GLAM was also inspired by, and indicative of thinking in this direction, by papers presented at the 2016 Mechanics' Institutes and Independent Libraries conference in San Francisco.[25] Nina Simon, the keynote speaker, discussed her recently published

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[25] "Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century. International Conference of Independent Libraries & Mechanics' Institutes", (San Francisco, 2016).

book, *The Art of Relevance*, which drew on case studies from her experience working in museums, and specifically talked about the renewal of connection with communities. Her central argument is that relevance must be approached as a key that unlocks meaning and for that to succeed it needs to be more than a door of welcome, momentarily opened.[26]

Study of the BMI is situated in this museological context (even though the Institute is not a formally accredited museum[27]), given its similar housing of heritage collections and engagement in research and interpretation. The study became not just about exploration of Ballarat's past through what Hurley calls the BMI's community assets, but opened the potential to explore the various ways that heritage collections and places can be brought to life and analysed as a path to the future, within a critical heritage framework. The assets provide launching pads for creativity, reinterpretation, and the establishment of new connections and resonances through time. BMI's acquisition of the Max Harris Photography Collection and the employment of a part-time curator was the catalyst for this research. The theoretical framework for the eventual form of this study is detailed in the next section.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis draws on the work of key theorists and practitioners across the various fields of: heritage (Harrison[28], Smith[29]); museology (Witcomb[30], Simon[31], Kidd[32], Anderson[33] Barrett[34]); cities (Banderin and van Oers[35]); and cultural value (Holden[36], O'Connor[37],

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[26] Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance*, (Santa Cruz, California: Museum 2.0, 2016).

[27] This process is done in Victoria via the Museum Accreditation Program https://amagavic.org.au/museum_accreditation_program The associated Victorian Museum Awards are held annually to "highlight outstanding achievements in the Victorian museum, gallery, and collecting sector. This special event raises awareness of museums as effective vehicles for engagement with ideas and communities, rewards and encourages best practice by individuals and organisations, and recognises the value of museums within the community".

[28] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*.

[29] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

[30] Andrea Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003).

[31] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*.

[32] Jenny Kidd, "Introduction: Challenging History in the Museum," in *Challenging History in the Museum: International Perspectives*, ed. Sam Cairns Jenny Kidd et al. (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

[33] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum*.

[34] Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (Chichester Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[35] Bandarin and van Oers, *The Historic Urban Landscape Managing Heritage in an Urban Century*.

[36] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy".

[37] Justin O'Connor, *After the Creative Industries*, Platform Papers (NSW: Currency House, 2016).

Meyrick et al[38]). While appreciating the different focuses and histories of these distinct fields, the thesis privileges their common threads: that their respective fields of interest are evolving and dynamic; that the value and meaning of their activities are cultural constructs; and that they share an interest in interdisciplinary projects that bring together theory and practice. Changes in museological practice are central to the study and the project's framework draws on Anderson's work in *Reinventing the Museum* where the aims of "repositioning in communities, forming alliances, shifting to a collaborative spirit and greater public service mission" are seen as fundamental.[39] Witcomb and Buckley's correlation between museology and heritage is also central, citing common issues and stressing the importance of "case studies that place these issues within international, cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary contexts".[40]

The common issues that they identify are listed below:

- commitment to plurality of stakeholders and a recognition of power relations between them

- recognition of the constructed nature of heritage and therefore the politics of representation

- interest in the democratisation of heritage production and access to its products in ways that foster true forms of collaboration and recognition of human rights

- appreciation of the importance of valuing the intangible and material aspects of cultural spaces, developing new methodologies for the documentation and interpretation of new types of material, especially around memory, feelings, traditions, and the social value of place and social interactions

- awareness that developing these sensitivities also implies a questioning of received traditions, particularly of western forms of knowledge production[41]

As a way to conceptualise these issues and their inter-relationships, the idea of ecology, with its interconnected and inter-dependent systems, cross-fertilisation and processes of layered and evolving change, provides a rich metaphor and framework for this practice-led, critically engaged and community-embedded project in a number of ways. There is, firstly, the structure of the PhD study itself, as it reaches across disciplines and seeks to integrate a variety of methodological tools. Writing on a "new breed of creative academics" in 2007, Graeme

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[38] Julian Meyrick, Robert Phiddian, Tully Barnett, *What Matters?: Talking Value in Australian Culture* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2018).

[39] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum.* 9.

[40] Andrea Witcomb and Kristal Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies': Looking Back in Order to Look Forward," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19, no. 6 (2013). 575.

[41] Ibid.

Sullivan has described such practice-led work as "opening up ideas to allow us to look in new ways at art, culture, history and research, among other things".[42] Similarly, via the mixture of practice and theory the research focus here is concerned with the interplay of collections, places, people, and ideas—and how these interrelations open up important links between past, present and future—all within the ecological context of mutual dependence.

Secondly, the metaphor is useful in that it has been effective in contemporary concepts and debates around cities, culture, heritage, and value—and the resulting issues of sustainability— across environmental, organisational, and cultural areas of practice. Holden has written specifically on the idea of cultural ecologies, reflecting this interrelationship between varying kinds of value and the various players within cultural systems. He states that:

> the use of ecological metaphors, such as regeneration, symbiosis, fragility, positive and negative feedback loops, and mutual dependence creates a rich way of discussing culture. Different perspectives then emerge, helping to develop new taxonomies, new visualisations, and fresh ways of thinking about how culture operates.[43]

This ecological framework neatly encompasses Harrison's dialogic heritage model as an interconnected web of people and things and their relationships to each other and to the world, where heritage is seen as "emerging out of the relationship between past and present as a reflection on the future".[44] Also of significance is UNESCO's 2011 definition of the HUL as "the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of 'historic centre' or 'ensemble' to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting".[45] As Foley summarises: "This recommendation emphasised that a historic city is not a freeze-frame of the past, but a living, evolving landscape that has constantly added new layers, and continues to do so".[46] What is being investigated in this study, then, may be seen to exist in a living ecology, wherein the language and assumptions of the ecologist can provide a useful and suggestive perspective to describe a living and interdependent system. The five interconnected areas of this research: heritage, curation,

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[42] Sullivan, "Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-Led Research".

[43] John Holden, *The Ecology of Culture: A Report Comissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Cultural Value Project*. (UK: Arts and Humanities Research Council). 2.

[44] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 228.

[45] Anna Foley, "The Historic Urban Landscape: A Gardener's Perspective," *Australian Garden History* 26, no. 4 (2015). 25.

[46] Ibid.

cultural organisations, cities, and value, are elaborated below in relation to this multi-layered ecological thinking.

Heritage

Cities and places contain built heritage, natural heritage, and intangible cultural practices, together with layers that are continually evolving; they encompass interconnection between the tangible and intangible, the natural and cultural, and include extensive arcs of overlap. Harrison sees these as being in dialogue, even while being at times presented as an "artificial divide".[47] Cultural organisations are ideal for the study of this overlap and layering of tangible buildings and collections and what can be done in creatively connecting them with various stakeholders.

Curation

Similarly, the use of collections and archives in creative ways involves reassembling and renegotiating material from the past, where engagement with collections in "radical or novel ways with the hope of reanimating holdings"[48] becomes a major objective. This process is explored through practice and case studies in this thesis.

Organisations

System networks in organisations where the dynamics involved in action research incorporate "the systematic relationship between individual and team, the team with other teams, the organisation with its environment and each with each other...and [which] can enable or hinder successful management of the change process"[49] are investigated through action research at the BMI.

Cities

In the city heritage ecosystem, the urban landscape of the HUL approach is made up of built forms, natural features and people (or as Harrison frames it: human and non-human actors[50]) where, as in ecological systems, "change is the only constant".[51] Foley uses the ecological

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[47] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 204.

[48] Anna Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin, eds., *Fantasies of the Library* (MIT Press, 2016). 9.

[49] David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, Fourth edition. (London: SAGE, 2014). 99.

[50] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 35.

[51] Foley, "The Historic Urban Landscape: A Gardeners Perspective". 26.

metaphor to describe the HUL approach to gardening, where "ecosystem resilience is improved by biodiversity. Therefore, it follows that we can improve the resilience of a historic city by diversifying the number of people who have a personal connection to that place".[52] This notion of city ecology can be viewed alongside increasing urban populations together with Rainey Tisdale's work on city museums that expresses a similar contemporary context where residents "truly care about the place where they live … and they learn through this lens".[53] The ecological drivers of the city in relation to heritage, and arts and culture, lie in its meld of various stakeholders and collaborators that includes government, cultural organisations, artists, residents, visitors, and so on, each involved in the production of cultural value and city identity. The city ecology thus provides the context for this thesis study.

Value

Holden has stated, with regard to cultural value, that "ecologies are dynamic, productive and complex; treating culture as an ecology and not just as an economy opens up all sorts of new ways of describing and understanding what is going on".[54] Subsequently, this thesis draws on the interconnected relationships between the public, cultural professionals, and policy makers, as discussed by Holden.[55] It also takes into consideration the links between the various kinds of value or capital—social, cultural, economic—and Holden's triangle of value, which is constituted of intrinsic, instrumental and institutional aspects.[56] These are detailed further in the literature review.

Through the application of an ecological perspective across the various fields of study, the importance of relationships and new ways of assembling and experiencing heritage and creativity and the resultant value will be explored in depth. The interconnected elements of the project's methodology are discussed below.

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[52] Ibid. 27.

[53] Rainey Tisdale, "City Museums and Urban Learning," *Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 1 (2013). 4.

[54] Holden, *The Ecology of Culture: A Report Comissioned by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Cultural Value Project*. 2.

[55] "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy". 21.

[56] Ibid.

Methodology

The mixed-method, reflexive approach used in this study combines practical experience and qualitative data. The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with peers, using a "series of predetermined but open-ended questions…useful in research questions where the concepts and relationships among them are relatively well understood".[57] Practical experience here involved practice-led research activated through creative projects. It incorporated insider action research, through curatorial work, and collaboration with the BMI organisation and board. The combination brings a uniquely located perspective to the research through the combined roles of researcher, curator, artist, and citizen.

Practice-led research was based upon curatorial case studies, and insider action research used data generated through journaling, observation, and the experience and enactment of change as an employee (curator) working within the organisation. These approaches resulted in the creation of an archive documenting the process (imagery, multimedia, reports) with the archive itself thus becoming further data. None of these various methodological tools is discrete: that is, process and product inform one another, as will be reflected in the discussion of results.

Barbara Bolt asks students who undertake practice-led projects to consider how a project's conceptual framework impacts on the methodological framework adopted in the research.[58] This "multi-mode research inquiry where knowledge is a matter of doing"[59] is congruent with the theoretical frame in that they share the nature of being emergent, generative, reflexive, interdisciplinary and interested in "strengthening the relationship between theory and practice".[60] Robin Nelson, discusses the related practice as research (PAR) in the Creative Arts and describes the convergence of theory and practice as an "interactive, dialogic engagement of doing-thinking".[61] The implications of this doing-thinking approach for the research undertaken here is detailed below; at this point, however, one strategy in particular should be mentioned. An attempt has been made in the writing up of this study to give a distinct voice to the practitioner/curator when such personal experience is the subject of discussion.

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[57] Lisa M. Given, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, Qualitative Research Methods (Los Angeles, Calif, London: SAGE, 2008). 811.

[58] Barbara Dr Bolt, "A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts?," *Working Papers in Art and Design 5* (2008).

[59] Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. 5.

[60] William Logan, Máiréad Nic Craith, and Ullrich Kockel, eds. *A Companion to Heritage Studies* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016). 2.

[61] Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. 9.

The first-person singular pronoun 'I', for example, is reserved for those occasions. It appears, for example, in the Origins of the Project section above. Journaling data is also delineated in boxes and presented in figures as data. These stylistic modes are a means by which constant self- monitoring of the researcher's attitude to the data can be measured.

Practice-led research and action research, as relatively recent methodological approaches, require some further discussion, particularly when delivered within a complex interdisciplinary context as they are here. Barrett and Bolt note that "practice-led research is a new species of research, generative inquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research".[62] This approach, as a methodology distinct from qualitative research practice, has been distinguished by Haseman and Mafe (in Nelson) as performative research that involves "alternative forms of reporting research, outside of traditional research paradigms of quantitative (numbers) and qualitative (words)".[63] This PhD uses practice-led methods through the creative practice done via curatorial work. Combined with action learning from inside an organisation, these processes have then been captured in an archive using the various forms of visual, aural, and text-based documentation and reflection, also used as data in this thesis (discussed further below).

This approach, outside of the traditional research paradigm, opens new possibilities for research. Sullivan discusses practice-led research in relation to a relevant 2007 exhibition, *New Adventures of Mark Twain: Coalopolis to Metropolis,* in which Australian artists created works in response to the archived letters of Mark Twain. This exhibition was shown in Australia and New York and Sullivan describes the outcome of such work—whereby artworks across various forms re-arranged and re-presented materials of the past—as allowing the move beyond "prevailing attitudes, assumptions and assurances".[64] This is particularly significant in the Australian context and that of Indigenous history: he refers to Benjamin Genocchio's assertion that "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" and consequently "there is a continual need to reassess interpretations of past histories".[65] In support of practice-led research, he notes that "there is acceptance that traditional systems for knowledge that rely on probable

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[62] Estelle Barrett and Barbara Dr Bolt, *Practice as Research : Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007). 1.

[63] Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. 22

[64] Sullivan, "Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-Led Research". 62.

[65] Ibid. 62.

outcomes…cannot fully respond to the challenge of new interpretive possibilities".[66] These interpretive possibilities, which involve new voices and perspectives, are explored through case-study projects at the BMI as well as in the qualitative interviews with curators and staff at other GLAM organisations.

Where practice-led research relates here directly to the project's curatorial practice, insider-action research became an essential addition for conducting research "in the organisation or community in which one is employed or a member".[67] This approach became significant as the project developed, and it became clear that the study of creative activation through curatorial practice would also involve investigation into the organisation's operating structure and capacity. Use of this methodology was guided by literature and practice in *Doing Action Research in Your own Organization* by David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick. This methodology provided a vital framework for the messiness involved in performing the dual roles of researcher and staff member/curator. These dual roles are described as part of the "complex interactions in the swampy lowlands"[68] of doing action research within an organisation. This description helped to articulate both the complexity and potential of this methodology. Levinson and Greenwood describe action research as containing a "balance between rigor and relevance with great transformative potential…that is collaborative and democratic, *with* not simply *for* stakeholders".[69] This is discussed further through the experience at BMI covered in later chapters, where in playing both an organisational role and that of "active agent of inquiry or change, this multiple role identity both complicates and focuses the research project".[70] As a result the emergent nature of this research project became a significant factor as multiple methods and data were used and gathered continuously, then analysed, with the results becoming, in their turn, new data to be studied.

The final product takes the traditional form of a written thesis as evidenced here, but with the additional outputs of curatorial practice and its documentation (see list of multimedia for example, and outcomes listed in Figure 0.11), and of action research and tools whereby change in the real-world setting of the BMI has occurred and is ongoing. In this way the various

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. xx.

[68] Ibid. 97.

[69] Davyd J Greenwood Morten Levison, "Revitalizing Universities by Reinventing the Social Sciences: Bildung and Action Research," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Yvonna S Lincoln Norman K Denzin (Sage, 2011). 29.

[70] Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. xv.

methods can be seen as another living strand in the ecology of dynamic, interconnected parts, that accords well with the project's conceptual framework. Multiple approaches and outcomes are integral to this study, partially as it is situated across two disciplines within the university, and partially because of its being situated in spaces between academia and practice/industry. This creates an ecology of outcomes across the various stakeholders that reflects the ecological frame of the study and its application, in both theory and practice, and to the research questions posed in the proposition of creatively activated heritage. The various components of this project's methodology are detailed further in the next section and are numbered and outlined in Figure 0.9 below.

COMPONENTS OF METHODOLOGY

1. Qualitative Interviews

Conducted with 18 staff from Mechanics' Institutes , GLAM and history organisations, listed in Figure 0.10

2. Practice-led research as BMI curator and researcher

Curatorial projects:
- *Spring Celebrations and Open Day* 2016
- *White Night Ballarat* 2017
- *Beers through the Years* 2017
- *Imprints: Storytelling the City* 2017
- *Talking Shop: Ballarat in Business and City Life* 2019
- Cataloguing of the digital images in the Max Harris Photography Collection and associated upload onto Victorian Collections

3. Action research as BMI curator and researcher

Working with the BMI organisation from within to address issues and enact change using methods such as:
Journaling
Trialling
Collaborative development of tools

4. New archive of material for the BMI Audio Visual Collection, and photo book

Archive contains photographs, film, audio, digital artworks and documents recording the practice-led and action Research of the three-year curatorship.

The book utilises imagery from the archive to tell the story of the project.

Figure 0.9: Components of the project methodology

1. Qualitative Interviews

Interviews were conducted with eighteen adult participants over a period of two years at five locations: Ballarat, Bendigo, Melbourne, Sydney and San Francisco. The participants were selected on the basis of their being on staff at Mechanics' Institutes or other GLAM organisations. This interview data is the focus of chapters three and four, and is summarised in Figure 0.10 below.

Number of participants	Role	Organisation	Location
7	Curator/Public Programs/Interpretation/Other related staff	2 Museum 2 Gallery 1 Library 2 MI	3 Ballarat 1 Bendigo 2 Melbourne 1 San Francisco
2	Curator Managers	2 Museum	Ballarat Melbourne
5	Managers/Board Members	3 MI 2 Museum	1 San Francisco 1 Melbourne 2 Ballarat 1 Sydney
3	Independent Orgs	1 Library 2 History	3 San Francisco
1	Marketing	Museum	Ballarat
18		7 Museum 5 MI 2 Gallery 2 Library 2 History Note multiple staff from Sovereign Hill and Gold Museum interviewed from different areas (4 total)	7 Ballarat 5 San Francisco 4 Melbourne 1 Bendigo 1 Sydney

Figure 0.10: Interview participant details

Prior to the interviews, each participant was provided with a copy of the questions, a plain language statement of the purpose and nature of the research, and with consent forms (see appendix items 0.1, 0.2 and 0.3). Having regard to the public and professional nature of the research, all participants consented to their names and organisational roles being cited in the research.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a variety of locations at times convenient to the participants. One hour was set aside for each interview. Each interview followed the same format: the interviewee was greeted, asked to make him or herself comfortable and the purpose

and procedure of the interview was again outlined. A total of nine interview questions were asked, with follow-up questions where appropriate. At the end of the interview, interviewees were asked if they had additional comments to make about any matter raised in the interview, or any issues that related to the overall process itself. As had been agreed to prior to the interview, audio records were taken during the course of the interview for later transcription and analysis. Fourteen of the eighteen recorded interviews were then transcribed by university-approved provider Smartdocs. The remaining four, due to the poor audio quality, were transcribed by the researcher. The transcripts were then categorized via the data analysis software NVivo, and emerging concerns were detailed to form the data for eventual discussion. While the initial interview sample was eighteen, the final interviews included in this thesis are from representatives of five Ballarat GLAM organisations and five Mechanics' Institutes (with BMI staff represented in both) in order to accommodate the focus and scope allowed by the thesis.

2. Practice-led research as curator

Curatorial practice as research was undertaken as an employed part-time curator at the BMI. It involved working with BMI staff and volunteers and external stakeholders to make collections more accessible. Case-study exhibitions and events were used to trial and study the creative uses of heritage buildings and collections presented at the BMI. Key to this was the then newly-acquired Max Harris Photography Collection featuring Ballarat city in the 1860s– 1960s. Two case study events in particular are reviewed in detail: *White Night at the BMI* (chapter five) and *Imprints: Storytelling the City* (chapter six).

The case studies were planned in collaboration with staff and volunteers at the BMI, and through partnering with local stakeholders from the council, university, tourism, arts and culture, and heritage communities. This was done within the parameters of identified aims such as: raising the BMI's profile and public interest in the organisation following restoration of the building; engaging new audiences and partners to support its activities; and making use of spaces and collections in a way that also raised the capacity of staff and volunteers to think about new possibilities and ways of operating. Staff and volunteers (and stakeholders) were then part of debriefing and reporting processes to be incorporated into subsequent case study

projects. The full list of case study projects is outlined in Figure 0.11 below. Associated appendix and multimedia items are available via the provided Figshare links.[71]

Case Study	Date	Outcomes and multimedia-
Spring Celebrations and Open Day: Exhibitions, performance, live music and events, workshops and launch of Max Harris Photography Collection at the BMI (City of Ballarat Community Impact Grant)	Sep 1-3 2016	-New film commissioned and premiered featuring archival footage relating to the BMI's cinema history, *Silver Rememberings* and event advertisement for Regent Cinema (Yum Studio) -Interview with Max Harris on the photography collection for Open Day 2016 -Interpretive panels for ongoing use -Event report and stakeholder list (Appendix 5.3) -Process and event imagery
White Night Ballarat and *White Night at the BMI*: Live music, performance and installation	March 2017	-First regional event of this kind -Recorded interview event with guest artist Ellen Sørensen -Impetus to design event planning and review documents (See Appendix 5.2) -Process and event imagery
Beers through the Years in partnership with City of Ballarat Heritage Weekend and Good Beer Week: Exhibition and event	May 2017	-Exhibition panels -process and event imagery -Event Report
Imprints: Storytelling the City As part of the Ballarat International Foto Biennale: Exhibition and programme of events	August 19th- Sep 17th 2017	-Audio artworks of artist responses -process and event imagery -film of *Imprints Storytelling the City* opening event -Artists and curator talk events
Talking Shop: Ballarat in Business and City Life In partnership with collectors and artists	January to April 2019	-Artist in Residence trial and artist book created during residency -new material collected for exhibition and display and BMI AV collection including photographs and oral histories -digital tour of exhibition created and available online -online exhibition on Victorian Collections -Twilight Talk on my 3 year research project and launch of large portion of Max Harris Photography collection being available online on Victorian Collections -Event report and recommendations on artist in residence model for future (Appendix 7.4 and 7.5)

Figure 0.11: Case study events

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[71] https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3

Other event outcomes that formed part of the research data include audience comment books, and BMI debriefing and reporting documents. Imagery and audio-visual captures of event production and delivery were resources for data, as well as creative outcomes of the research: a film of the 2017 *Imprints: Storytelling the City* opening event was created by local filmmaker Erin McCuskey[72] and recordings were made of the artist and curator interview events that were part of the 2017 *White Night at the BMI* and *Imprints: Storytelling the City* programming[73]. A survey was also conducted by BMI management in 2018, capturing data on audience responses to events run by BMI over the previous twelve months. This report is included in the appendix (Appendix 0.4) and referred to in the thesis in case study discussions.

The curatorial work at BMI also involved cataloguing the digital images in the Max Harris Photography Collection, as well as creating a new component of the BMI heritage collection: the Audio Visual Collection, which now houses the digital Max Harris images. It is also a repository for new material known as born digital[74] (meaning created in digital formats) that was produced during the curatorship such as oral histories, and films and audio created from case study projects (see examples in Multimedia links 12 and 16[75]). This work connected the BMI with GLAM practice and values as stated by GLAM Peak, the Australian national body that in 2017 was awarded a federal government grant to develop a draft national framework for Digital Access to Collections and a prototype toolkit. This framework states that "access to our shared heritage and knowledge makes a difference: digital collections support innovation, creativity, education, engagement, research at all scales, and combined with curiosity and with computational power, lead to significant social, cultural and economic outcomes".[76] At one of the final events in my curatorship, BMI launched much of the digital photo collection as available online, via the Victorian Government funded resource Victorian Collections, which

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[72] Multimedia Link 11: AVAT745 Opening event 'Imprints Storytelling the City' September 1st 2017. Available via figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3 or https://vimeo.com/243494499

[73] Multimedia Link 7: AVAT749 Artist talk, Ellen Sørensen and Barry Gilson with Amy Tsilemanis, September 2017 audio, and Multimedia Link 8: AVAT748 Curator talk, Lorayne Branch discusses Henry Sutton with Amy Tsilemanis, September 2017, audio- available via figshare- .https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3

[74] "Born Digital," National Library of Australia, August 2016, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.nla.gov.au/collections/born-digital.

[75] Multimedia Link 12: AVAT744Max Harris interview on Bridge St/Bridge Mall and childhood memories with photographs from the collection (recorded December 2018), Amy Tsilemanis. Available via figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3 and Multimedia Link 16: Talking Shop digital exhibition on Victorian Collections. Available at: https://victoriancollections.net.au/stories/talking-shop-ballarat-in-business-and-city-life-at-ballaarat.

[76] "Digital Access to Collections" GLAM Peak, accessed 25th May 2020, "http://www.digitalcollections.org.au/".

is situated within Creative Victoria. At this function, a 'Twilight Talk' was presented on the three-year curatorship, as a way to both celebrate past achievements and inspire future directions. This talk also highlighted the significance of creative and public engagement and practical outcomes and change as part of this PhD project.

3. Insider-action research

Insider action research combines data from the curatorial work with the processes of operational and strategic change within the organisation. The governing principles of action research were implemented from Coghlan and Brannick as far as possible, including the following terms and definitions as outlined in their glossary:

- Process reflection: Reflecting on how things are done
- Reflexivity: Being attentive to and inquiring into the process as it unfolds
- Systems thinking: Seeing the whole rather than parts and understanding how elements are interrelated and interdependent
- Territories of experience: The areas of intentions, planning, actions and outcomes that operate at individual, interpersonal and organisational levels.[77]

The documents created collaboratively as part of this methodology (and included in the curator's May 2019 handover documents—available in the archive) worked from a key premise of action research labelled "co-generative inquiry".[78] They include event planning and review templates, event reports and recommendations, the curatorial resource list, and an updated collections policy document. Live journaling produced throughout the research "that captures both the events and one's own learning-in-action"[79] was coded through the NVivo system in order to organise different areas for discussion. The entries included phases of the project (establishment, delivery, transition and handover); who was involved (general public, internal staff and volunteers, members, funding patrons and other stakeholders); case study events; structural blockages and breakthroughs; reflections; and content linked to other areas such as general policy. This method of reflexive journaling, and of collaborative trial and review, contributed to the organisational change processes analysed in this PhD study.

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[77] Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. x–xxi.
[78] Ibid. 29.
[79] Ibid. xx.

4.   Archive of material and photo book

A new archive, of predominantly digital material (derived from the practice-led research and insider action research as discussed in parts 2 and 3 above) was created from the practical work and case studies. To be housed in the BMI Audio Visual collection, this archive contains digital photography, film and audio created during the project. It incorporates the curator's handover package delivered to the BMI at the conclusion of the curatorship in May 2019. This contains action-research outcomes including event and volunteer templates, policies, and reports. The archive also includes the following artworks produced during the curatorship: *Silver Rememberings*, the film by Erin McCuskey (Multimedia link 2); *Tread Lightly*, audio by Ellen Sørensen (Multimedia link 9); *Creation Song*, audio by Barry Gilson (Multimedia link 10); and *Talking Shop*, the artist-in-residence book by Pauline O-Shannessy Dowling (Multimedia Link 18). As a further outcome, *Creation Song* and *Tread Lightly* have been added to the *SongWays* digital music-mapping project on the Ballarat HUL portal. A photo book, capturing the curatorial project in images will be part of the archive as well as being gifted to all project stakeholders. Documents and multimedia from this archive that are referred to in this thesis are available via university data repository Figshare, as is a digital copy of the photo book.[80]

This mixed-methodology approach means that the problems that the dissertation addresses are done in various ways and with real-world outcomes. In practice this means that paths for change towards greater connection, diversity and relevance in the BMI (and other MIs and GLAM organisations facing similar challenges) could be trialled and captured in documentation: in written, visual and aural forms. This was done through curatorial work that allowed questioning of past narratives, the bringing in of new voices to work with collections, and collaborative new events and programs to creatively connect with various publics, and into the cultural life of the city. In the process, questions of governance, reductive understandings of value, organisational leadership and the associated will and ability to change were brought under a spotlight and emerged as deeply interconnected. The research questions of value and whether sustainable change is possible were investigated through this mixture of qualitative interviews, practice-led research, action research and the archive of creative documentation in photos and multimedia. For all involved, the results were at times complex, at times confronting, and at times revelatory. The project produced new knowledge about how creative activation can bring

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[80] Multimedia Link 20: AVAT784 Amy photo book 2020. Available via figshare-
https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

arts and heritage together for renewal and engagement, as well as the challenges that can arise from the lack of organisational dynamism and shared vision.

The bringing together of both the unknown and disruptive elements of practice research with the subversive element of action research meant this was always going to be a challenging process. Action research approaches from *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organisation* were used. These included identifying those needed for change to take place, and those that might be resistant along with the need to assess organisational readiness and capability. However, it is acknowledged that ideally there would have been greater initial collaborative assessment between curator/researcher and the Board aimed at identifying desired change and future state to work together from the outset of the project. The actuality of the largely volunteer run, historic and unique organisation, and the evolving nature of the research project meant this process was not always perfect. However, working with the HUL concept of early adopters, and those that were open to change and bringing their skills to the process, was also key and captured in my action research journaling along with challenges that are recognised as a feature of the methodology. See 2017 reflections in Figure 0.12 below.

> *Positive feedback has been coming back, such as- heritage volunteers re Spring Celebrations and Open Day- 'we didn't know if it would work but it was great.' And from particular board members- 'you're a breath of fresh air', 'love your way of thinking' 'I had almost left in frustration before you.'*
>
> *The Action Research process hasn't always happened due to current state at BMI (dealing with multiple issues, stuck etc). There is a level of irony in this, that the organisation is not together enough to embrace which is also what I am addressing…but this is also part of the methodology and rings true to my experience- Coghlan and Tulloch write that "Action Research has a large degree of messiness and unpredictability…as the insider action researcher and action-director you are both creating and acting the script."*

Figure 0.12: Active Research reflective journaling, June 2017

Despite challenges, the use of creative activation and curatorial practice to address questions of relevance, diversity, organisational values and change, along with placing MIs in the GLAM context and bringing arts and heritage together in new ways, has produced unique new knowledge. This knowledge crosses both theory and practice, and bridges the disciplines of critical heritage, museology, cities and cultural value. Importantly it may also inspire courage

for other change agents to push through resistance and through the use of creativity and collaboration, to enable questioning, and ultimately more open cultural organisations.

This introduction has outlined the project's origins, areas of inquiry, theoretical framework, and methodology. The five interconnected areas of interest—heritage, curation, cultural organisations, cities and value—will be the subject of the literature review to follow in chapter one, which is set in the historic context of museums and Mechanics' Institutes and the contemporary frame of critical heritage and GLAM. The BMI icon Minerva (Roman goddess of wisdom) looks out across the city in Figure 0.13 below, a symbol of the organisation's aspirations through time, and invites investigation into the BMI's offerings and potential in the twenty-first century.

Figure 0.13: AVAT05 The rooftop of the BMI with Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom, overlooking Sturt St 2016

Chapter One: Literature review

A finished museum is a dead museum, and a dead museum is a useless museum.

- George Brown Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration* [1]

This literature review comprises four parts. It is necessarily of considerable length, as it covers multiple disciplines and areas that are key to the thesis. The first half deals with historical material and the second half with contemporary. The review begins with a discussion of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century museum ideology and practice. It then draws parallels between these and the MI movement, before review of contemporary issues in museology, critical heritage and the GLAM sector, and value in order to frame the case studies and interview data exploring the BMI and selected other MIs and GLAM cultural organisations in later chapters. Little has been written about the contemporary linking of MIs and the GLAM sector and this research builds on work done in both fields to produce new knowledge. This is backed by practice-as research that highlights innovative uses of curatorial and creative practice to bring new perspectives to heritage and open up organisational thinking and futures that are more "diverse, inclusive, representative, and creative."

Part one examines certain pivotal moments in the history and development of museums in the United Kingdom, North America and Australia to identify and trace some of the aims and principles that governed their foundation. Key themes in this development relate to public education, particularly in the fields of science and technology, and education as a moral force aimed at social improvement of the working classes. The preservation and use of objects as signifiers of civilised culture and the ideological implications of their curation emerge, as do related concerns of public access to collections, the ownership of collections, and also the tensions between private and public interests in their funding. Questions of cultural value and usefulness will be seen to seek answers with increasing urgency as these institutions (and others with a similar provenance—such as libraries, art galleries, Mechanics' Institutes) grew to become integral parts of the cultural network of cities and the focus of government policy and the disbursement of public money.

Part two of this chapter details the origins of the MI movement in the UK and Australia. It will provide various perspectives on their achievements and influences. The themes established via

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[1] George Brown Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration* (York: Coultas & Volans, 1895). 201.

the discussion of museums as they played out in MIs explore Enlightenment ideals of self-improvement and their civilising role in education and culture. These include the role of MIs in the social mobility of the working class and middle classes, the relationship between MIs, government and the public, as well as the inherited tangible and intangible heritage of these institutes as they exist today. Across these themes are the overarching issues of their conceptual/ideological frameworks as revealed in foundational documents and actual practice. Their governance structures as cultural organisations, instruments of government policy and the relationship between public and private access will also be explored.

Part three reviews the fields of contemporary heritage and GLAM and the critical lens applied to decolonisation, curatorship, new uses of collections, museum activism and organisation management and structures as they come to effect practice. Part four covers related debate around value and provides a short history of the creative industries and creative city concepts.

Part One: Museums, an evolving conversation

The history and philosophy of museums has evolved along with society, highly charged with questions of identity, authority, and access. At the end of 2019, heading into the third decade of the new millennium, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was involved in consultation and debate over a proposed definitional change that reflects an increased focus on critical dialogue, diversity, access and the link between past, present and future.[2] The current definition on the ICOM website defines the museum as "a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment".[3] The new proposal contains significant shifts in emphasis: it aims to describe museums as "democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people"[4]. The definition continues to be contested but provides evidence of changes in the conception and role of museums, as part of ongoing

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[2] "Museum Definition," International Council of Museums," accessed 25th May 2020, https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

discussions.[5] There is, for example, a shift from focus on permanent sites providing services to society to ideas of open and multiple spaces, connecting the past with the present and future.

Writing in 2010, American museum historian and scholar Steven Conn discussed a contemporary museum boom being coupled with a boom in scholarship on museums. This constituted a second golden age of museum building, the first being during the last quarter of nineteenth century and the first quarter of twentieth.[6] In this earlier period, there was a major shift towards the opening up of museums to the public, in contrast to them housing private collections for the benefit of specialists, which had been the case previously. Key beliefs persisted, however, that science was an objective field of inquiry, and knowledge as something to be imparted from and by the knowing to the needy. A key tool to this review of museum history and philosophy is provided by Anderson's Reinventing the Museum Tool[7]. Anderson describes the tool, hereafter referred to as the RMT, as firstly capturing the "essence of the trends in the paradigm shift and provid[ing] the underpinnings of the structure and concepts presented in this volume". Secondly she presents it as a means to trace the general movement of "dismantling the museum as an ivory tower of exclusivity and towards the construction of a more socially responsive cultural institution in service to the public".[8] The RMT provides the differing approaches of the traditional and the reinvented museum under four headings: Management Strategies, Communication Ideology, Institutional Values, and Governance. It is reproduced below in Figure 1.1 and is used for analysis throughout this thesis.

Management Strategies

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Inwardly driven	Responsive to stakeholders
Various activities	Strategic priorities
Selling	Marketing
Assumptions about audiences	Knowledge about audiences
Hierarchical	Learning organisation
Unilateral decision-making	Collective decision-making

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[5] See debate around criticisms of the political tone associated with the new definition https://time.com/5670807/museums-definition-debate/, and reflection from archivist Mike Jones https://www.mikejonesonline.com/contextjunky/2019/09/18/reflections-on-icom-kyoto-and-that-definition/ Accessed May 25th 2020.

[6] Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). 1.

[7] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum : The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*.

[8] Ibid., 11.

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Limited access	Open access
Segregated functions	Integrated operations
Compartmentalised goals	Holistic, shared goals
Status quo	Informed risk-taking
Fund development	Entrepreneurial
Individual work	Collaboration
Static role	Strategic positioning

Communication Ideology

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Privileged information	Accessible information
Supressed differences	Welcomes differences
Debate/discussion	Dialogue
Enforced directives	Interactive choices
One-way communication	Two-way communication
Keeper of knowledge	Exchange of knowledge
Presenting	Facilitating
Two-dimensional	Multi-dimensional
Analogue	Virtual
Protective	Welcoming

Institutional Values

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Values as ancillary	Values as core tenets
Institutional viewpoint	Global perspective
Insular activity	Civic engagement
Social activity	Social responsibility
Collection driven	Audience focusses
Limited representation	Broad representation
Internal perspective	Community participant
Business as usual	Reflective practice
Accepted realities	Culture of inquiry
Voice of authority	Multiple viewpoints
Information provider	Knowledge facilitator

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Individual roles	Collective accountability
Focused on the past	Relevant and forward-looking
Reserved	Compassionate

Governance

Traditional Museum	Reinvented Museum
Mission as document	Mission driven
Exclusive	Inclusive
Reactive	Proactive
Ethnocentric	Multicultural
Internal focus	Expansive perspective
Individual vision	Institutional vision
Single visionary leader	Shared leadership
Obligatory oversight	Inspired investment
Assumed value	Earned value
Good intentions	Public accountability
Private	Transparent
Venerability	Humility
Caretaker	Steward
Managing	Governing
Stability	Sustainability

Figure 1.1*:* Reinventing the Museum Tool (RMT) outlining paradigm shifts

This summary of the shifts in museum philosophy and practice provides the theoretical framework for the review which follows.

The British Museum and access

The Enlightenment era, with roots that can be traced back to the Renaissance, brought to the field of intellectual endeavour the practice of reason over mysticism, great advances in science in fields such as astronomy, chemistry and electricity, and set about "bringing order to the natural world" as well as radical elements in the ideals for the organisation of society in relation

to secularism and general public welfare.[9] These social and scientific movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth century influenced developments in museums.

In his 1975 *A Social History of Museums*, Hudson notes that in England, Chamber's *Cyclopaedia* was published contemporaneously with the creation of the British Museum (in 1753) viewing both as an "expression of the eighteenth century spirit of enlightenment which produced an enthusiasm for equality of opportunity in learning".[10] The museum itself was established under the bequest of Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), and opened in 1759 with a collection of antiquities, coins and medals, natural history specimens and a large library collection. The new institution, in accord with Sir Hans's wishes, gave the public "free access to view and peruse" the collection. But according to Edward Alexander (writing on museums in "Collection of Curiosities to Popular Education") tickets were required and groups of not more than five were conducted hurriedly through the unlabelled exhibits.[11] Hudson argues, too, that despite its ideals, in practice, when museums such as the British Museum were established, "they carried on the traditions of the private collections. They might belong to the state, or to a body of trustees, but they were as exclusive, elitist and, not infrequently, precious as their predecessors".[12] In his section "Entry as a privilege", Hudson quotes a visitor from 1784 who managed to gain a coveted ticket only to be rushed through the collection: "I considered myself in the midst of a rich entertainment, consisting of ten thousand rarities, but I could not taste one. It grieved me to think how much I lost for want of a little information."[13] Hudson also refers to the "Statutes and Rules" outlining the arduous process in applying for a ticket, that could include an investigation into credentials, lasting several months. Children below the age of ten were rigorously excluded. Admission of the public was viewed by the Museum as "popular but far less useful" than scholarly research—a clearly elitist view of usefulness.[14] Change was encouraged. Hudson refers to astronomer James Ferguson who wrote "Observations on the British Museum" in 1847, and provided a set of proposed improvements based on issues with the building, and poor planning. Ferguson charged the museum with

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[9] Peter Gay, *Age of Enlightenment*, Great Ages of Man (Nederland: Time-Life International, 1966). 5.

[10] Kenneth Hudson, *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1975). 6.

[11] Edward P. Alexander, "Early American Museums: From Collection of Curiosities to Popular Education," *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship* 6, no. 4 (1987).

[12] Hudson, *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*. 6.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid. 9.

"lagging behind public opinion…only forced forward by pressure from without".[15] But the pace of change was slow and brought about significantly by external forces.

This earlier period in the traditional museum is characterised by public access, and use defined as scholarly research. There was a focus on the reverent nature of museum architecture and collections based upon the primacy of scientific explanations of the universe: the museum as temple. These views dominated museum thinking until the 1880s and 1890s when there is evidence of greater acceptance of the popular usefulness of museums via education and moral edification. This was part of larger social movements which led to the formation of the Liberal and Labour Parties, the 1884 Representation of the People Act (bringing suffrage to about sixty per cent of the adult male population) and compulsory and, in the 1880s and 1890s, free primary education.

Nineteenth-century museum principles and the idea of usefulness

Before considering this period, it must be noted that the first half of the century saw parallel developments in the MI movement in Britain. The first Institute in Glasgow opened in 1823 while the Smithsonian Museum opened in America in 1827, sharing aims with MIs "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge".[16] In Australia, moves to establish the Australian Museum in Sydney along similar lines occurred during the 1820s and 1830s. Changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution[17]—the growth of cities, the emergence of a new male working class, and the development of railways enabling the rapid transport of goods and people, for example,—were also key factors. So too was Chartist and later Fabian thought about public education and male suffrage. The development of MIs in Australia and their relation to museums will be discussed further in part two.

The later nineteenth-century threads of museum development will be discussed via a key text written in 1897 by George Brown Goode, Assistant Secretary at the Smithsonian Institution from 1887 to 1896. His influential work, *The Principles of Museum Administration*, published in 1897[18] refers to Thomas Greenwood, a British publisher and public library advocate who stated: "There is no more consoling fact to thoughtful humanity than that there is no limit to

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[15] Ibid. 56.

[16] "Purpose and Vision," Smithsonian Institute, accessed May 25th 2020, https://www.si.edu/about/mission.

[17] Garry Wotherspoon, "The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts," (Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, 2013). 6.

[18] Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration*.

human progress…unmistakeably useful as are a large number of museums and art galleries, we have, as yet, only touched the fringe of their possible usefulness."[19] Greenwood also noted the "softening and refining influences of art and beautiful objects and museums as "gifts of knowledge".[20] This belief in progress, universality, and the usefulness of cultural institutions is a constant in Goode's principles.

Goode also argued that the "munificence with which the national museums of Great Britain have been supported, and the liberal minded manner in which they have been utilised in the cause of popular education and for the promotion of the highest intellectual ideals, has been and still is a source of inspiration to all in America who are labouring for similar results".[21] Goode and Greenwood's work reveals a shift from the prioritising of serious research in the early days of the British Museum to a co-presentation of the aims of popular education and high intellectual pursuits—reflecting a significant shift in museum ideology.

In Goode's 1897 introduction he defines the museum as:

> an institution for the preservation of those objects which best illustrate the phenomena of nature and the works of man, and the utilization of these for the increase of knowledge and for the culture and enlightenment of the people.

These principles work from the assumption of museum administrators being caretakers and imparters of a knowledge that is objectively knowable. At the same time Goode stated that "a finished museum is a dead museum, and a dead museum is a useless museum".[22] While the focus remains on scientific knowledge of the world (and the belief in human progress through these means) the statement also provides a prescient insight. It prefigured future changes in museums based on the nature of constant evolution and in a view of usefulness lying in change and an opening up of relevance to broader audiences. He implied that something fixed becomes dead, and therefore no longer useful. While the mode of implementation today might be different—polyphonic, critical, not as convinced about the certainties of objectivity—Goode's remark remains a powerful statement of the dynamic link between museums and living, evolving culture. In presenting what he refers to as "cardinal necessities" Goode includes other practical concerns of the museum that are still significant today: the need for "a stable

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[19] Ibid. 173.

[20] Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries* (Stationers' Hall Court, E.C: Simpkin, Marshall and Co, 1888). 17.

[21] Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration*. 173.

[22] Ibid. 201.

organization and adequate means of support", and also for "a definite plan, wisely framed in accordance with the opportunities of the institution and the needs of the community for whose benefit it is to be maintained".[23] These issues remain key.

Goode is in no doubt as to the usefulness of museums: "There can be no doubt that the importance of the museum as an agency for the increase and diffusion of knowledge will be recognized so long as interest in science and education continues to exist."[24] These notions of usefulness, as developments occurring alongside other public systems, range from technical knowledge for industry and trade, to scientific and artistic exposure as a civilising influence, to the broader roles of culture and education in cities. Greenwood, too, noted in 1888 that cultural institutions, whose aim was to provide invitations "not reserved for the favoured few, but thrown open to the many", could decrease crime as well as play an "important economic role in the nation's life".[25] These various uses and roles continue to be debated in museology today (indeed crime prevention is present in Creative Victoria's 2016 Creative State Strategy—see figure 5.17).

Goode's 1897 definition focuses on objects as a measure of the scientific progress of man. It speaks of "the people" referring to a broad public constituency, who can be enlightened via knowledge and culture, and in the process learn moral goodness, and follows Greenwood in the UK on belief in the refining influence of art and knowledge.[26] These concerns are reflected in ICOM's proposed changes to its definition of museums, though also indicate the concerns of twenty-first century political and scientific paradigms. Man has become humanity; intangible as well as tangible benefits are considered; active spaces replace the idea of a static temple; nature has become the environment, with radically different associations—but the many assumptions made by Goode and Greenwood hold firm—museums serve society, they are open to all, they have an important educative role, they enable scholarly research. Perhaps the greatest change lies in the absence in ICOM's proposal of any moral edification element, again reflecting a changing ideology, where diverse and secular values are preferred.

Museum definitions continue to be contested and the proposed 2019 changes towards critical dialogue, diversity, access and the link between past, present and future, are no different.

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. 237.

[25] Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*. 177.

[26] Ibid.

Changing paradigms are discussed in part three as part of the discussion about Anderson's RMT. The following section concentrates on the evolving role of the museum curator and administrator.

Objects and curation

In the relationship between museums and their publics, a key change was from the focus on tangible objects and specimens of the early days to the late twentieth-century global shift to tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and a greater appreciation of, though continued debate over, colonial legacies. In Goode's discussion of kinds of museums he observes: "The museum of history preserves those material objects which are associated with events in the history of individuals, nations, or races, or which illustrate their condition at different periods in their national life".[27] He also notes that "every museum of art and every archaeological museum is also a museum of history, since it contains portraits of historical personages, pictures of historical events, and delineations of customs, costumes, architecture, and race characteristics".[28] Changes in museums in more recent times address their past colonial practices and language such as this with regard to civilised and non-civilised or primitive and savage, as will be discussed in part three.

The categorisation, display and labelling of objects and specimens was also a priority in nineteenth-century museums, revealing the underlying assumption of objective knowledge and rationality. "There should be a thorough system of labels, written in simple language, supplemented by pictures, diagrams, maps, and books of reference" insisted Goode.[29] These practices at times had racial implications. In the *Illustrated History of the Australian Museum 1827–1979*, a section on anthropology discusses social Darwinism and the cultural evolutionism of thinkers such as Sollas that saw western civilisation as "the ultimate peak". Here it is said that "museums tended to support the theorists [like Sollas] by arranging their displays *as if* certain arrangement of artefacts represented evolution of forms from simple to complex" (original itlalics).[30] It is in ideologies like these, and the explicit statement of colonial conquest by British Museum's keeper of ethnography, C.H Read (in Strahan)—who stated in

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[27] Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration*. 210.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid. 22.

[30] Ronald Strahan, *Rare and Curious Specimens: An Illustrated History of the Australian Museum 1827-1979* (NSW: The Australian Museum, 1979). 146.

1910 that he "saw the main advantage of museum displays of anthropology being to show the British people what a great colonial empire they had acquired"[31]—that calls for decolonising practices in museums are responding to today. Examples include development in Indigenous cataloguing and labelling that recommend the move away from dehumanisation and anonymity, whilst also the highlighting of the conditions of original collection of material.[32] One particular example of contemporary controversy and criticism is evident the British Museum's attitude toward repatriation of material collected during colonisation,[33] a very live debate. Just as practice and critique has developed around objects in museology, so too has the role of curators.

When Thomas Greenwood spoke of the "ideal museum" in 1888 there was a very specific character and purpose assumed whereby "the curator and his assistants will be men thoroughly sensible of the capabilities of the specimens under their charge for conveying high moral, intellectual and often physical lessons".[34] This statement assumes objectivity and the belief in both knowledge for moral and intellectual outcomes (and again the reference to men as the only gender for this job). It also contains assumed ideas of education leading to all that is "really good, true and noble".[35] The relationship between curators and objects, as well as museums to their visitors, including issues of class, gender, and Indigenous ownership and knowledge, have evolved significantly since these early museum principles. Saumerez Smith (in Strahan) argues that the foundations of the museum in the second half of the nineteenth century, were generally accepted and effectively promoted by government. These were that: "collections on display should contribute to the advancement of knowledge, that they should be arranged systematically, that they should be administered for the public and not by private individuals and be reasonably accessible to the public".[36]

These ideals of collected objects arranged for various kinds of teaching and for broad public access can be seen reflected in the Great Exhibition in London of 1851, the first world's fair and first industrial exhibition. This was a model to be followed around the world, with Ballarat and the BMI being involved in various exhibitions of this kind, which reflected a belief in

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[31] Ibid.

[32] See Nathan Sentance in Australia, and Uncomfortable Art Tours at British Museum.

[33] See for example- https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/feb/18/uk-museums-face-pressure-to-repatriate-foreign-items.

[34] Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*. 177.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Peter Vergo, *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989). 8.

scientific progress and systematic display. The relationship between such beliefs and social regulation and morality were also key.

Social Regulation and museum evolution into the twentieth century

In 1884, Sir Henry Cole (a British civil servant and inventor) advocated helping "the working man choose a life characterized by moral restraint as preferable of both bed and ale house" believing that "the museum will lead him to wisdom and gentleness, and to heaven, whilst the latter will lead him to brutality and perdition".[37] Museologist and cultural critic, Tony Bennett, asserts the social role of "cultural governance" in shaping the moral, mental and behavioral characteristics of the population is "a profound transformation in [museums] conception and in their relation to the exercise of social and political power".[38] This was an approach that carried into the early twentieth century with the views still being stated that "the moral effect of museums is invariably wholesome and good and tends to high citizenship" and that "thoughts are taken from commonplaces to more ennobling themes".[39]

In the coming together of public access and both educational and moral teaching as part of the movement towards universal education, Bennett notes three issues at the forefront for museums of this early period. First, the museum as social space and the need to detach this from its earlier private and socially exclusive form (discussed above). Secondly, the museum as a space of representation (increasingly contested as a way to display the world that included colonial acquisitions), in contrast to the wonder and novelty of previous forms like the cabinet of curiosities. Thirdly, the museum as a space of observation and regulation so that the body of visitors might be "moulded in accordance with the requirements of new forms of public conduct".[40]

In this moulding of society, the usefulness of museums is discussed in a 1912 talk by Frederic A. Lucas, then director of the Brooklyn Museum. He stated that the value of museums is "to inculcate the spirit of law and order, to foster a love of the beautiful, to teach the visitor to

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[37] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London
New York: Routledge, 1995). 21.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy*, ed. Hugh H Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). 12.

[40] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*. 24.

observe and think, to supply 'rational amusement' to the masses".[41] Here moral teaching is connected with the supreme belief in the value of knowledge and its connection to civilisation. Lucas (in *Museum Origins*) goes on to say that

> over and beyond these things are the educational opportunities offered everyone and, after all, love of knowledge is the supreme test of civilization. Man stands pre-eminent among all living things in his desire for knowledge, his wish to know the reasons for all that goes on around him, and according to the extent of his desire does he stand in the intellectual scale. The savage merely wants to know where he can find something to eat and wherewith he may be clothed, the astronomer casts his eye across millions of miles of space seeking for knowledge of other worlds.[42]

This statement presents key late-Enlightenment precepts that the masses, including colonial subjects, are empty and must be filled (taught, fostered, supplied) with law, reason, and love of beauty, creating order and civility. The primacy of progress and scientific knowledge as signs of a higher state and the pre-eminence of man is again uncritically elevated.

These early-twentieth century assertions on the role and uses of the museum highlight the various ways that some of these ideas endure, as cultural organisations re-evaluate their roles and missions today. This re-evaluation is largely around their relationship with the public and how both tangible and intangible heritage is used to tell stories about society's past, present and future. Shifts through the early twentieth century outlined in Anderson's *Reimagining the Museum* engages with these issues and helps to frame developments that occurred out of the nineteenth-century approaches. In John Colton Dana's chapter from 1917, he speaks of "the gloom of the museum" claiming it had "built itself an elaborate home, gathered in it the rare, the curious, the beautiful" and given a select few access. "Now seems to come the demand that the museum serve its people in the taste of helping them to appreciate the high importance of manner, to hold by the laws of simplicity and restraint, and to broaden their sympathies and multiply their interests".[43] Here the need for greater access is central but still with a focus on providing visitors with refinement and taste. Advocating for public access is evident but still in a one-way transmission of educating and civilising. In 1942, Theodore Lowe asked, "What is a museum?" looking at the relationship and tension between scholarly research and popular education, which can be seen as having its roots as far back as the establishment of the British Museum. By 1971, Duncan F Cameron queried if the museum should act as a "temple or a

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[41] *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy.*

[42] Ibid.

[43] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum : The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift.* 33.

forum" representing changes that led into the new museology of the 1980s and 1990s and what Anderson calls a "proliferation on writing" about museums.[44] In discussing Cameron's chapter she asks:

> Are museums places for worship of the object or places where the public gather to debate, to consider issues of the day and the consequences of human actions? In the 70s many museum leaders felt they had to choose. Today, many museums elect to embrace both.[45]

Regulation through education—both scientific and moral—has been seen as a key element of early museums. The one-way transmission of information and knowledge is one of the shifts discussed in more participatory and democratic practices of the new museology of the late twentieth century. The early museum aims of "achieving order and rationality" with a rational and improving rationale, and what Tony Bennet calls governmental application (whereby high culture was treated as an "instrument of social management")led to issues around representation and knowledge, and concepts of the public museum and issues of access and cultural rights.[46] Consequently, Bennett suggests that there are two distinctive political demands in relation to today's museum: parity of representation within museums displays, and members of all social groups having equal practical rights of access.[47] These contemporary issues of public access and participation, and the nature of collection management and display, have their roots in the early museum principles with their ideology of filling the public with knowledge and goodness, and incorporate the concept of civilisation. This was a concept with an inherent colonial-era association, and requires a greater level of critique today. This period also coincided with the development of disciplines, such as anthropology, which raised issues around power dynamics and colonial relations; all issues relevant to museology today that inform the discussion of how such approaches and dynamics function at the BMI.

Discussion of Habermas' concept of the public sphere, including its Enlightenment origins, concludes this section on museums, presenting an alternative way of looking at the arrangement of society. Rather than the top down approach discussed above, the concept is based around

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[44] Ibid. 12.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum.* 2.

[47] Ibid. 9.

"citizens voluntarily coming together to participate in public debate and for a concept of the public good".[48] This provides context to the possibilities of GLAM today.

Public sphere

Habermas' 1989 work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere[49],* has influenced thinking about museums. Particularly relevant is his concept of the public sphere as having its origins (then decline) in Enlightenment principles: the ideal of democratic politics and the values of equality, liberty, rationality and truth.[50] Finalyson discusses Habermas' idea of the public sphere (in German *offentlichkelt*, meaning publicity, transparency and openness) as part of a "theoretical paradigm of understanding the social world" which is used "to guide social change by illuminating potential for social change".[51] He describes how the concept of the bourgeois public sphere (an "informal sphere of sociality located somewhere between bourgeois civil society and the state or government") emerged from the Enlightenment. So, too, did the "literary public of the salons, clubs and coffee houses of the eighteenth century," with their focus on the establishment of civil rights and freedom of expression.[52]

Jennifer Barrett's more recent *Museums and the Public Sphere* [53] discusses the "utopian and idealist goal of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century…using museum spaces to civilise and educate people" whilst also symbolising a nation's achievements (military, cultural, or economic). She views the idea of the modern museum of this time being "caught up in the new experience of being *public*".[54] She notes that this concept has been central in recent debate around museums and their role as public institutions, citing the development of new museology in part responding to enduring perceptions of museums as being elitist and inaccessible.[55] She also notes new museology's attempt to democratise the museum and engage with the public in a way different to the "universalising exhibiting practices of previous centuries".[56]

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[48] James Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). 9.

[49] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere : An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 1st pbk. ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

[50] Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. 15.

[51] Ibid. 10.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*.

[54] Ibid. 3.

[55] See also Max Ross, "Interpreting the New Museology," *Museum and Society* 2, no. 2 (2015).

[56] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 3.

She states that "the contemporary museum often struggles to negotiate between the remnants of an earlier rhetoric of 'public'" referencing a singularity, and "new practices and types of spaces designed to attract new audiences, engage new communities and respond to the locality or nation within which they are situated".[57] In this way public, in contemporary use, refers to inclusivity and diversity in contrast to a singular mass of past understandings. "As one of the essential aims of recent museology has been to demystify the authoritative function of the museum, as necessary to represent diversity, to attract new publics to the museum, and to encourage new forms of visitation and engagement via electronic means, the museum demonstrates an awareness of the history of its practices".[58] Barrett's argument for museums' potential as "cultural public spheres" is discussed further in part three.

Through an examination of the literature, this section has outlined various ideological and practical shifts in the features of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century museum into the perception of those of the twentieth century and foregrounded key themes around access, curation, the public role, and the varying kinds of usefulness that museums can be put to. Many similarities to these shifts exist in the development of Mechanics' Institutes, which will now be discussed, and will lead into an examination of contemporary museology and critical heritage as a framework to apply to hybrid cultural organisations like MIs today.

Part Two: Mechanics Institutes

The development of Mechanics' Institutes in early nineteenth-century Britain (similarly to the case with museums) grew out of the Enlightenment ideals of the primacy of secular, scientific knowledge and the possibility of self-improvement, and expanded into a wider social and political interest in the education and enfranchisement of the masses. The first meeting of the London Mechanics' Institute (LMI), in the early 1820s, defined a mechanic as "any person who worked with his hands".[59] These were male, stood in need of technical skills, and were considered essential if employers were to adequately staff their new industrial workplaces.

The development of MIs will be discussed here from their origins in the UK through to their foundation in Australia. Certain educational and political aims adopted by MIs (and shared to a great extent by museums) will be traced. These include: the idea and purposes of

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid. 6.

[59] Michael D. Stephens and Gordon W. Roderick, "Science, the Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes," *Annals of Science* 29, no. 4 (1972). 352.

self-improvement; the need to civilise working people, the relationship between (perceived) working-class educational and moral deficiencies and the political, economic and cultural ambitions of the middle class; the fraught relationship between MIs and government in terms of the disbursement of public monies and the allocation of crown land; the potential for conflict inherent in the developing public versus private spheres of interest; and the tangible and intangible heritage (buildings, collections and organisational structures and accrued cultural values) which characterise MIs today.

MI historian George Nadel is one of many who cite Dr George Birkbeck as the originator of the MI movement.[60] Birkbeck was a Quaker, a pioneer in adult education and a professor of natural philosophy. In 1823, in Glasgow, he helped found the first institute of the name, to educate tradesmen. Soon after, he established the LMI with Lord Henry Peter Brougham who was, in 1826, to found the "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge".[61] This period in the 1820s saw a growing interest in public education, factory reforms, and political movements, such as the Fabians and the Chartists, who sought, among other things, to reform the electoral process through a widening of male suffrage, and to gain for the working classes a greater share of the new wealth being generated. This was occurring against the backdrop of complex industrial and agrarian changes to British society. It was increasingly felt in many quarters that there was an urgent need to raise the educational, technical and moral standards of the emerging industrial working class.

Self-improvement and the idea of goodness

The MI ethos was strongly influenced by the self-improvement movement (Samuel Smiles, for example, having popularised the concept with his 1859 book *Self-help*.[62] This concept involved both technical improvement (mechanical skills and scientific knowledge) as well as moral improvement, a dual emphasis that echoed the early development of museums. Along with MI influencers like Birkbeck and Brougham, other figures included Benjamin Franklin in America, who argued that "human happiness and social welfare were dependent on teaching prudence

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[60] George Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture: Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957).

[61] Ibid. 286.

[62] P. C. Candy and John Laurent, *Pioneering Culture : Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art in Australia* (Adelaide: Auslib Press, 1994).

and self-restraint to the mass of men".[63] Birkbeck spoke of the "unquenchable spirit of man" and the "heaven-lighted lamp in man" and asked: "Why are the avenues of science barred against the poor just because they are poor?"[64] Here it can be seen that Birkbeck strongly believed that all should have access to knowledge and find the prudence and goodness therein, and that this goodness had a distinct Christian and spiritual dimension. MIs were seen as a path to good in society, and science became the almost missionary means by which the moral and (technical) educational reform of the mass of men was to be achieved.

These aims were common to nations on both sides of the Atlantic and to the new Australian colonies. Nadel in *Australia's Colonial Culture* asserts that "educational thought of the early 19th century was characterised by the optimistic belief about the nature of man, and that morality was a matter of knowledge".[65] This optimism was soon exported to Australia. Starn notes how Goode similarly "made much of an Anglo-American scenario celebrating a happy union between private benefaction and public reform with 'rational recreation' and 'moral uplift' for the working classes".[66] Of course, behind these philanthropic, even altruistic ideals, lay more practical agendas of economic and political advantage: its proponents and not incidental benefactors were to be the emerging middle classes.

Historian Pam Baragwanath has highlighted the ideological and political context of MIs. Baragwanath describes how members of the Mechanics' movement were derisively termed improvers by the British elite.[67] Similarly, Stephens and Roderick observe that they were not favoured by the established Church nor by Roman Catholicism, and that the connections between MIs and Whig and Radical politics meant that the Tories were, in the main, strongly opposed to any such reforms, seeing them as part of the larger Radical and Continental movement intent upon revolution.[68] As a result, the contested place of the MIs was characterised by what Jan Kociumbus has described as a complex of "competing classes and

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[63] Jill Blee, "The Mechanics' Institute Movement," in *Under Minerva's Gaze: 150 Years at the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute* (2010). 17.

[64] Stephens and Roderick, "Science, the Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes". 349.

[65] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture.*

[66] Randolph Starn, "A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 1 (2005).

[67] Simon Leo Brown, "Mechanics Institutes in Victoria Detailed in New Book, These Walls Speak Volumes," ABC Radio Melbourne, 2015, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-18/every-mechanics-institute-in-victoria-detailed-in-new-book/6947064.

[68] Stephens and Roderick, "Science, the Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes". 352.

ideologies"[69], and issues of access, benefit and success remain contentious today. Kociumbas strongly questions the motivation of such places as museums and MIs, describing them as "public temples, enshrining cultural ideology for the reformation of people, where rich and poor would mingle together harmoniously in a unified pursuit of rational entertainment and self-improvement".[70] Her implication is clear: this unity and harmony is a semi-spiritual fantasy, and it obscures the struggles for political and economic power which characterise the development of the middle classes in the nineteenth century, a struggle that is reflected in the origin and growth of the MIs in Britain. In Australia, in the new and burgeoning colonies, Nadel notes, "it was not so much industrialism but the conditions of immigration and settlement that looked to knowledge as 'social panacea'",[71] along with the ideology of settler colonialism.

The achievements of MIs and spread to Australia

Stephens and Roderick wonder "what mystical hold Mechanics' Institutes had on the intellectuals and industrial middle classes who founded and supported them with such beneficence".[72] This is certainly relevant to the spread of the movement to Australia, where the first MI was established in Hobart in 1826, followed by Melbourne in 1829 and Sydney in 1833, with most towns in colonial Australia following suit.[73] Baragwanath has recorded the 1000 institutes that were established in Victoria alone.[74] In the absence of government-established education and libraries, the idea of MIs as independent, secular organisations providing access to reading material, lectures and social gatherings was enthusiastically seized upon. This was assisted by Colonial government support (not without debate over the issues of free and subscription libraries discussed further in relation to the BMI in the chapter two) where, from 1857, MIs were included in Government funding for the purchase of books. Titles of crown land were also distributed, which aided in the spread of Institutes. Official thinking, as derived from the UK, can be viewed in an excerpt from Governor Bourke speaking in 1837 as part of his involvement with the founding of the Sydney Mechanics and School of Art (SMSA). He stated that "the political, civil and social relations of an advancing nation were

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[69] Jan Kociumbas, "Science as Cultural Ideology: Museums and Mechanics' Institutes in Early Nsw and Van Diemen's Land," *Australian Society for the Study of Labour History* 64 (1993).

[70] Ibid.

[71] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture.* 168.

[72] Stephens and Roderick, "Science, the Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes". 359.

[73] Mechanics' Institute was the name commonly used in Victoria or School of Arts in NSW. Sydney became a combination of the two as Sydney Mechanics and School of Art (SMSA).

[74] Pam Baragwanath and Ken James, *These Walls Speak Volumes: A History of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria* (Camberwell: Ken James, 2015).

directly concurrent with its moral and intellectual enlightenment".[75] As can be seen, museums grew out of similar assumptions. In Australia, this context included the resounding wealth generated from the 1850s Victorian gold rushes that fostered the rapid economic and cultural development of cities, including Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Melbourne.

Meanwhile, in the UK, and despite the movement's initial aims of serving working-class education, Stephens and Roderick note that as early as the 1850s institutes were criticised for turning more towards the hosting of entertainment.[76] They highlight that the emphasis on "serious scientific instruction" soon shifted to more cultural activities and, interestingly, assert this "was not a desertion of principles, but more a realistic coming to terms with the impossible idealism of these principles".[77] In assessing the achievements of the MIs they emphasise that "due recognition to their pioneering role in the library and museum fields" should be given but conclude that the viability of the initial aims was compromised by being informed by an "essentially middle-class cultural ethos".[78] Leanne Gibson argues that a similar situation evolved in Australia, in that the mission shifted from education for the lower classes to "cultural cultivation of the middle classes".[79] Nadel notes practical issues around fees, as well as changes in audiences, which helped create an altered "mental culture" interested less in scientific lectures and more in "literary, dramatic and musical recitals".[80] The later nineteenth-century introduction of public libraries, technical education and working men's colleges also played a role, with Thomas Greenwood noting in 1880 that MIs had become "little more than respectable lounges for men fairly well off, who dislike the smoke room of the public house or hotel".[81] This charge still resonates today.

Despite this shift, or (more likely) because of it, the movement was popular in colonies such as Australia, where they went hand-in-hand with the creation of new settlements. While the movement broadly shared the aims of its UK counterparts, MIs in Australia were "fueled by a mixture of ideals, and supported by an assorted coalition of people with quite various

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[75] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*. 170.

[76] Ibid; Stephens and Roderick, "Science, the Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes". 352.

[77] Stephens and Roderick, "Science, the Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes". 353.

[78] Ibid. 353.

[79] Lisanne Gibson, *The Uses of Art*: *Constructing Australian Identities* (St Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 2001).

[80] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*. 287.

[81] Ibid.

motives".[82] The common thread seemed to be the "diffusion of useful knowledge" and its partnering with mental and moral improvement, and the same desire to offer "rational recreation" that we saw repeated in Goode. These ideals are apparent in many founding Institute's aims, including the BMI's initial rules of 1859.

MIs provided an organisational structure to the building of society in the new colony where, in contrast to the past in the UK, the focus was on secular institutions and the education of adults. In this way, adult education scholar Derek Whitelock asserts MIs made literacy and adult learning "familiar and acceptable" in the chaotic frontier society of colonial Australia prior to the existence of public libraries and formal state-based adult education.[83] In a different argument for their developing influence, Gibson has studied the civilising role of MI's in their provision of access to arts and culture. Here she argues that they contributed to the foundation for contemporary Australian cultural policy. Using Sydney Mechanics' and School of Art (SMSA) examples, she argues that Australia was particularly successful in combining the two understandings of art within the MI movement—technical skill to improve industrial design with high culture as a means for the development of society.[84]

Gibson goes on to argue for the success of MIs as discursive places in that they fulfilled their aim in providing access to culture to the people and supported the early colonial governments' role in civilising the colonies. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, Australia, she states, was still considered savage and vulgar but was "undergoing a significant shift from a convict to settler society".[85] MIs were part of providing a civilising influence on the colony. This involved making useful knowledge available to mechanics but essentially became about providing "civilised culture from the 'Great European Tradition' to the emerging colonial middle class".[86] MIs in Australia can therefore be seen to digress from the aims originally defined in the UK in the early 1820s. Yet their contribution to the cultural development of the colony meant elements of European cultural traditions merged with the new and developing Australian society.

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[82] Candy and Laurent, *Pioneering Culture : Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art in Australia*. 3
[83] Ibid. 23.
[84] Gibson, *The Uses of Art*. 34.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.

Politically and ideologically the Mechanics' movement in Australia was a mix of Enlightenment aims, liberal ideals, and European, particularly British, culture. It shared its ethos with early development of the idea of museums, which according to Bennett (following Foucault) sought "to regulate social behaviour by endowing individuals with the capacity to self-monitor and regulate".[87] However, MIs evolved in Australia less homogenously than in the UK, and more recent commentators, such as Gibson and Kociumbus, have focused upon the influence of the colonial liberals, themselves a diverse group, who as a class ,were important not so much for educating and regulating the working class, but for "developing the knowledge and social skills of the emerging liberal elite".[88] Thus Kociumbus was able, in referring to post-1970s commentators, to note the increased questioning of the Enlightenment ideal of knowledge as progress, the shift towards a critique of knowledge as power, and the problematics of class and colonisation that such critiques raise and are embedded in the MI movement.

In summary, MIs can be seen to have played a role in developing adult education, and the social and cultural life of evolving society in colonial Australia. The aims of self-improvement and moral regulation perhaps had less of a lasting effect as operating structures and priorities shifted. Issues of class and exclusivity came to the fore from early on. Regarding the Melbourne Institute (Athenaeum), Bowman notes that, despite its aims, "from the outset, the Port Phillip organization, like the Hobart institute before it, was dominated by the middle class" who provided much of the funding.[89] In Sydney "ex-convicts were not specifically banned from attending, [but] they were made to feel unwelcome".[90] Elements of this social and political inheritance—focussing on management practices and the MIs' relationship with the public— will be elaborated on further in chapter two through a closer discussion of the BMI in Ballarat. Part three of this review provides a context to the contemporary frame of critical heritage and museology that is then applied to the BMI and the curatorial case studies featured in later chapters.

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[87] Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum.* 20.

[88] Kociumbas, "Science as Cultural Ideology: Museums and Mechanics' Institutes in Early Nsw and Van Diemen's Land". 18.

[89] Margaret Bowman, "Middle-Class, Masculine Management: The Melbourne Athenaeum and Its Secretary 1909-1949," *Victorian Historical Journal* 81, no. 1 (2010).

[90] Blee, "The Mechanics' Institute Movement". 18.

Part Three: Contemporary heritage and museology

> The past [is] inescapably a product of the present that organises it.
>
> -Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*

This thesis draws on Anderson's paradigm shifts in museum practice from a traditional model to a reinvented one.[91] This section uses his RMT to outline these shifts. The RMT provides a list of binary features under four headings: Institutional values, Governance, Management strategies, and Communication ideology. For example, under Institutional values, one binary is values as ancillary (traditional) in comparison to values as core tenets (reinvented). Anderson notes that by using the term "traditional" in the tool it is "not intended to be pejorative but is rather a term for reference in this particular dialogue to illustrate one viewpoint around the museum as institution and concept".[92]

The sets of binaries provide a perspective that is useful in discussing both past and contemporary museological practice, and how they might be applied to the BMI in this thesis. They are a way of considering processes of change and as an assessment tool for organisations to see where they are at and where they want to be. Anderson describes the tool's purpose in "illuminating dialogue" where "issues about relevancy, institutional vitality, and alignment with contemporary museum practice can be discussed relative to a specific institution".[93] The RMT was created by museum leaders over the past three decades. As a result of this collaboration, a consensus seems to emerge towards the preference for features represented on the reinvented side of the binary. Here, while traditional is not intended as a negative judgement, hope for moves towards the reinvented paradigm are evident. A key feature of the new paradigm is that "keeping the dialogue alive on the local, regional, national and international stage keeps the ongoing process of revitalization alive and helps avoid stagnation".[94] Here we are reminded of Goode's prescient insight from the late nineteenth century that a "dead museum is a useless museum". Back then it focused more on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge and on engaging the interest of both scholarly and general

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[91] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum.* 2.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid. 9.

audiences. Today Anderson takes this view as part of the evolution of the field and the need for ongoing discussion and reflection about its ideals and practice.

Australian museologist and critical heritage scholar, Andrea Witcomb, has asked if debate around museological changes presents a "continuity beyond the idea that new practices present a complete break from the past".[95] The emphasis on continuity is key where organic rather than oppositional relationships might more accurately reflect the reality and ideal. This is taken into account when discussing contemporary museology trends in theory and practice, placing them within an ever-evolving conversation with ideologies and practices of the past. This is part of the thesis' ecological framework that goes beyond binaries to the interconnections between mutually dependent parts and, in this example, in the relationship between different eras and their ideological viewpoints. In what follows, the RMT will be used to illustrate and analyse the emerging themes of contemporary museology found in the relevant literature. The RMT framework is used more broadly in the thesis to study the contemporary BMI as an organisation and support analysis of the curatorial work undertaken therein.

The RMT itself sits within one powerful assumption of the reinventing the museum paradigm where "museums as cultural institutions have the power to make a difference".[96] The same assumption is true of a range of other cultural organisations such as libraries, galleries and MIs. Earlier thinkers, like Goode, would agree with this premise but there are differences in approach. Anderson privileges the features from the reinvented side of the tool including "multiple viewpoints", "civic engagement", "broad representation", and operating with values of "shared leadership" and "inclusiveness".[97] This thinking frames much of the discussion within contemporary museology and parallel discussion about the role of culture in cities where the stakes are high. O'Connor, for example, warns that "the challenge of the good city and urban civility is before us".[98] This involves public accountability and effective articulations of value with regards to cultural organisations and their role in cities.

In part one of this chapter, the evolving conversation was brought up to the 1980s and 1990s and the introduction of new museology. The title of a 1989 collection of pieces edited by Peter

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[95] Witcomb, *Re-Imagining the Museum.* 3.

[96] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum.* 8.

[97] Ibid. 3.

[98] Justin O'Connor and Kate Shaw, "What Next for the Creative City?," *City, Culture and Society* 5, no. 3 (2014). 170.

Vergo, *The New Museology*, led to the proliferation of museum writing in following decades referred to by Anderson and Conn.[99] Vergo discussed the movement that emerged out of "widespread dissatisfaction with the 'old' museology" arguing that too much focus had been on museum methods and too little about the purpose of museums.[100] He called for a reexamination of the role of museums in society, that must move beyond measuring success via "more money and more visitors" to avoid finding themselves "dubbed as living fossils".[101] Barrett has described this as an ethos of shifting focus onto the profession instead of creating better museums for communities and opening up new ways of thinking about both museum management as well as their societal role.[102]

Ideology of the new museology dealt with changes in "value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity"[103] within museums. This also included the reallocation of power and "curatorial redistribution" with the push for greater participation, access and diversity of representation.[104] The new museology of the late 1980s paralleled developments in the fields of history, heritage and academia and various critiques of power. Barrett, for example, highlights the questioning of colonial practice, the increasing social and feminist art history, and the "unsettling of canons".[105] American museum scholar and curator Christina Kreps traces the lineage of new museology back to the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and community-based museum initiatives. By bringing a new social element to museums, in contrast to traditional interpretation and function, Kreps describes conventional museums being seen as object-centered, whereas the new museum was to be people-centered, action-oriented, and devoted to social change and development.[106] The implications of this change of direction are now being worked out in contemporary heritage and museum practice.

The recent debates that have arisen around the relationship of curators, visitors, objects, and the tangible and intangibles of heritage can be seen to come out of some of the key tenets of new museology as described by Sharon MacDonald: "object meanings as contextual rather

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[99] Vergo, *The New Museology*.

[100] Ibid. 3.

[101] Ibid. 3.

[102] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 146.

[103] Vikki McCall and Clive Gray, "Museums and the 'New Museology': Theory, Practice and Organisational Change," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 29, no. 1 (2014). 20.

[104] Ibid. 20.

[105] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 147.

[106] Christina Kreps, "Curatorship as Social Practice," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 46, no. 3 (2003).

than inherent" and "experience and understanding of exhibitions is variable rather than fixed or premeditated".[107] Similarities can be seen in critical heritage scholar Laurajane Smith's arguments relating to heritage experience and exhibitions. Smith highlights a focus toward heritage management and conservation that incorporates the politicised, constructed processes of production, consumption and engagement with heritage in its varied forms.[108]

Developments during the later twentieth century saw the use of artists in reinterpreting material. One example in *Reinventing the Museum* is the 1992–93 'Mining the Museum' project, interpreting the collection at Maryland, and described as a "significant artwork".[109] Anderson also names Stephen Weil's 'From being about something to being for somebody' as a "seminal article" of the 1970s.[110] This is a concept that has evolved further with increased focus on heritage and museums also being made by communities, telling their own stories.[111]

The reconsideration of the purpose of museums, and the relationship between curators, heritage content, collaborators and visitors, evolved into twenty-first century conversations about the political aspects of museums, such as those in Smith, Bennett, and Hooper-Greenhill, and to the approach of "challenging histories", as in Kidd and Witcomb, bringing a more intense and comprehensive level of critique. Witcomb and Buckley have drawn important parallels between museology and this more critical heritage field.[112] These parallels can come to include approaches to curatorial practice and research, the interplay of tangible and intangible heritage, and the contribution of visitors and other stakeholders, such as artists. Other key areas of consideration include: decolonisation, as in Tihuwai Smith[113] and Sentance;[114] organisational approaches to opening up and relevance as in Simon;[115] cultural leadership analysed by Holden;[116] and the complex nature of value as part of a cultural economy explored by

[107] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 14 See also the Pitt Rivers Museum relational project: https://digital.humanities.ox.ac.uk/project/relational-museum.

[108] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*.

[109] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum : The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*.

[110] Ibid.

[111] See OF/BY/FOR ALL https://www.ofbyforall.org/.

[112] Witcomb and Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies': Looking Back in Order to Look Forward".

[113] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Dunedin, N.Z.: Otago University Press, 2012).

[114] Nathan Sentance, *Archival Decolonist* (blog) Accessed 25th May 2020, https://archivaldecolonist.com/.

[115] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*.

[116] John Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership," in *Key Issues in the Arts and Entertainment Industry*. (Woodeaton, Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Ltd., 2011).

O'Connor.[117] Each of these themes/issues makes a significant contribution to the ability of cultural organisations to make a difference in people's lives.

Heritage studies and social/cultural development

Major shifts have occurred in the field of heritage studies over the latter half of the twentieth century. This has included the recognition of cultural landscapes in the 1990s and the HUL concept launched by UNESCO in 2012, both "emphasising the need for a holistic view of the environment and a sensitive, balanced approach to new human interventions"[118] in historic cities.

A table presented in the recent work of Cooke, Buckley and Fayad (figure 1.2 below) demonstrates shifts in heritage practice from 'conventional' to the 'new HUL practice.'[119]

The Burra Charter says …	Conventional heritage practice	New 'HUL' practice
… for places of cultural significance	'Heritage' is focused on spatially located 'places'	More than places
Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects [Article 1.2]	Values are tangibly expressed and embedded in place	Values embodied in people
Policy for managing a place must be based on an understanding of its cultural significance [Article 1.1]	Statements of Significance are adopted and applied through formal processes and are fixed for long periods	Significance as fluid, contestable
Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions [Article 1.1] – comprising fabric, associations and meanings	Focus on fabric, especially the exterior fabric and appearance of historic buildings	People carry values which are attributed to tangible and intangible elements
		More than visual
		Depending on values, fabric could be just one way of transmitting meanings
Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations [Article 1.2]	Victorian State legislation refers to aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific or social significance	Cultural significance is localised – defined by the distinctiveness of the place and values held by people
	In practice, aesthetic, architectural and historical significance are used more frequently than the others	
Use can be part of significance [Article 7.1]	Adaptive re-use is common	Values guide the approach to the management of change. For example people may value use above fabric in particular instances
Compatible use respects the cultural significance of a place [Article 1.11]	Uses are generally not included in statutory requirements	
Conservation of a place should identify all aspects of cultural and natural significance … [Article 5.1]	Natural values are considered through separate systems of decision making	Practice needs to reflect cultural perspectives that do not separate nature and culture (including Indigenous cultures)
	Indigenous cultural heritage values are considered through separate systems of decision making	
The setting of a place can be significant [Article 8]	Heritage places are strictly bounded	Landscapes are permeable and experiential
	Precincts/areas are a focus for contestation and patchy outcomes	
Oriented at people who provide advice, make decisions or undertake works [Preamble]	Methods are expert-led	Methods are community-centred and locally focused
Conservation should make use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of the place. [Article 4]	Methods are focused on physical recording and historical documents	New visual and spatial methods, cultural mapping and localised approaches
Cultural Significance is defined very broadly [Australia ICOMOS 2013b]	Aboriginal heritage is often equated with pre-contact archaeological sites	Aboriginal and settler communities associate their heritage with landscapes comprised of diverse elements and periods of history, including contemporary associations

Figure 6.6 Emerging HUL practice in Ballarat and its links with Australian practice.[7]

Figure 1.2: 'Emerging HUL practice in Ballarat and its links with Australian practice'

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[117] O'Connor, *After the Creative Industries*.

[118] Logan, Nic Craith, and Kockel, eds., *A Companion to Heritage Studies*. 3.

[119] Cooke, Buckley, and Fayad, "Using the Historic Urban Landscape to Reimagine Ballarat: The Local Context". 106.

In a framework similar to the RTM tool, this is a useful reference point for discussing shifts in emphasis. What can broadly be observed here is a move from the focus being on material phenomena (buildings, objects) to values being "embodied in people" where heritage significance is "fluid and contestable".[120] Also importantly, conventional practice has often seen Aboriginal heritage "equated with pre-contact archaeological sites", whereas HUL sees the association with it as being "comprised of diverse elements and periods of history, including contemporary associations".[121] In their discussion of HUL in Ballarat (2016), Cooke et al state that the development of values-based heritage work and the "transformations foreshadowed" in the table could have significant impacts on heritage practices of the future.[122] They suggest that HUL presents opportunities to "take back and re-appropriate heritage to those that are more inclusive, diverse and community centred".[123] The language and aims here are reminiscent of Harrison's and inform the framework of this project, as does Anderson's *Reinventing the Museum* paradigm shift.[124] Shared values are evident here but the full impacts of the HUL approach remain to be seen.

Taylor discusses the philosophical foundations that underpin both the concept of cultural landscapes and the HUL approach. Here he refers to the foundational work of Bandarin and van Oers (2012).[125] They describe HUL's recognition of the layering of significances and values deposited over time in historic cities by different communities under different contexts. Taylor states that this approach "relates closely to the cultural landscape concept of layers through time replete with social meanings".[126] As a result Taylor believes cities, including Ballarat, can be understood as a type of cultural landscape. The interconnections between layers and meanings through time are significant, not only in cities but also (as this thesis addresses) in their cultural organisations that manage heritage collections and stories. The ecological nature of these layers and relationships across people, stories, tangible and intangible heritage and different forms of value can be powerfully brought to life through work that creatively activates the past.

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid. 107.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum.* 3.

[125] Bandarin and van Oers, *The Historic Urban Landscape Managing Heritage in an Urban Century.*

[126] Ken Taylor, "The Historic Urban Landscape Paradigm and Cities as Cultural Landscapes. Challenging Orthodoxy in Urban Conservation," *Landscape Research* 41, no. 4 (2016). 471.

This shift towards understanding the meanings and values of heritage places as being layered, and neither static nor inherent, has led scholars to note that "not all heritage serves as a reminder of a glorious past" and that along with new perspectives on cities, collecting practices are also undergoing a "growing critique of museum and archiving practices"[127]. This covers postcolonial critique through to issues of sustainability, social cohesion, digital technologies and questions of ownership.[128] As Harrison puts it (citing previous work by Smith 2006, Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996 and Lowenthal 2004) heritage is not a thing but refers to attitudes and relationships with the past, where heritage is formed *in the present* (original italics).[129] In this model, connection with the past is variable and might involve tangible links to objects, buildings or places, or intangible practices that appear to be separate from material things.[130] Harrison stresses the variability of forms heritage can take but also argues for the link between tangible and intangible heritage, as being interconnected rather than separate entities. This changed thinking in relation to heritage and museum practice (a move away from the monumental and fixed) is deeply connected to social, cultural and political developments. It calls for greater inclusion and representation in heritage sites and museums, as outlined in the earlier discussion of new museology, as well as the role heritage might play in addressing contemporary societal challenges.

The 1960s and 1970s in Australia, and around the world, saw social movement in areas such as gender equality and Indigenous and First Nation rights, prompting changes of attitudes in museums and historiography. In America in the 1990s, when discussing the growth of writing on the subject of museums, Anderson notes that issues of racism and equality in US museums did not enter the national dialogue until the 1980s, an observation that fed into the new debates around access and diversity. Conn identifies the charge of museum elitism where, in the 1920s and 1930s, institutions were accused of being "little more than monuments to the taste of wealthy plutocrats" and notes these accusations, with their "vaguely class overtones", as being levelled again in the context of the identity politics of the 1960s.[131] His dissenting voice is critical of the link between museums and politics. Debates around the degree to which heritage and museums are inherently political are themselves part of the critical role that heritage—and

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[127] Logan, Craith, and Kockel, eds. *A Companion to Heritage Studies*. 6.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 14.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* 9.

the places where heritage is collected and displayed—can play in society. These debates and discussions meet in this thesis via the study of cultural organisations and their relationship with both their heritage collections and storytelling while sited in their contemporary city contexts and broader global debates.

Into the twenty-first century

Critical Heritage

The field of critical heritage works from an updated understanding of what heritage is. It involves analysis of how heritage is formed, who controls and authorises it, what it can do, and when it possibly needs to disappear. These shifts and debates are integral to the discussion of cultural organisations and creative connections made via their heritage collections.

Australian scholars connected with international networks and concerns formed the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) in 2012.[132] Parallels can be seen with HUL, as movement to a broader, more dynamic definition of heritage, one that crosses heritage management, creation and experience, and also looks to the future. (HUL, however, works from a local government setting while critical heritage with its links to museology, noted by Witcomb and Buckley, works more from academia and industry). Scholar and past ACHS president, Tim Winter, has called for a more critical engagement with heritage studies which better understands the

> various ways in which heritage now has a stake in, and can act as a positive enabler for, the complex, multi-vector challenges that face us today, such as cultural and environmental sustainability, economic inequalities, conflict resolution, social cohesion and the future of cities, to name a few.[133]

In addition to the enabling role heritage might play, a key element of critical heritage has been recognition of the distinction between "official heritage"[134]—or Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD[135])—referring to professional practices authorised by state, legislation or charter, and this broader understanding of heritage as many things across "objects, places, and practices"

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[132] "History, 2012 Manifesto," Association of Critical Heritage Studies, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/

[133] Tim Winter, "Clarifying the Critical in Critical Heritage Studies," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 19, no. 6 (2013). 3.

[134] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 14.

[135] Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, eds. *Intangible Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2009). 7.

where intangible is not separate from material.[136] As Smith and Akagawa put it: moving away from the polarising of tangible and intangible heritage, where in fact all is intangible in that values are given by people, not vice versa.[137]

Key features and critiques as expressed in the ACHS 2011 manifesto centre around the historical focus in heritage studies on "Western, predominantly European, experts in archaeology, history, architecture and art history".[138] The AHD is described in the manifesto as "the old way of looking at heritage", a view that privileges "old, grand, prestigious, expert approved sites, buildings and artefacts that sustain Western narratives of nation, class and science". The importance of heritage connecting with other disciplines, as well as engaging in contemporary issues such as urban development and climate change, can be seen in the ACHS 2018 conference theme of borders, which considered "how heritage is valued, preserved, politicised, mobilised, financed, planned and destroyed".[139] This, along with Harrison's *Heritage Futures*,[140] represents the shift from heritage being focussed on the past to how it connects with our relationship to the future.

In *Heritage: Critical Approaches*, Harrison aims to bring together two existing critical approaches—the material and the discursive—"broadening the debate from one about heritage as power, to a wide debate about the future".[141] He states that while studies have focused on the politics of representation and discursive processes of meaning-making, this book is "more attuned to affective qualities of heritage" and links to broader global issues.[142] In this way, Harrison broadens the heritage discussion from what Conn criticises as identity politics, but also makes a deeply political connection to global issues. Harrison describes how the definition of heritage is changing through the 1990s and 2000s, developing critical and cross-disciplinary approaches and globalisation of heritage studies where he sees "the role of uncertainty in accounting for heritage as a global phenomenon".[143] He states that the new millennium and its sense of crisis has contributed to a growth of nostalgia, and a rise of the experience economy. In his 2013 book he aims to develop "a toolkit of concepts" and address the under-theorised

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[136] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 14.

[137] Smith and Akagawa, eds. *Intangible Heritage*. 6.

[138] "History, 2012 Manifesto."

[139] Ibid.

[140] Harrison Rodney et al, "Heritage Futures," *Archaeology International* 19, no. 3 (2016).

[141] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 229.

[142] Ibid. 11.

[143] Ibid.

area, "reorienting heritage so that it might be more closely connected with other contemporary social, political, economic and environmental concerns".[144]

As part of this, Harrison believes in moving beyond what he calls the dominant "salvage" paradigm of heritage, amid concerns for "a present drowning in its pasts".[145] Moving towards a similar conclusion, Conn discusses French historian Pierre Nora and the concept of museums acting as places where we can measure the distance between then and now. He states that "whatever their economic hopes or political goals [in the new golden age of museum building] many of these new museums promise to function as places of our collective memory".[146] The danger, he highlights, is that our "landscape, metaphorically and literally, becomes so cluttered with our attempts to remember the past that they crowd out our capacity to imagine the future".[147] Harrison draws on literature on collective memory to suggest that forgetting is integral to remembering and that attention will need to be paid to this area by critical heritage studies in the future.

As can be sensed here, there are many live questions. What positive role can heritage in its varied forms play in relation to contemporary challenges? How are legacies of the past (including colonial practices) addressed today? How is heritage value and legitimacy ascribed? What stays and what goes? These are serious questions that the GLAM sector, as cultural organisations that house and display heritage collections, face.

GLAM

GLAM is a relatively recent acronym that encompasses galleries, libraries, archives and museums as collectors and interpreters of cultural material. Key practical concerns of the sector deal with digitisation, collaboration, and convergence[148] in relation to the preservation of and access to collections. Broader debates around the possibilities and challenges of the sector include the questions outlined in the preceding paragraph, as well as the participating organisations' role in the public sphere and in society generally as community builders, and as

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[144] Ibid. 4.

[145] Ibid. 167

[146] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* 19.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Wendy Davis and Katherine Howard, "Cultural Policy and Australia's National Cultural Heritage: Issues and Challenges in the Glam Landscape," *The Australian Library Journal* 62, no. 1 (2013).

providers of places for debate and activism. Articulation of the sector's value, and of government policy and funding, is also significant.

GLAM cultural organisations have been highlighted as places of trust in an increasingly uncertain, post-truth world[149] and seen as thriving in a position where they have become "as much about community as the literary [and other] riches they contain".[150] Similarly, journalist and author Gideon Haigh has described MIs as having an unlikely contemporary revival in their role within communities.[151] At the same time there is argument against the "myth of neutrality".[152] This myth involves the acceptance of the belief that institutions such as museums and libraries reflect a view of society which is an impartial one, and that the historical reality they represent is neutral. In recent years, the U.S.-based #MuseumsAreNotNeutral online campaign has articulated concerns, "building on decades of activism work, challenging the supposedly 'neutral' status of institutions".[153] Similarly, in Australia, museum worker and critic Nathan Sentance has argued that "museums, libraries and archives cannot remain objective or neutral because they never were".[154] Debate has arisen over the proposed changes to ICOMs definition of museums, as discussed in Part One, in particular around what has been labelled as its political tone.[155] Janes and Sandell write in *Museum Activism* that despite a common belief among museum boards and staff that they must protect their neutrality "the inherent and inevitably political character of museums is increasingly acknowledged".[156] They believe that "persistent anxiety" around how to navigate the opportunities and challenges this presents limits the opportunities museums (and similar organisations) have to "achieve their true potential".[157]

These are live debates that are also affected by government policy and funding. In the Australian government the GLAM sector sits within the Creative Industries area along with

[149] Lee Rainey, "The Reinvention Recipe: One Part Desperation. One Part Aggravation. One Part Decimation. One Part Liberation." (paper presented at the International Conference of Independent Libraries & Mechanics' Institutes. Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century, San Francisco, 2016).

[150] Jane Cadzow, "One for the Books; the Unlikely Rennaissance of Libraries in a Digital Age," *Sydney Morning Herald* September 28th, 2019.

[151] Gideon Haigh, "Rebirth of History," *The Australian* July 30th, 2016.

[152] *Museum Activism*, ed. Richard Sandell Robert R Janes (New York: Routledge, 2019). 8.

[153] Suyin Haynes, "Why a Plan to Redefine the Meaning of 'Museum' Is Stirring up Controversy," *Time,* September 9th, 2019. Accessed 25th May 2020, https://time.com/5670807/museums-definition-debate/.

[154] Sentance, "Archival Decolonist".

[155] "Why a Plan to Redefine the Meaning of 'Museum' Is Stirring up Controversy."

[156] Janes and Sandell, *Museum Activism*. 8.

[157] Ibid.

arts. In Victoria, GLAM sits within the Creative Victoria department. In 2018, following funding cuts, the Australian peak body, GLAM Peak, responded with an articulation of the sector's value as a contribution to a government inquiry.[158] It presented these under the categories of intrinsic, social, educational, scholarly, creative and commercial value, and concluded that whilst "applauding innovative approaches to programming and generating new income streams" it was necessary to "caution against overestimating the level of funding available from non-government sources". They also stressed the need for government to play a role in "leading, constructing and investing" in a vision for these institutions.[159]

Of particular note is their statement that ongoing under-resourcing also reduces impact and access "beyond the ACT," referring to the many smaller, often volunteer-based, collecting organisations around the country. Causing further unrest was the December 2019 removal of a dedicated federal Arts Department. The Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) wrote in a member email that it was "shocked and dismayed" and questioned the agency of an "arts division at the bottom of a huge department's pecking order" stating that externally "visibility matters. Respect matters. The creative industries matter. Our cultural lives matter".[160] It also articulated the various kinds of value that "the collections sector" contributes, stating that the sector is "a resource for innovation and creativity, and a basis for learning and knowledge production on many levels. Museums and galleries are sites of social inclusion and opportunities for Indigenous reconciliation. They are integral to community identity and wellbeing as well as drawcards for cultural tourism".[161] The articulation of various forms of value and the impacts of policy decisions are clearly issues in the GLAM sector.

As in issues around heritage, the discussion of value is inevitably and deeply political. Holden notes that funding of culture is no longer considered a public good like health and education, and that erratic shifts in funding over the last three decades have often been decided not on financial grounds but rather ideological ones.[162] O'Connor asserts the intentional shift from cultural to creative in policy as "not a terminological whim" but as expressing something deeper where an "expanded understanding of culture was cast as an economic driver of the

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[158] "Digital Access to Collections".

[159] Ibid.

[160] Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA), *Email Correspondence* (10/12/2019).

[161] Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA), *Email Correspondence* (10/12/2019).

[162] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy". 12.

creative industries".[163] Political decisions such as these affect both internal and external understandings and evaluation of art and culture. Just as O'Connor has spoken of the political nature of shifts from cultural industries to creative industries, Meyrick also questions the matter of neutrality in relation to evaluation. This is part of his critique of cultural instrumentalism in Australia since the 1990s and the shift from a traditional concept of "the arts" to a contemporary concept of "creative industries" with quantification becoming key to the change.[164] He believes this shift to develop "indicators and benchmarks" in cultural activities and creative practices (which he sees as hugely varying and impossible to compare) to be "a political act". Here the shift to creative industries concept and the focus on measurement is "not neutral" and is in need of "critical scrutiny".[165]

In the past, statements of the universal good of high culture found in galleries, libraries and museums saw the funding of arts and culture as public good. Social developments mean that the problematic elitist, exclusive, colonial practices associated with it have moved to discussion of access, diversity and agency. But also, politically and economically there has been a push for an unrealistic self-sustaining practice for arts and culture through the creative industries model and increased pressure on cultural organisations to justify their activities and receipt of government funding. While the need for accountability is unquestioned, what is of deep concern is the focus on economic and instrumental outcomes, outcomes which limit other contributions made by both the GLAM sector and arts generally across their varied forms. What to measure and how to measure it are questions which lie at the heart of any funding debate. This is discussed further in part four of this review.

As culture is ever-evolving, so too are these debates. David and Howard have noted that "GLAM institutions are operating in a changing environment of cultural-heritage and collecting practices…while this lack of clear disciplinary definition could be seen as a problem, by its very nature GLAM also offers potentially rich, yet-to-be-explored areas for exploring the cultural-heritage sector".[166] In this way, parallels can be seen here with HUL and critical heritage as emergent fields, still in the process of developing, and facing various live

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[163] O'Connor, *After the Creative Industries*.

[164] Robert Phiddian et al, "Counting Culture to Death: An Australian Perspective on Culture Counts and Quality Metrics," *Cultural Trends* 26, no. 2 (2017). 177.

[165] Ibid. 179.

[166] Davis and Howard, "Cultural Policy and Australia's National Cultural Heritage: Issues and Challenges in the Glam Landscape". 16–17.

challenges. One such in the Australian context, is debate around Indigenous recognition and the notion of truth-telling that is key to the 2017 document *Uluru Statement from the Heart*[167]. This drive to address past injustices and silences is also captured in the development of an Indigenous Roadmap in the GLAM sector, through the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMAGA), advocating for agency and self-determination as well as highlighting what can be learnt about, and be proud of, as a nation with the oldest living culture.[168] Historian Anna Clarke has stated that "we may have developed new critical approaches, and a growing understanding of the genealogy of historical silence. Yet the meaning and the consequences of that understanding are still a work in progress".[169] An essential part of truth telling is ensuring that unheard voices and perspectives are amplified; creative engagement with materials of the past provides one way of enabling this.

Decolonisation in GLAM

The call for greater critique of heritage studies (via a re-evaluation of heritage practices and current and future challenges in the field) and museology (via the adoption of ideals toward diversity and inclusion as expressed in the reinvented museum) is under scrutiny in the GLAM sector. One example of this work is the focus upon Indigenous culture and agency and the ways in which these have been handled in the past compared with the concept of decolonisation in current and future practice. The implications of this kind of analysis have stimulated debate, even controversy.[170] In opposition to this move towards decolonisation, commentators such as Conn have expressed deep reservations: it is a question, he argues, of "demanding political penance from the museums for the sins of colonialism".[171] This minority view fails to take into account what Witcomb has called the "colonial relations that underpinned the birth of the museum institution itself and the danger of reproducing these".[172] Critical reflection on past practices is here considered a key way of guiding future approaches of both a robust critical

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[167] https://ulurustatement.org/.

[168] See: https://www.amaga.org.au/shop/first-peoples-roadmap-enhancing-indigenous-engagement-museums-and-galleries-hardcopy-version.

[169] Anna Clarke, "Friday Essay: The 'Great Australian Silence' 50 Years On," *The Conversation* August 23rd 2018. Accessed May 25th 2020, https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-great-australian-silence-50-years-on-100737.

[170] See for example V&A Director Tristram Hunt on repatriation- https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/29/should-museums-return-their-colonial-artefacts.

[171] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* 15.

[172] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 259.

heritage field and in fulfilment of the reinvented museum ideals. Questions around control of collections and their narratives are pertinent.

In debates around reflection on the past and shifts into the future in Australia, Nathan Sentance is a strong advocate for First Nations perspectives and stories being "told and controlled by First Nations People" in GLAM organisations. He claims this is to *"balance the biases and misinterpretations of Aboriginal culture and people that has been previously set by GLAM institutions"*. On his popular blog, *Archival Decolonist*, Sentance covers issues in the sector including commemorative events, diversity as disruption (not "shallow exercises") and argues that museums and memory institutions have never been historically neutral, so to argue for this in the present is to misrepresent them.[173]

Sentance has a particular interest in the role of archives and collections in overturning the common assumption of their existence as facts: he stresses that with the "power that the archives wield: they can turn ideology into history, opinion into fact".[174] One example he discusses to illustrate this is the creative practice-as-research work of South Australian based Narungga poet and researcher Natalie Harkin. In her book *Colonial Archive: Archival Poetics,* Harkin speaks of "remembering into the future" as past, present and future are connected through her creative engagement with archives, in what Sentance calls an "exercise in the right of reply".[175] Sentance states that in Harkin's process she "names the power of archives, so this power cannot remain invisible but rather, can be challenged and critiqued. *Archival Poetics* speaks back to this power and dismantles it. In turn, it asserts the power that we First Nations people hold and have always held – a power that exists outside of colonial systems".[176] Just as Australia is grappling with these issues and exploring their possibilities, Ballarat is, too, guided and challenged by developments in both arts and heritage.

This recognition of alternative belief systems and its refocussing of power dynamics involves what Harkin has called "historical reckoning",[177] a process happening both within and without GLAM institutions and academia. The decolonising approach can be traced back to

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[173] Sentance, *Archival Decolonist.*

[174] Nathan Sentance, "Disrupting the Colonial Archive," September 18th 2019, accessed 25th May 2020, https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/natalie-harkin-archival-poetics/.

[175] Natalie Harkin, "Archival Poetics: A Decolonial Offering" (paper presented at the Critical Archives: New Interpretations, New Practices and New Lives for Archival Material, Deakin University, Burwood, 2017).

[176] Sentance, "Disrupting the Colonial Archive".

[177] Harkin, "Archival Poetics: A Decolonial Offering".

New Zealand scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's seminal *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples.*[178] There Smith argues that archives and collecting practices, along with research, require deeper analysis of imperialism and an understanding of how "the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices".[179] Smith cites indigenous people's telling of alternative stories as being "powerful forms of resistance".[180] Harkin's work as discussed via Sentance is an example of this, using the creative forms of poetry and weaving. Approaches such as these, including the use of theatre, dance, music, visual art, film and virtual reality present ways for artists and cultural organisations and collections to provide new interpretations with potential shifts in power imbalances, both past and present. In accordance with the HUL table's presentation of shifts from conventional heritage, practice methods may become more "community centred and locally focussed" and more creative, moving beyond "physical recording and historical documents". (Figure 1.2)

When it comes to projects in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders collaborate in GLAM, Barrett's questioning of decolonisation discussions in museums is also relevant. She states that a fine line is trodden "between breaking new ground, [with reinterpretation of collections and their traditionally told narratives for example] and appropriating spaces and practices already situated elsewhere".[181] Sentance's call for structural change needing to be "supported, advocated and undertaken by memory institutions" also argues that this be done "without infringing on work already being done by grassroots groups".[182] There is a balance to be sought here, and Barrett stresses the need to ask: "who is invigorating whom, and at what cost"?[183] As this thesis considers the double aim of organisational renewal along with greater diversity and participation of content and collaborations, a sensitive approach toward mutual benefit and respect becomes paramount. Its implications are specifically addressed through the *Imprints: Storytelling the City* case study in chapter six.

Themes within heritage and museology using RMT binaries

Following from the above, key themes of scholarship will now be discussed under the two headings of curation and creative use of collections, and organisational management. Within

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[178] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies.*

[179] Ibid. 32.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere.*

[182] Sentance, "Archival Decolonist".

[183] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere.* 114.

this is the relationship of organisations with the public—that term being understood in Barrett's nuanced sense of its diversity—and the broader issues of cities, heritage, creativity, and the links between past present and future within a dialogue around value and notions of usefulness.

Creative activation is here viewed as having the aims both of revitalising organisations, and of providing places of relevance and connection for various communities. It works from the notion that heritage places and collections and GLAM organisations might be used as launching points and action packs for the twenty-first century.[184] The role of artists as activators and connectors is explored in the 2016 collection of essays *Fantasies of the Library,* the book itself presented as an active book-as-exhibition. Editor Anne-Sophie Springer states that it is now standard practice to invite artists to "engage with existing collections in radical or novel ways, with the hope of reanimating the holdings according to contemporary agendas or alternate histories and epistemologies, all while refurbishing the attraction of aging institutes and soliciting new audiences".[185] The use of creativity also links to the MIs' historical role in the arts, as discussed further in chapters two and four. Contemporary creative activation can be the means by which "more voices are heard, master narratives challenged, reorganisation of objects [undertaken]to question meanings, [creating a] dynamic approach to the encounter between visitor and museum narrative".[186]

Barrett, however, has some reservations about this process. While she is generally supportive of this new approach to heritage and museums, she also notes the need to be aware of the "dangers of appropriation and duplication".[187] Barrett believes the key to avoid this is the need to maintain a nuanced understanding of the terms "public" and "community" where the relationship between each diverse entity and the institution is a reciprocal one; where in Smith's view "heritage, or heritage making, [is to be seen] as an embodied set of practices or performances in which cultural meaning is continually negotiated and remade, and is, moreover, a process in which people emotionally invest in certain understandings of the past and what they mean for contemporary identity and sense of place".[188] With this caveat in mind

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[184] Megan Prelinger, "The Analog Library in a Digital World: Practices for a Busy Room" (paper presented at the International Conference of Independent Libraries & Mechanics' Institutes. Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century San Francisco, 2016).

[185] Springer and Turpin, eds., *Fantasies of the Library*. 9.

[186] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000).

[187] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 114.

[188] Smith Laurajane, "Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites," *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage* 14, no. 2 (2014).

then, we can now turn to the role of the curator and collections in the process of creative activation. Here, binaries from the RMT will be used to frame the discussion.

The changing role of the curator (RMT binaries of changing voice of authority to multiple viewpoints and individual work to collaboration)

The historic and authoritative curator discussed in early sections saw the academic knowledge of the curator as truth.[189] This concept can also be seen to a degree in relation to MIs and BMI management in the late nineteenth century being described as "stern custodians" of collections, leading to a complex relationship with the public and to issues of access. In the move from the nineteenth-century museum visitor being considered as a vessel to be filled, or as a *tabula rasa*, to him or her playing more active and participatory roles, the function of the curator has been questioned.[190] These shifts are echoed across the arts and heritage sectors, with John Holden also noting the changing role and mission of cultural organisations from "privileged gatekeepers to facilitators".[191] Witcomb has also noted the shift from the nineteenth-century museum aim to "instil a sense of morality and good behaviour in the hearts and minds of citizens, [whereas] the aim today is to foster an acceptance of cultural diversity".[192] Barrett discusses the new museology aims of democratising rather than universalised exhibition practices and representing "multiple voices rather than being singularly authoritative", [193] which are similar objectives to those of the RMT.

Barrett presents various views on contemporary curation and the important differences between contexts such as art museums and history museums. To a degree, she states that art museums act as power brokers or taste makers, "picking the public mood" by deciding what is seen and guiding cultural experience and consumption. With this come pressures to measure success through a quantitative approach of "bums on seats". Alternatively, there are participatory approaches to curation such as Kreps' "appropriate museology": working from bottom up, being people centered and appropriate to local settings.[194] This approach may combine Indigenous curatorial practice and focus on the appropriate curation of cultural material as chosen and valued by communities. Barrett asks why a museum should be the preferred site

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[189] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 148.

[190] Ibid. 143.

[191] Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership". 1.

[192] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 80.

[193] Ibid. 4.

[194] Ibid. 152.

for such cultural work rather than "maintaining traditions [and exhibiting it] in their own community contexts".[195] As discussed above, mutual respect and reciprocity are key. If museums are to function as open places for public debate and culture, Barrett concludes that following new museology "curatorial practices based on an ethos of participation, respect, a recognition of diversity and a belief in healthy intellectual debate," are more likely to be effective than the past, authoritarian approach.

A common way of viewing the curatorial role has become as a facilitator working across various aspects of an organization, from finance to technology and community awareness. Here curators are "no longer undisputed dispenser[s] of knowledge" but use the above skills to negotiate "competing agendas and beliefs".[196] The contemporary curator's role may involve collaboration regarding these various elements of public programming along with community engagement and outreach, and the management of online content, stakeholder development and business. As Kreps poses in discussing curatorship as social practice, "curatorial work has become so encompassing that it is now difficult to define precisely what a curator is and does".[197] It is in this context that the curatorial role of the BMI will be assessed (chapters five, six and seven) and comparative analysis of interviewed staff at cultural organisations (chapters three and four) will be undertaken, linking back to the expanded sphere that cultural institutes operate in—from education to entertainment and tourism.

Objects and Visitors (RMT binaries change of collection driven to audience focused)

As museologist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has observed: "[m]useums were once defined by their relationship to objects: curators were keepers and their greatest asset was their collections. Today, they are defined more than ever by their relationship to visitors".[198] Anderson discusses the move away from collections as being the sole measure of value for a museum to focus on public service,[199] yet, and equally importantly, she notes that "collections can illustrate and illuminate stories, aspects of community life, people, and the natural world in ways we are just beginning to explore".[200] This aligns with Barrett's discussion of a twenty-first century shift again *away* from the preoccupation with visitors. Here she notes what

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[195] Ibid. 154.

[196] Ibid. 151.

[197] Kreps, "Curatorship as Social Practice". 312.

[198] Ibid. 3.

[199] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum : The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*. 9.

[200] Ibid. 9.

MacDonald has called the "restitution of respect for museum curators and directors who use their specialist knowledge to challenge and inspire audiences in unexpected ways".[201]

Just as curatorial knowledge of collections and public participation and access need not be oppositional but rather relational, Kreps argues that in the debate around museums being either objects- or people-focused these two areas are not mutually exclusive: "Objects in museums only have value and meaning in relation to people. What we need is an approach to curatorial work that recognizes the interplay of objects, people, and societies, and expresses these relationships in social and cultural contexts".[202] Important to this approach is Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's reminder that culture is also always evolving. Discussing UNESCO heritage listings, she argues that change is intrinsic to culture, and measures intended to preserve, conserve, safeguard, and sustain particular cultural practices are caught between freezing the practice and addressing the inherent processual nature of culture.[203]

Here the move from the past museological focus on specimens, categorisation and objective facts and knowledge shifts to the reinvented museum's multiple viewpoints. And rather than curators and GLAM organisations acting as gatekeepers, their specific knowledge and expertise can inform their role as facilitators and stewards, and challenge past narratives through the creative use of collections, collaborations and storytelling. In this way collections act as springboards to events, programming and projects that can create connecting points, with meaning-making processes in different instances, either led or shared by curators, artists, and audiences. This people-centered and adaptable approach finds a parallel in the HUL work in historic cities, with its focus on values and the sharing of different kinds of knowledge. As explored in the 2011 collection of essays, *Performance and the City,* connecting in creatively to city contexts "can help renegotiate the urban archive, to build the city and to change it".[204] The degree to which cultural organisations are able to work in this model is however reliant on their structural capacity for: shared overall vision and strategy; communication of the aims with specific projects (sometimes community based, sometimes artist based, sometimes a conversation); and on the relationship with local communities and

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[201] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*.

[202] Kreps, "Curatorship as Social Practice".

[203] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production[This Text]," *Museum International* 66, no. 1-4 (2014). 169.

[204] D. J. Hopkins, Shelley Orr, and Kim Solga, eds., *Performance and the City* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 6.

their positioning in city networks. The local context of Ballarat will be discussed in this regard in chapter two.

New uses of collections and affective experience (RMT binaries: exclusive to inclusive and assumptions about audiences to knowledge about audiences)

As well as GLAM organisations questioning their role in the twenty-first century, they are reassessing their collections and contemplating how these can be used in new ways for greater relevance and critique. Hooper Greenhill notes "moves towards reconciliation and reparation following the destructive elements of the nineteenth and twentieth century require museums to review their holdings and the stance they take towards them".[205] She also states that "some of the most revealing challenges to the traditional modernist museum are those used by artists".[206] Various museums and galleries have held exhibitions that directly engage with this, and ask artists to revisit relations with collections and institutions through new creative work. Local examples include Art Gallery of Ballarat's *Solis* with artist Louiseann King, and *Parlour* with artist Megan Evans, whose installations created interventions in existing gallery spaces and collections to illuminate effects of colonisation. (Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

Figure 1.3: Louiseann King's *Solis* at AGB, 2018. Image courtesy of Art Gallery of Ballarat and Louiseann King. Photography by Danny Wooten.

Figure 1.4: Installation shot from *Parlour*. Megan Evans, Parlour, 2018, digital photograph on rag paper, 92 x 133cm, Purchased with funds from the Joe White Bequest, 2019, Collection of the Art Gallery of Ballarat.

GLAM organisations and their collaborators have the potential to find new perspectives and expand inclusivity through creative use of existing collections. In the reinvented museum context, these creative forms of engagement across visual arts, performance, multimedia and

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[205] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. 150.
[206] Ibid. 141.

so on can also be a means to "fill the gaps"[207] or speak the silence, referred to by Stanner and Clark. Australian museologist and researcher Jenny Kidd states: "museums are inextricably caught up in interpretation of the intangible—voicing those cultures and individual stories that have been absent from collections".[208] This gap-filling approach facilitates inclusivity and also highlights the multiplicity of experiences people bring to heritage and collections. Smith discusses the "performative and embodied nature of the museum visit", questioning the dominance of learning as a main objective and the shift towards more participatory practices.[209] The role of artists within this experience can be varied. Kidd's research into museum theatre, for example, examines the interlinking experience of visitors, audiences and participants. Kidd's 2006 *Performance, Learning and Heritage* research project explored "the suitability of performance as a tool for filling the gaps in collections".[210] Findings presented in 2011 stated:

> Usefully complicating the meaning-making process through the inclusion of multiple voices, and more challenging conceptualisations of what 'heritage' is, enabled our respondents to explore the physicality, multiplicity and complexity of the past in ways that felt new, shocking and memorable…When it comes to the interpretation of heritage—particularly those histories perceived as difficult or challenging—upping the stakes, taking some (well calculated) risks, and engaging audiences in dialogue through performance can engender a healthy questioning of cultural authority, an understanding of the knottiness of the past, and result in less superficial analyses of the 'authentic'.[211]

Witcomb has also analysed various museum exhibitions that deal with difficult and challenging histories in their shift from learning via historic narrative and facts to providing "affective rather than cognitive knowledge".[212] She draws on Ross Gibson's work in this field, seeing the museum as a cultural laboratory, and the results on audiences of affective experiences that are palpable.[213] Whilst Witcomb's exhibition examples don't directly involve artists, she notes the power of "poetic allusion" where curators draw on creative tools to use "immersion that works through a series of shocks to the established ways of seeing the past and understanding heritage".[214] She also argues that this requires imagination and the ability to empathise, and

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[207] Jenny Kidd, "Filling the Gaps? Interpreting Museum Collections through Performance," *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 19 (2006).

[208] Ibid. 61.

[209] Laurajane, "Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites". 1.

[210] Kidd, "Filling the Gaps? Interpreting Museum Collections through Performance". 67.

[211] Jenny Kidd, "Performing the Knowing Archive: Heritage Performance and Authenticity," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, no. 1 (2011). 32.

[212] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 260.

[213] Ibid. 267.

[214] Ibid. 259.

stresses Gibson's belief that museum exhibitions are prime sites for affective responses.[215] This is one of the values of bringing together arts and heritage, as explored in this research, along with the role cultural organisations like museums can play in "the process of negotiating and producing national identities rather than simply reproducing established narratives about them".[216]

In exploring the affective response, Witcomb conjures Walter Benjamin and the auratic qualities of art (1979) where "the significance of art is that it offers the potential to produce experience" engaging affective forms of response, different from that of a detailed historical narrative.[217] This research works from Witcomb's premise that curatorial thinking and exhibitions themselves are a form of "critical history practice",[218] and that curatorial work collaborating with artists can produce various forms of value for organisations, participants, and audiences, as part of a regional cultural context. A potential problem that she highlights within the affective approach is that recognition may only be possible for those already sympathetic (in her example, an exhibition dealing with colonial displacement of the Indigenous), with interpretation requiring a "high level of cognitive work".[219] She also discusses the different audiences used for case study examples—for instance Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians—and also the significant role of location as well as the impact of expectations. For example, what might be experienced in a First Nations exhibition space at Melbourne Museum that is clearly marked as such will be different from these themes being addressed in an exhibition or environment where such content may be unexpected.

The experiences of audiences will be discussed as part of this thesis to some degree, drawing on the work discussed here, but further research is also required in this area as noted by Witcomb and Barrett. In 2013 Witcomb stated that audience engagement research is "patchy and slow" and concluded that "deep ethnographic analysis of audience responses across the political spectrum, ethnic and racial differences as well as different levels of education" is required to truly assess affective experiences and "alteration", as hoped for by Ross.[220] Barrett has also highlighted issues with contemporary visitor research that conflates concepts

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[215] Ibid. 267.
[216] Ibid. 259.
[217] Ibid. 269.
[218] Ibid. 256.
[219] Ibid. 262.
[220] Ibid.

of public and audience. For example, "audience can be meaningless units if their limitations as a signifier of the museums core constituents are not understood".[221] Instead, she suggests that "an interdisciplinary approach to conceptions of public and community can reveal more about the public sphere than a notion of audience within visitor studies and audience research alone".[222] While these are important questions, the answers remain largely outside the scope of this thesis. The focus here lies in how GLAM organisations can creatively connect their offerings with various publics through creative activation that explores reinterpretation, gap filling, affective approaches and different kinds of value.

Museum Activism (RMT binaries: insular activity to civic engagement, institutional viewpoint to global perspective, and accepted reality to culture of inquiry)

As we have seen, museological and heritage practice has been hotly contested throughout history and continues to be so today. The reinvented museum side of the paradigm shift aims toward greater openness and inclusivity and prompts questions about the GLAM sector's cultural and political role. Concepts such as decolonising archives and gap-filling through rehanging and reactivating collections raise previously unheard voices. Hooper Greenhill (2000) argues in response to dominant canons that "today cultural maps are being re-plotted and re-territorialised…bringing formerly invisible nodes of significance to light and exploration of new territories formerly left off the cultural map".[223] An activist element has emerged, captured in the 2019 collection *Museum Activism*, where debate is positioned in "the largely untapped potential for museums as key intellectual and civic resources to address inequalities, injustice and environmental challenges".[224] Her earlier work has also discussed differences between today's critical approach to contemporary museums as "sites of struggle" and the "modern public museum which, since the seventeenth century, had disseminated knowledge through purposeful collecting and display strategies with the concept of "right" at their core".[225] Barrett similarly looks at the "history of transition from princely collections to the publicly available institution attempting democracy".[226] She places her argument between "the claims of modern museums to be democratic, and the desire of new museums to actually

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[221] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 169.

[222] Ibid., 170.

[223] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. 140.

[224] *Museum Activism.*

[225] Kidd, "Introduction: Challenging History in the Museum". 3

[226] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 166.

be democratic".[227] The relationship between ideals and reality in this regard continues as an issue today, as demonstrated in the case study of the BMI, and by cultural organisations in processes of change. This involves organisations assessing both their desire and their capacity for functioning as democratic spaces, what Barrett advocates for as "cultural public spheres".

Key to the role that GLAM organisations might play as cultural public spheres, and Anderson's belief in museums' ability to make a difference, is their position within the city or regional base. These aims, whilst altered in the contemporary setting, can be traced back to early museum and MI ideals for a democratic society engaged in self-improvement and culture as a means to civility. Museum worker and scholar Rainey Tisdale states that contemporary "city museums, which serve the needs and interests of city residents, should be actively engaged in helping these residents create better cities".[228] The RMT puts the shift as being from insular society to civic engagement, where in Rainey's view "difficult conversations can take place".[229] The ideals of new museology around changes in "value, meaning, control, interpretation, authority and authenticity"[230] can be seen to take on new power in this decade via work on museum activism and the concept of "challenging history". Kidd's vision here is of a "perpetual, rebellious, provocative call to arms, full of potential to disrupt and transform".[231] In this view, it is desirable to engage the RMT shift from an institutional viewpoint to a more global perspective.

This approach, of course, has its critics. Conn has expressed concern with museums forced into what he sees as "faux politics…[that] detract] from the real cultural, scientific, and educational work of museums that is precious and important on its own terms".[232] This view seems to hark back to earlier museum ideals and raises the twentieth-century question of whether museums should act as reverent temples or democratic forums.[233] Conn states that "to ask museums to solve our political and economic problems is to set them up for inevitable failure".[234] Whilst these are viable concerns, the aim of GLAM organisations is not to solve, but to open debate and discussion. To separate museums from the context and change around them, and

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[227] Ibid., 167.

[228] Tisdale, "City Museums and Urban Learning". 6.

[229] Ibid. 7.

[230] McCall and Gray, "Museums and the 'New Museology': Theory, Practice and Organisational Change".

[231] *Museum Activism*. 3.

[232] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* 15.

[233] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum.* 12.

[234] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* 17.

their potential to play a civic role, seems problematic. The above themes will be discussed in chapter three, exploring Ballarat GLAM organisations and MIs and incorporating the practical experiences at the BMI (chapters five, six, and seven).

If the aim of GLAM organisations to make a difference is embraced, the success of the relationship between curatorial practice and organisational structure, leadership and clarity of purpose is key. Organisationally this involves the RMT shift from accepted reality to a culture of inquiry. For any transformation to occur the link between theory and practice is also key. Thinkers such as Simon, Kidd and Witcomb are working practically in museums as directors, educators and curators, and write from this perspective. Similarities with heritage ideas and those of HUL can be seen, along with the importance of interdisciplinary practice where Harrison anticipates the potential "creative dynamism for a newly emerging field of interdisciplinary academic investigation with links to policy making in the 'real' world".[235]

This section on curation has discussed the role of the curator to consist of using collections in new ways to raise marginalised voices and stories, implement affective heritage experiences, and examines the civic role of GLAM organisations and their multiple publics as part of city networks. How the possibilities of the contemporary curatorial role to facilitate these activations is interconnected with organisational management is discussed in the next section. The link between creative activation and organisational management, becomes a key finding of this PhD.

Organisational management—opening up, relevance and change (RMT binaries: protective to welcoming; static role to strategic positioning; status quo to informed risk taking; compartmentalised goals to holistic, shared goals; institutional values not being ancillary but core tenets of operations; and business as usual to reflective practice).

Useful to this research is museum director and museologist Nina Simon's work on meaningful relevance in cultural organisations, which works from the premise of not only what an organisation has (heritage buildings and collections for example) but also what they can ignite. In Simon's view this is achieved through opening hearts and doors, with multiple connecting points around a clearly defined centre:

> One core, many doors: The institute has one mission and many ways for people to participate. This is the strongest path—and the most difficult. It takes courage and

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[235] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 8.

focus to maintain one core. It takes open-heartedness and humility to open many doors. It takes trust to hold it all together.[236]

Simon's books, *The Participatory Museum* (2010) and *The Art of Relevance* (2016), leading to the establishment of the global movement OF/BY/FOR ALL, which produces "a set of tools to help your organization become of, by, and for your community", explore this approach.[237] Simon explains how the OF/BY/FOR ALL thinking helped to transform the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History (MAH) from "a struggling museum into a vibrant community centre. We've seen libraries, parks, theaters, and community institutions around the world use the same principles to become more relevant, resilient, and inclusive".[238] At MAH Simon constructed social bridging as a key organisational aim whereby stronger and connected communities are built through art and history.[239]

These principles of inclusivity and resilience seek to make connections between people and organisations that unlock meaning.[240] Simon evaluates misconceptions about the idea of relevance. She asserts that "is it relevant?" is an incomplete question; rather "the question is always "WHO is it relevant to? or WHAT is it relevant to?"[241] In her discussion of relevance theory (via cognitive scientists Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber) she considers the role of familiarity and effort where "institutions need to meet people in the middle, 'reach out a hand, and invite you in'".[242] Simon connects this with the need for organisations to "cultivate open-hearted insiders" with a recognition of "threshold fear" where there exist "many museum visitors who may labour under the feeling that they are outsiders".[243] Traditional issues of access continue, and with new approaches toward engagement and participation, Simon maintains relevance must not simply be a door momentarily thrown open but be adopted as an ongoing process.

As we have seen in Kreps and Barrett, an increased focus on visitors can also be coupled with the expertise of the curator, varied uses of collections, and greater participation from, and nuanced understanding of, multiple publics. Barrett looks at ways for museums to construct

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[236] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 157.

[237] https://www.ofbyforall.org/.

[238] https://www.ofbyforall.org/.

[239] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*.

[240] Ibid. 22.

[241] Ibid. 41.

[242] Ibid. 38.

[243] Ibid. 226.

publics other than as audiences or consumers (and not just by simply replacing one term (public) with another (community) and attempting to continue as before).[244] Simon also views outsiders as being just as complex as insiders and recommends looking not just at basic demographics, such as teens for example, but also at shared interests like being "curious about history" or having the "desire to belong".[245]

These issues directly relate to organisational capacity and leadership, as well as clarity of purpose. The practical challenges of opening up museums within the context of new museology is discussed by McCall and Gray, who note that the potential for practical implementation can be hindered by current managerial structures and mechanisms. "In each scenario, the relationship between workers and management was a key area of discussion and had a fundamental impact on the implementation of policy expectations".[246] Simon states the need to question institutional tolerance for relevant activities that challenge traditional ways of working.[247] When she began at the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz it was at a time of crisis and she was troubled by questions in her boardroom such as "how do we get more young people in? [and] How do we get more donors?" She viewed these as "lazy" and decided to ask new questions: "What are we willing to change to welcome new people? [and] "What are we willing to change about how we work to help new people feel like they belong?" She reported that "these two questions brought us from the brink of failure to stunning success".[248] Also key to this achievement is her approach of having clear aims with which to evaluate the outcome. John Holden's work on cultural leadership similarly looks to effective leadership being not about titles; as a way of being rather than a badge. He highlights the need for continuous adjustment, based on the contemporary fluid world.[249]

As Simon calls for a clear institutional core, based on trust, that allows for diversity, Anderson also advocates flexible dynamic thinking in organisations where the outcome is not just about "adding a program, gallery or increasing financial reserves but a systematic shift in attitude, purpose, alignment and execution".[250] She states that organisational change is complex and

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[244] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 129.

[245] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 89.

[246] McCall and Gray, "Museums and the 'New Museology': Theory, Practice and Organisational Change".

[247] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 172.

[248] The Art of Relevance Tedxpaloalto." Tedx Talks. May 15th, 2017. Accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTih-l739w4.

[249] Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership". 81.

[250] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum.* 2.

slow, dependent on the history of the institution, and reliant on the capacity of leadership to bring along the key players in a sustained process where "acceptance of the need for change may be the hardest barrier to overcome". These issues provide the backdrop to the practice and action research undertaken for this thesis during the author's period as curator at BMI. The workings between the various parts of the organisation during a time of change became what Anderson describes as a "juggling act of building capacity and resources whilst adjusting public persona and offerings".[251] The relationship between internal structure and management, including clear purpose and values, and projects that allowed for new and dialogic connections between people, places, objects and ideas is at the core of this thesis. The value of such work, and whether sustainable change is possible, are investigated throughout its chapters.

The reality of the increased roles that cultural organisations are tasked with is a relevant issue that has been debated in the field. Conn sums up recent "attacks and challenges on museums in: walking a fine line between non-profit ethos and the world of corporate money, between education and 'info-tainment' between opening up and being overrun".[252] Whilst these are legitimate tensions, this thesis aligns with Simon and co. in their belief that, with strong leadership and core values, opening up is desirable, albeit complex and slow, and leads towards greater public value. The concept of being overrun raises its own questions around access and privilege—who is allowed in, and which stories are told in what way. As a result of such tensions, concepts of value in cultural organisations are interconnected and multi-layered, as they cross multiple publics and communities, organisations and their collaborators, and government policy and funding. Some of these issues are outlined in Part Four, as part of this thesis' argument for the value of cultural work that goes beyond the purely functional and economic.

Part Four: Value

It is possible to see the whole issue of culture and value as one that essentially depends upon the definitions of those key terms, and upon the implications of their acceptance. Meyrick et al see this quite clearly: "Historically what was a rich, multidimensional term [value] evoking a range of thoughts, feelings and perspectives has been stripped of its layers of meaning and increasingly used to signify one thing only: financial value".[253] They argue for the need to

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[251] Ibid.

[252] Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?*

[253] Meyrick et al, *What Matters: Talking Value in Australian Culture*. 13.

return to a much broader understanding of what is meant by culture. Lionel Trilling's 1963 formulation is quoted with approval:

> The concept of culture affords to those who use it a sense of the liberation of their thought, for they deal less with abstractions and mere objects, more with the momentous actualities of human feelings as these shape and condition the human community, as they make and as they indicate the quality of man's existence.[254]

Trilling's essential point about the value of culture was that, however defined, it lies in "the momentous actualities of human feelings" and in the quality of life as it is lived. O'Connor expands upon this: "Culture refers to a way of life, a stock of knowledge and symbolic meanings, and a set of artefacts, practices and processes that express and speak to this".[255] That is, cultural value involves dimensions of meaning which are both tangible and intangible, and which encompass process and practice as much as the products of those processes and practices. Any measurement of cultural value therefore must be able to respond comprehensively and flexibly to the vast range of culture's reach. Meyrick et al address those who might say: "What's wrong with wanting to know what the public dollars invested in culture produce by way of economic and social outcomes?" Their position is not that "culture's external impacts are being put above its internal qualities" but rather it is being treated purely as a *function.*[256]

Holden's analysis of the dimensions of value is relevant here and key to this thesis. Holden believes the term "cultural value", that goes beyond culture's utility, while not perfect has "provided politicians with an understanding of why culture is important, and is helping institutions to explain themselves and talk to each other".[257] (In Australia this notion is echoed in the 2016 backlash to government-funding cuts to the arts, where one positive to emerge was articulating ways to speak about what artists do and its value[258]). Building upon Pierre Bourdieu's work on the three forms of capital—the social, the cultural and the economic[259] — Holden derives three forms of value as utilised in this thesis: intrinsic value, instrumental value and institutional value. In this triangle of value, Holden argues for a "robust mixed economy

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[254] Meyrick et al, *What Matter?* xv.

[255] O'Connor, *After the Creative Industries*.

[256] Meyrick et al, *What Matters?* xv.

[257] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy". 9.

[258] Meyrick et al, *What Matters* xviii.

[259] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.G Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

of value, a stable three-legged stool to validate culture".[260] He also considers how these forms of value are created and consumed in the triangular relationship between cultural professionals, politicians and policy-makers, and the public, noting the importance of shared understanding and language and the challenge of legitimacy.[261]

Holden's triangle of value involves three categories. The first, Intrinsic value, refers to being integral to public good, as well as describing the individual, subjective effects art forms have. As applied to the argument of this thesis- one key feature of this kind of value is its demonstration of "the capacity and potential of culture to affect us, rather than as measureable and fixed stocks of worth."[262] The second, Instrumental value, refers to culture being used as a tool, such as for economic regeneration or improved exam results, creating knock-on effects, and often present in the language of creative industries (creative city planning in Ballarat, for example, uses language like "leveraging" off creative activity). Thirdly, Institutional value refers to the way cultural organisations act, and how they do things, as a form of value creation. They can for, example, aid in building trust, civility, and a collective society (through considering opening hours, the greeting of patrons and selection of program offerings). As Holden states: "Institutional value should therefore be counted as part of the contribution of culture to producing a democratic and well-functioning society".[263]

Holden, in line with O'Connor, asserts that the instrumental has at times come to overshadow other measurements of value, the reason being that "politics wants to achieve mass social outcomes," and what culture can do has both hard and soft tools for evaluation, that are not always transferrable.[264] In the focus on instrumental value, three factors stand out: the openness of that value to the gathering of quantitative data, its relation to important social issues, and the interest of politicians in exploiting that relationship. It is not surprising therefore that any discussion of value in culture must become a political one. O'Connor, notes that the shift from cultural to creative in government policy documents was "not a terminological whim" but intentionally expressed a profound shift in thinking, whereby an "expanded understanding of culture was cast as an economic driver of the creative industries".[265] He traces this to Australian

[260] John Holden, "How We Value Arts and Culture," *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management* 6, no. 2 (2009). 455.

[261] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy". 9.

[262] Ibid. 15

[263] "How We Value Arts and Culture". 454.

[264] Ibid. 452

[265] O'Connor, *After the Creative Industries*.

Prime Minister Paul Keating's seminal *Creative Nation* policy of 1994. Subsequent policy shifts from the public provision of culture to the notion of self-sustaining industry[266] continue to be debated and are relevant to this thesis as it assesses the breadth of value in which creativity in GLAM is involved. A very brief history of the concept of creative industries and the creative city follows, and will be analysed via case studies in later chapters.

Short history of creative city and creative industries concepts

The creative industries and associated creative city concepts sit in the historical context of post-industrial society, and the response of civic and political authorities to its challenges. Creativity in cities became popularised as a concept in the 1980s leading to a 1994 workshop in Glasgow where key urban scholars, including Charles Landry, Peter Hall and Franco Bianchini, concluded that "successful cities are able to spur and nurture creative thinking; and density, diversity and openness are essential ingredients for this".[267] Van Boom cites Landry's 2000 book *The Creative City* arguing that cities should "think, plan and act creatively".[268] This, he argued, was a response to complex "post-industrial challenges of social fragmentation, diminishing sense of shared place identity, or feelings of fear and alienation"[269] which requires interdisciplinary and holistic approaches if these challenges are to be met. Three broad areas of concern were identified, with key scholars suggesting three approaches to a solution. Landry stressed creative problem-solving, Allen J Scott focussed on place-based creative production and Richard Florida urged the importance of creative practitioners, what he called the creative class, as key to stimulating economic growth.[270]

These seminal (and theoretical) discussions soon moved into the sphere of public action. In 1997, the UK government, through the newly created Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS), set up a Creative Industries Taskforce (CITF) which, in 1998, issued the Creative Industries Mapping Document. CITF findings saw the idea of culture move to a framework, which included wealth creation and economic performance. The 1990s saw the

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[266] Gibson, *The Uses of Art*. 116.

[267] Nienke van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate," in *Sage Handbook of New Urban Studies* ed. John A Hannagan, and Greg Richards and (SAGE, 2017). 358

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

[270] John A. Hannigan, and Greg Richards, eds, *The Sage Handbook of New Urban Studies*, 1st.ed (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017).

creative industries emerge as a major growth area. Lash and Urry outline, in *Economies of Signs and Space[271]*,) a new economy in which cultural and economic value is increasingly interconnected and where the creative industries are "hailed as those sectors that would be the driving forces behind a new post-industrial, symbolic economy".[272] In this sense, the creative industries model can be seen as one which attempts to commodify the symbolic (because often intangible) nature of culture, and is not a model that went unchallenged.

Hannigan et al, for example, argue that the shift from cultural to creative language can be viewed as a "deliberate political attempt to disassociate these industries from the subsidised arts discourse, and relate them to the spheres of digitisation, innovation, and the knowledge economy".[273] And again, they observed "changing meanings of creativity related to the urban [space], with a focus shifting from specific industrial clusters towards creative people and towards creative cities. An emerging debate concerns the extent to which creative city policies are consumption or production driven".[274] That is, symbolic, intangible value becomes (under the guise of creativity) a commodifiable object which fits well into market economies. But just how commodifiable some of those values are is open to interrogation.

Other potential issues with the creative city boom have been identified as: "their commercial character, and the widening social-spatial gap between those that can afford [it] and those who cannot" as well as the "place-lessness of many of these interventions—with places becoming homogenous, losing their local character".[275] The focus on the economic outcomes in creative cities can also be seen as "promoting a narrow view of the creative industries without involving the social and cultural dimensions that made these activities attractive in the first place".[276]

This economic focus was also critiqued by Chris Gibson and Natascha Klocker in 2005, when they noted the possibility of different forms of exchange where "alternative creativities less easily transformed into (capitalist) accumulation strategies are downplayed in favour of a high-tech/consumption oriented definition".[277] They argue that such alternative creativities

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[271] Scott Lash, and John Urry, *Economics of Signs & Space* (London, Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1994).

[272] van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate". 359.

[273] Hannigan and Richards, *The Sage Handbook of New Urban Studies*. 293.

[274] Ibid.

[275] van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate". 363.

[276] Hannigan and Richards, *The Sage Handbook of New Urban Studies*. 293.

[277] Chris Gibson and Natascha Klocker, "The 'Cultural Turn' in Australian Regional Economic Development Discourse: Neoliberalising Creativity?," *Geographical Research* 43, no. 1 (2005). 100.

may become essential "forms of resistance against the neoliberal economic agendas which appear to underpin much of the 'creative cities' and 'creative industries' rhetoric, and may promote, instead, articulations of economic exchange based on reciprocity, public goods, and knowledge, and principles of non-exploitation and acceptance of diversity".[278] Possibilities of these alternative creativities and their outcomes are explored through case studies in this thesis.

In Australia, Justin O'Connor has written extensively on the creative industries model. He asserts that finding a "new language of cultural value in an age when culture does have immense economic value is going to be the key challenge of the next two decades".[279] He discusses the possibility of rethinking the concept of economies, in response to criticism of the creative industries reduction of culture to an economic bottom line, and proposes a new idea of a cultural or creative economy. "Here economy is not defined exclusively in terms of markets, growth and GDP indicators. It is a return to an older notion of economy as a commonwealth…cultural economies do create jobs and wealth but that wealth is not just about profit or GDP, but also about human wellbeing".[280] O'Connor poses the question of not only what kind of culture we want to produce but what kind of economy we want to help us do this.

While the creative industries were conceived as a response to regenerating post-industrial cities (and the political potential within this towards both social and economic outcomes), it soon became apparent that this focus on the functional use of creativity raised a host of other questions around the meaning of culture and the dangers of reducing it in the way O'Connor highlights. van Boom also notes the ill-defined, because not sufficiently de-limited, nature of the concept of creative cities—making the movement "vulnerable to certain dominant interpretations: especially those of an instrumental-economic logic" and the danger that this approach runs "the risk that those agents of creativity (the artists, cultural intermediaries, creative class) do not recognise themselves, or even feel disengaged from the notion of creativity".[281] Writing in 2017, van Boom reflects that the creative city agenda "*seems* to have had the power to bring together the needs and demands of a variety of urban actors, looking for

[278] Ibid.

[279] Justin O'Connor, "Exposing the Creative Industries Fallacy," *Arts Hub* 2016. Accessed 25th May 2020, http://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/opinions-and-analysis/public-policy/justin-oconnor/exposing-the-creative-industries-fallacy-251161.

[280] Justin O'Connor, "Unesco Leads the Way on a Truly Global Approach to Cultural Economy," November 21st 2013, accessed 25th May 2020, https://theconversation.com/unesco-leads-the-way-on-a-truly-global-approach-to-cultural-economy-19595.

[281] van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate". 363.

solutions for newly emerging urban problems. But more and more, its potential is being contested. Different meanings and associations co-exist, or even blend together, hollowing out the concept".[282] The very meaning of the word "creativity", it can be argued, has been subtly changed to fit its new political/commercial context.

This thesis questions how heritage collections, and the organisations that house, interpret and present them, can creatively link up with the publics they serve to achieve greater connectivity and relevance. This involves issues of historical and contemporary management, curation, funding, and different approaches towards value in relation to heritage, culture and creativity, and the role they can play in society. There is tension between cultural organisations being publicly accountable and, as Holden notes, the need to "make their case to local and national government with depressing frequency and in terms that do not match their own value concerns".[283] Metrics are at times unclear or not linked to an organisation's key purpose or values. The fact that GLAM sits within the Creative Victoria government department that bases itself around the creative industries model, means issues of value and measurement need to be considered. Bringing arts and heritage together within GLAM organisations, through the facilitating role of the curator, allows investigation into multiple kinds of value, and how this might fit with broader city strategies and civic aims. An ecological, interrelated perspective is key where the ecology of players—the publics, cultural professionals and government, and of the value— economic, social and cultural, make up a more complex and nuanced view of how cultural organisations and cities operate.

This literature review has discussed early museum history in order to note parallels with the MI movement and development of the BMI as part of Ballarat's progress as an emerging city in the new colony. This history provides the context for the study of GLAM and MIs today, which is at the core of this thesis. The review extends to contemporary debates in museology, heritage and value in order to place study of the BMI (and commensurate urban MIs) within this broader and more critical context. The scholarship and debates outlined here allow for a complex framework in which to ask how creative activation might contribute to providing new perspectives of the past in the present, and connect cultural organisations with the publics they serve in powerful ways. Close study of the BMI allows

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[282] Ibid., 357.

[283] Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership". 34.

investigation of approaches to value and change, and the possibility of new leadership and public engagement. It is asked whether a flexible, enabling ethos might replace a more static one, and whether institutional values and shared goals can be more strongly articulated and lived out in practice. The BMI and Ballarat city context will be the focus of chapter two.

Chapter Two: Ballarat and the BMI, Then and Now

Figure 2.1: MH1103 Mechanics' Institute block at night 1938 Centenary Lighting (BMI Collection)

This chapter describes the context of Ballarat city and its cultural development up to the present day by placing the BMI's development within an historical narrative. The themes explored in relation to the thesis research problem include: leadership, adaptability, collaboration, funding, value, publics, city identity, and the complex legacies of historic cultural organisations attempting to meet current challenges. Three strategies in particular, developed by state and local agencies, will be examined in the light of this historical context: CoB's HUL and Heritage Plan; the Creative City/Creative Victoria initiatives; and cultural and heritage tourism in the city with examples such as Visit Ballarat's Made of Ballarat tourism and marketing campaign.

Ballarat city then, nineteenth century

Colonial settlement in Ballarat first took place in 1839 and was largely of a pastoral nature until gold was discovered in the region in 1851. The city was named after two Indigenous words *Balla* and *Arat* meaning "resting place".[1] The spelling with a double "a" was used until the current spelling was officially adopted by the City of Ballarat in 1996. Ballarat's population increased dramatically following the discovery of gold. Donald Barker numbers the Victorian

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[1] Withers, *History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences*. 10.

Colony at 76,000 in 1850 and almost 300,000 by 1854.[2] An article titled "City Built on Gold: The Story of a Wondrous transformation from Bush land to Modern City", in the 1938 centenary issue of the *Ballarat Courier*, describes how the discovery of gold "converted a remote dependency into a country of world-wide fame;…made this the richest country in the world; and in less than three years [did] for this colony the work of an age".[3] The same article includes a section titled "Natives were treacherous" which contains the contradiction that when the pastoral settlement of Ballarat began the "province was practically uninhabited" yet later reports that men were employed on Yuille's station "guarding the sheep from the depredations of the carnivorous dingo and the thieving propensities of the aborigines".[4] The article continues: "The natives too were treacherously inclined, and had foully murdered one of the hutkeepers at Sebastopol". The ongoing legacy of these beliefs and the wider impacts of colonisation upon the Indigenous population have yet to be fully admitted at the national level, let alone satisfactorily resolved.[5]

Another much discussed and interpreted event in Australian goldfields history, the Eureka rebellion of December 1854, was organised as a protest against the imposition of mining fees upon miners who were without political representation. This was a violent event that followed attempts at a peaceful resolution by the miners via such means such as petitioning; it was followed by parliamentary reform and the dropping of charges made against some miners. The BMI was established in 1859, with the leadership of some key Eureka figures, and only a few years after Ballarat was declared a municipality in 1855. Ballarat later became a borough in 1863 and a city in 1870. Ballarat East Library was established in 1862 (subscription-based, as was the BMI) as part of the Ballarat East Town Hall and Gardens precinct. East and West councils of Ballarat were amalgamated in 1921 after decades of fierce rivalry. Ballarat East and West had formed with distinct personalities, as Weston Bate describes:

> The tone of the East was strident and individual. It would never willingly be a suburb of Ballarat West. The two co-existed like the head and tail of a coin, looking in different directions and displaying the contrasting imprints of the historical and geographical dyes that had made them. Each was a guardian of an aspect of Ballarat's tradition, and the community as a whole was undoubtedly more

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[2] Donald Barker, "Funding Communal Culture: Opportunism and Standardisation of Funding for Mechanics' Institutes in Colonial Victoria," *The Australian Library Journal* 51, no. 3 (2002). 248.

[3] John Hargreaves, "The Story of Ballarat's 100 Years, City Built on Gold: The Story of a Wonderous Transformation from Bush Land to Modern City" *Ballarat Courier*, March 8th, 1938.

[4] Ibid.

[5] See Fred Cahir, *My Country All Gone the White Men Have Stolen It : The Invasion of Wadawurrung Country 1800-1870* (Ballarat, VIC: Australian History Matters, 2019).

meaningful and interesting as a result. It might be thought the East was more Australian because it was less subjected to imported urban forms and institutions and had a restless larrikin quality. Yet the West was probably more typical of what British migrants hoped for in Australia—material success—and it contained large numbers of pioneers who had had the best of both worlds.[6]

In 1874 the School of Mines (SMB) was established (taking on the subjects of art and design formerly taught at BMI) and the following year Her Majesty's Theatre opened, with the art gallery being established in 1887 as The Fine Art Gallery of Ballarat. This same year Ballarat Trades Hall was also built. The Ballarat Public Library, after much ado (discussed further in this chapter), was established on the corner of Sturt and Camp Streets in 1941. All of these institutions, with the exception of the Ballarat East Library, continue in some form today as part of a network of cultural and educational organisations. SMB became the University of Ballarat in 1998 and was later renamed Federation University Australia.

Many of these early city institutions were established through philanthropy (such as that of James Oddie at the Art Gallery of Ballarat (AGB[7]) and had various links to government at local, state and federal levels. Historian Anne Beggs-Sunter argues, via Bate, that Ballarat's golden age in the 1880s,—where "out of Ballarat's unusual social experience came a unique urban consciousness" born, as she states, of civic pride—"saw [the] wealth of the lucky pioneers channelled into public rather than private displays".[8] Some of the city's legacy today—its renown for heritage streetscapes and historic cultural institutions—can be traced back to these inclinations. Today these institutions play roles in housing and interpreting Ballarat's past and are a key element of the city's tourism. The creation of Sovereign Hill in 1970, the Gold Museum in 1978 and various incarnations of the Eureka Centre since the 1990s (together with the CoB and the BMI going back to their foundations) have provided housing for heritage collections and offer interpretation and display—and contestation—of stories relating to the gold rush and Eureka.

With regard to the development of Ballarat museums and historical societies prior to the 1970s, a group was formed in 1896, the Australian Historical Records Society, which ran for a decade before handing its collected material to the City. A printed rule book from 1896 outlines its

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[6] Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat, 1851-1901* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1978). 184.

[7] Art Gallery of Ballarat. "History of the Gallery." Accessed 25th May, 2020, https://artgalleryofballarat.com.au/collection/history-of-the-gallery/.

[8] Anne Beggs- Sunter, "Visual Arts in the Nineteenth Century," in *Under Minerva's Gaze: 150 Years at the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute* ed. Jill Blee and Phil Roberts (2010). 35.

purpose: to collect Ballarat history. Following this, there was no formal history group until 1933 when the Ballarat Historical Society was formed with Nathan Spielvogel (also involved with the BMI) elected as president. The subsequent Ballarat Historical Society museum had various homes, including the former Ballarat East library from the 1960s through to 1981 when its collections were moved to the care of the Ballarat Gold Museum (part of the Sovereign Hill Museum Association), where they remain today.[9]

An early Ballarat museum had also operated from a church site on Lydiard St South. "This building, originally the Wesleyan Church, was purchased by SMB in 1883…[t]he building was used as the School's Museum from the 1880s until the early 1950s. It was originally a geological and mineralogical museum and was seen as an important part of the teaching facilities of the School".[10] Ballarat curator and Ballarat Historical Society past president, Roger Trudgeon, notes that in the 1940s this museum was donated a collection of Aboriginal and Islander cultural material, collected by Ballarat doctor Sidney Pern, which is now held at the Gold Museum.[11] Along with material from the BMI's mineralogical museum, established by Professor Abel in 1862 (and transferred to the School of Mines in 1878), it is rumoured that much of this material was disposed of in the 1960s somewhere on School of Mines land.

By drawing this brief historical sketch of the nineteenth-century development of part of the city's cultural fabric, context is provided for the contemporary discussion of the city's approach to its cultural organisations, its heritage, culture and creativity, and how it has viewed itself through time.

BMI Origins and Development

Against the backdrop of Ballarat's development as a city, this section will outline the origins and development of the BMI, from its formative years in the heady gold rush period to a discussion of its current potential in the cultural life of the contemporary city's ecology. Davison notes that all of the development of the city up to 1900 was significantly affected by the gold industry and many of BMI's benefactors over this time had made their fortunes directly

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[9] Roger Trudgeon, Ballarat Historical Society 75th Anniversary edition of Ballaarat Remembers, 2008

[10] Federation University Australia. "Ballarat School of Mines Museum." Accessed 25th May, 2020, https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Ballarat_School_of_Mines_Museum.

[11] See more about this collection: Elizabeth Marsden "Wrapped in Red: Museum Ethics and the Pern Collection," 2018 accessed 25th May 2020, https://amagavic.org.au/insite/editions?ed=12743.

or indirectly from the gold rushes and the related economic boom.[12] Following the Eureka uprising, it was believed that "community leaders could turn their attention once again to the cultural and social needs of the miners and their families".[13] The BMI would play a key role in this effort.

When the MI movement spread to Australia in the 1820s, and to Ballarat in the 1850s, the colonial government was in the early days of its establishment, and there were gaps in education and social life that were subsequently filled by schools, TAFE colleges, public libraries, galleries and museums. In Ballarat, the BMI played a significant part in filling that early gap. Its first president was the Chartist and Eureka figure, secretary of the Ballarat Reform League, J.B. Humffray. The current Sturt Street site and initial funds were provided by the colonial government, with significant financial support being provided by early Ballarat settler and philanthropist Thomas Learmonth, who was a supporter of the ideas of fellow Scot, George Birkbeck. Humffray held the position of BMI president for two years, and the influence of his liberal education [14] and shared beliefs in education and equality drove these early years. His leadership also presented a significant sectarian bias towards Protestantism, another way of excluding certain groups without overtly saying so.

In 1853 there were six MIs in Victoria. By the end of the decade there were twenty more, including the BMI, that were born of the "want for a wholesome alternative to the nightly entertainments enjoyed by the miners".[15] To this clear echo of the moral aim common to the founders of museums and MIs in Britain in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Baragwanath adds a significantly political dimension to their purpose: "Mechanics Institutes wanted equality and they wanted an egalitarian society".[16] Hazelwood notes how the need for an "institute of learning" was driven by public interest, and that once established, such establishments provided the standard model of library and lectures, as well as the unique opportunity of local leadership to play a role in developing the Ballarat community.[17] Frank Hurley points out that "for a number of years the BMI was the local community-based

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[12] Keith Davison, "The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1951 and the Influence of Henry Cole Batten 1911-1951" (1993). 15.

[13] Blee, "The Mechanics' Institute Movement". 21.

[14] Diane Langmore, "Humffray, John Basson (1824-1891)" Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 4, (MUP), 1972, accessed 6th June 2020, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/humffray-john-basson-3818

[15] Blee, "The Mechanics' Institute Movement". 21.

[16] Simon Leo Brown, "Mechanics Institutes in Victoria Detailed in New Book, These Walls Speak Volumes".

[17] Jennifer Kaye Hazelwood, "Mechanics' Institute : British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat," *Division of Humanities, Curtin University* (2005). 113.

institution diffusing useful knowledge. It was a secular institution with few, if any, public or private competitors in this role".[18] He describes the Institute as playing a socially useful role during the mid and late nineteenth century with access to library facilities, an auditorium, newspapers and journals, as well as a museum of minerals and natural history. Hazelwood cites records showing that lectures "regularly attracted between 400 and 750 people, thus promoting an educational and cultural homogeneity amongst those community members who attended", and so significantly influencing the local culture in providing both a centre for, and a cradle of, cultural activities. She also notes that its fundraising, activities to cover building costs and repay loans, involved the letting out of rooms and the hosting of cultural activities for "social benefit".[19]

The moral aspect to these activities has been described by Jill Blee as "Entertainment of the Uplifting Kind" where soirees were popular at the BMI as they provided an "atmosphere in which there was no alcohol served".[20] She notes that the "lecture hall and the grand hall were in frequent demand",[21] made use of by a wide variety of Ballarat church groups and temperance organisations. Temperance was a value shared by management, evidenced in early twentieth century advertising material which continued to promote the BMI as a place of "refined companions, progressive businessmen, and comfortable club rooms [on] a strictly temperate basis" (Figure 2.2). Gambling as a moral issue can also be seen in examples such as cards and cribbage being permitted in the BMI Smoking Room but with wagers strictly prohibited and in the 1908 tenancy of one of the front shops—Smith & McKay tobacconists—being terminated due to police complaints concerning a gaming room.[22] There were at times tensions between economic and moral concerns and between BMI management and the religious community: the 1877 Art Union lotteries that raised vital funds for the institute were condemned on moral grounds (gambling) by local churchmen. The BMI Committee responded, rather stiffly,

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[18] Hurley, "Useful Survival: Reflections on a Mechanics' Institute in the 21st Century".

[19] Hazelwood, "Mechanics' Institute : British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat". 115.

[20] Jill Blee, "Theatrical Pursuits," in *Under Minerva's Gaze: 150 Years at the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute*, ed. Phil Roberts Jill Blee (Ballarat: Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, 2010). 82.

[21] Ibid. 83.

[22] Clive Brook and Sue McCrae, "Ballaraat Mechanics' Institute Chronology," (Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, 2017). 13.

that they were "quite competent to look after the morals" of Ballarat citizens,[23] making it quite clear that they did not welcome outside interference.

Matters of gender also came into play and MI researcher Sarah Comyn has written on the Institutes' role in developing "respectable sociability"[24] through amusement and recreations. Through examination of the records it becomes clear that the role of women was expected to be one of refinement and that stepping outside of this was not encouraged. Comyn cites BMI's inaugural meeting, wherein Dr Kenworth stated that "the world depends on the mothers for the goodness and greatness of its men".[25] In this way she believes women were used as tools of governing the respectability of MIs: "a means of signaling the institutes as places of rational and respectable entertainments where models of courtesy and politeness were maintained". [26] These examples can also be seen as part of the colonising themes of class, race and gender. Women additionally had a very practical function, playing a pivotal role in fundraising. Records show that, in 1871, income had fallen due to depressed mining activities, and with resultant debts of over 6000 pounds, the ladies' fundraising efforts contributed substantially to the Institute's revenue.[27] In 1872, it was noted that in recognition [of their efforts] a special reading room and retiring rooms were provided. In 1879 the ladies Reading Room was closed after continuing problems with the "bad behaviour of the ladies" (though in a 1918 advertising special, "comfort for ladies" is back in favour, as pictured in Figure 2.2).[28] The nature of this bad behavior is unfortunately not elaborated on. However, writing about the following decade, Nathan Spielvogel records a note in his 1929 history of the BMI that suffragette Helen Hart was banned from the institute due to her "agitating for women's rights"[29] in 1884. This is the same era in which Louisa Lawson joined the SMSA committee, [30] though she was soon to retire due to (perceived) lack of action within the leadership, a perception that still has resonance today. Women were also recorded as enthusiastic attendees at classes, particularly art,[31] but

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[23] Nathan Spielvogel, "*The Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1927 Born in Hope, Nurtured in Adversity*" (unpublished, 1929). 43.

[24] Sarah Comyn, "Literary Sociability on the Goldfields: The Mechanics' Institute in the Colony of Victoria, 1854–1870," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 23, no. 4 (2018). 10.

[25] Ibid. 12.

[26] Ibid. 12.

[27] Clive Brooks and Sue McCrae, "Ballaraat Mechanics' Institute Chronology".

[28] Spielvogel, "*The Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1927 Born in Hope, Nurtured in Adversity.*" 47.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Wotherspoon, "The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts".

[31] Jill Blee and Phil Roberts, *Under Minerva's Gaze: 150 Years at the Ballaarat Mechanics' Insititute*, 150 Years at the Ballaarat Mechanics' Insititute (Ballarat, Vic.: Ballaarat Mechanics Institute, 2010).

despite their involvement throughout the Institute's history they were only allowed full membership in the 1950s.[32] While there were female tenants and library staff there was also no representation in management until the latter twentieth century. This history is another mixed legacy, inherited and felt through the organisation to the present day.

Figure 2.2: Early twentieth century advertising (BMI Collection)

Kociumbas asserts that despite their connection to the social-governing ideologies of museums, MIs in Australia never really had enough influence to seriously control social regulation; but Hazelwood makes a compelling argument that the leaders of the BMI did play a regulating role in Ballarat's cultural development. Hazelwood shows the ways in which British ideals were

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[32] Jennifer Kaye Hazelwood, "The Unseen Influence of Women in the Institute," in *Under Minerva's Gaze: 150 Years at the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute* (2010).

both reflected and adapted in a colonial setting,[33] and reveals that, in the Ballarat gold rush period, institutions and social structures were being established that were "deemed necessary for social and cultural cohesion".[34] Blee proposes that one key characteristic in this newly-forming settlement was that, unlike in England, "class had little relevance in goldfields towns like Ballarat".[35] Hazelwood broadly agrees with this assessment, arguing that miners and community leaders lacked "established class differentials" but points out that despite twelve percent of the population at this time being Chinese, records show that no Chinese were BMI members. It seems that while BMI leaders supported "liberal-democratic principles of equality and opportunity",[36] these principles were those as interpreted by the mid-nineteenth-century white European population which was also predominantly male.

It is Hazelwood's balanced appraisal that, while the BMI originated in and adopted "most of the aims and aspirations of its British counterparts" in the 1850s, it, too, "within a short period…had taken on a substantially different community role" by the 1860s and 1870s.[37] The original MI ethos of self-improvement and access to scientific knowledge was observed to a degree—the ongoing citation and celebration of Ballarat inventor Henry Sutton (who was said to have read all the scientific books in the library by age fourteen)[38] is an example of the role played by the BMI in the educational and scientific life of the community at the time. Barker, however, is of the opinion that "in Victoria, as in other parts of Australia, the term Mechanics' Institute was a misnomer," stating that instead MIs "came to symbolise a hybrid form of cultural institution offering intellectual recreation in the form of popular lectures and classes, book readings, a library and social entertainments".[39] Davison remarks upon the "small demand for instructive works as compared to those whose prime aim is amusement" at the BMI[40] as well as upon "the miscellaneous nature of subscribers…requiring amusing books and

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[33] Hazelwood, "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute: British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat". 109.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Blee, "The Mechanics' Institute Movement". 27.

[36] Hazelwood, "Mechanics' Institute : British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat". 112.

[37] Ibid. 119.

[38] Withers, *History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences*.

[39] Barker, "Funding Communal Culture: Opportunism and Standardisation of Funding for Mechanics' Institutes in Colonial Victoria". 249.

[40] Davison, "The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1951 and the Influence of Henry Cole Batten 1911-1951". 25.

lectures rather than technical instruction".[41] A contributing factor to this change of direction might also have been the shortage of lecturers in the colonies in scientific fields.

Rather than focusing on what some have viewed as the failure of this shift from useful knowledge for the working class to more cultural roles or to use Nadel's phrasing, to an "amusement function over loftier aims",[42] Hazelwood argues that the core strength of the BMI in this early period was "attributable to the multiplicity of activities it offered".[43] There was the need for fundraising—hence many of its balls, bazaars, exhibitions, and the hiring out of rooms to community groups were all still major means by which the BMI found itself "contributing to the social and cultural influence provided by the Institute".[44]

In addition to these various activities, the BMI also, for a short time, was home to a mineralogical museum. Candy and Laurent have observed, in relation to MI collections, that any kind of curators were in most cases also the Secretary or Librarian of the Institute and as a result of their "lacking formal policies to guide collection building or professional curatorial care" many collections were lost.[45] The BMI mineralogy museum was developed by a Professor Abel. Gabrielle L McMullen describes Abel's role at the BMI, where he was given the honorary title of Professor and life membership. In 1862, the professor donated 240 specimens of minerals as the nucleus of the museum there and in the following year, 1863, Abel was appointed its first Honorary Curator. The BMI committee noted in its annual report: "Under his able superintendence and with the co-operation of the members, especially those connected with mining…the museum will doubtless assume the position its importance deserves".[46] It is interesting that a BMI committee report of 1862–3 states in contrast to this hope, that "considering the great importance of a museum of this kind to a district like Ballarat, this indifference [to the museum] on the part of the mining community seems difficult of explanation".[47] This echoes other comments related to early establishment of Ballarat libraries where "the working classes were thought never to appreciate the opportunities presented to

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Nadel, *Australia's Colonial Culture*. 127.

[43] Gibson, *The Uses of Art*. 119.

[44] Hazelwood, "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute: British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat". 119.

[45] Candy and Laurent, *Pioneering Culture : Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art in Australia*. 13.

[46] Gabrielle L. McMullen, "A German Mineralogist in Gold-Rush Australia: August Theodor Abel (1802-1882)," *Historical Records of Australian Science* 12, no. 2 (1998). 195.

[47] Clive Brooks and Sue McCrae, "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute Chronology." 5

them by the altruists".[48] McCallum notes this with some scepticism and the fact that "natural born leaders [of libraries] like Humffray, Dyte and Steinfeld saw libraries as necessary institutions, hopefully for the people's improvement, but certainly for the township's prestige".[49] A gap is again evident here between high, and at times questionable, ideals and the everyday reality.

Despite the community indifference noted in 1862–3, BMI persisted, and in 1870 the Mineralogical Museum was enlarged and moved to the top floor of the building. By 1877, however, it appears that the newly established School of Design was operating successfully from this space with the 1878 minutes noting the decision to abolish the Museum and transfer its exhibits to the School of Mines. BMI had opened its School of Design in 1870. This followed developments in the Victorian Government's desire not just to educate labouring classes but to "promote improved design and craftsmanship in the manufacturing industry".[50] As part of the historic West-East rivalry experienced in Ballarat at this time, the Ballarat East library also opened a School of Design in 1870, with many artists and teachers being involved at both schools. Ballarat historian Anne Beggs-Sunter notes the popularity of the Art Schools, where statistics from 1885 show artisan or mechanic attendance at these centres being much lower than that of school children and young women. She calls the BMI an "incubator" for Victorian Ballarat's interest in the visual arts through its lectures and exhibitions, and sees this as the foundation for continuing today's Art Gallery and Federation University Arts Academy.[51] The various schools were eventually amalgamated, in 1907, into SMB's School of Art, with Beggs-Sunter noting the importance of this in the context of the declining mining industry. Some of these developments may also account for the fate of the museum.

After it had played major cultural and educational roles in the 1860s and 1870s, various factors led to BMI's decline in the later nineteenth century. These included external factors such as the economic depression of the 1890s, increased competition in the local context from other places for culture and learning, and the changing tastes of the growing population. Hurley concludes that "like similar institutions elsewhere, the BMI held a near-monopoly of its function in its immediate community for several decades. It soon lost that monopoly".[52] It is also of

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[48] Austin McCallum, *A History of Ballarat Libraries* (Central Highlands Regional Library Service, 1978). 17.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Blee and Roberts, *Under Minerva's Gaze.* 31
[51] Ibid. 30–32.
[52] Hurley, "Useful Survival: Reflections on a Mechanics' Institute in the 21st Century".

significance that community initiatives and the ethos towards volunteerism were to give way to provision of government services.[53] Contested visions of a new role for the BMI led to what Candy and Laurent have described as "heated arguments between traditionalists, who wanted to maintain the 'tone' and intention of original founders, and the progressives who saw that the institute would be overtaken as a centre of social and cultural life if it failed to adapt".[54] Such contests are still being played out today. The attitude taken towards trespassing viewed in Figure 2.3, paints a stark picture of inclusion and exclusion in the organisation.
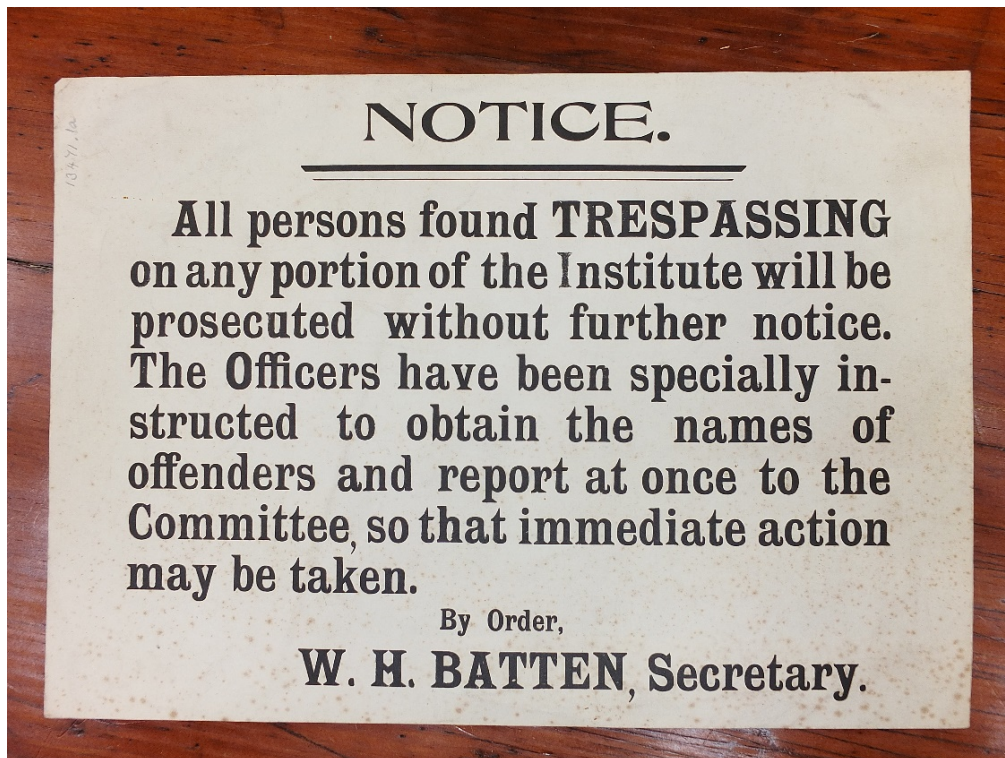
Figure 2.3: Late nineteenth/early twentieth century notice (BMI Collection)

BMI governance and funding

The history of the BMI in terms of its governance can broadly be characterised as one in which a more or less unchanging governance model sought to cope with a changing world. The original model—a governing Committee elected and charged by subscribers to: set and realise its agreed goals, to establish its own internal schedule of regulations, and to secure its financial survival is essentially that in operation today. One measure of the success of this model is the fact that the Institute still exists, that it has survived over 150 years of immense change to remain a significant architectural and heritage presence in Ballarat. Whether this, and the

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[53] Candy and Laurent, *Pioneering Culture : Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art in Australia*. 12.
[54] Ibid. 15.

historic operating model, is enough to be relevant and sustainable into the future is central to this research.

One of the most significant changes to the BMI that informs this position, is that described by Hazelwood as a shift, which occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century, from the organisation being "a venue for all classes of society" to appealing to a far narrower demographic, even to being elitist.[55] "This perception was supported by the cost of membership, the strict internal rules that covered all aspects of members and visitors' behavior, and the composition of the committee".[56] These issues remain relevant today. Through time, regulation perhaps became less about shaping humans towards enlightenment and moral good, and more about who was able to fit within the spoken and unspoken rules of membership and the committee. Peter Mansfield's assessment of what he calls the "angsty period" of Ballarat libraries in 1875, saw a "groundswell of resentment" against BMI in regard to its acceptance of government funding while still maintaining restricted access.[57] Criticism of BMI becoming essentially a private institution, despite receiving government funds, was contentious, and by the 1880s the committee had opted to remain private and not receive annual subsidy any more,[58] representing its preference for this exclusivity.

Mansfield has noted that by this period both BMI and Ballarat East libraries had "ceased to grow and had entered a second phase of library development (the first being based in the context of goldfields' wealth which easily attracted support from the civic elite of Ballarat, along with generous government financial support for library services). He believes the second phase was "characterised by introspection, public disputes, and eventually stagnation".[59] Mansfield also points toward a failure to keep up with changing social expectations and a marked shift away from "the generosity of spirit displayed by the founders of libraries in the

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[55] Hazelwood, "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute: British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat". 119.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Peter Mansfield, "The Management of Libraries in Ballarat between 1851-1900 [Edited Version of a Paper Given at 'Rediscovering Mechanics' Institutes' Australian Mechanics' Institute Conference on 17-18 November (2000).]," *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services* 14, no. 2 (2001).

[58] Barker, "Funding Communal Culture: Opportunism and Standardisation of Funding for Mechanics' Institutes in Colonial Victoria".

[59] Mansfield, "The Management of Libraries in Ballarat between 1851-1900 [Edited Version of a Paper Given at 'Rediscovering Mechanics' Institutes' Australian Mechanics' Institute Conference on 17-18 November (2000).]". 64.

1860s".[60] Both management style and financial difficulties can be seen as historical and ongoing challenges, despite the acknowledged longevity.

Another factor in management practice which is of significance is that of intergenerational succession, seen as both a strength and a weakness. Spielvogel notes that many members carried over multiple generations.[61] Historian and past BMI president Phil Roberts discusses the Committee of Management structure where "a tradition had evolved of long service of committeemen".[62] Father and son combinations, for example, with the most significant being the secretary/librarian role that was held for ninety-two years by the Batten's (William Henry 1859–1910 and Henry Cole 1910–1951). The consequence of this dynastic approach to management has been debated: Davison in his study of the influence of HC Batten states that "one significant characteristic of this Institute is its continuity that allowed for 'coherent policy' and consistent archiving practices".[63] But the real question relates to the direction and success of these policies: consistency is not in of itself a virtue. Roberts, for example, while noting the value of commitment and knowledge of the Institute under this model, also notes a downside: the lack of "fresh blood" and the dearth of young people to succeed[64] which this practice inevitably entails.

In relation to the latter nineteenth century, Hazelwood also notes the "increasingly conservative management that did not replace the youthful energy of [the] founders".[65] Hazelwood believes that management in this period shifted from disseminators of information (within a liberal-minded establishment) to stern custodians of collections.[66] Hazelwood's thesis argues that, while the BMI "initially espoused liberal egalitarian values, by 1880 the Institute was more readily identifiable as reflecting British, male, middle-class values".[67] The tensions revolving around issues of class (exclusivity and identity) and intergenerational leadership have not yet

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Spielvogel, *The Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1927 Born in Hope, Nurtured in Adversity.* 21.

[62] Phil Roberts, "The Institute from 1910 to 1985," in *Under Minervas's Gaze* (Ballarat: 2010).

[63] Davison, "The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1951 and the Influence of Henry Cole Batten 1911-1951". 6.

[64] Roberts, "The Institute from 1910 to 1985". 130.

[65] Hazelwood, "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute: British Influences and Local Responses in Nineteenth-Century Ballarat". 130.

[66] Ibid. 120.

[67] Jennifer Kaye Hazelwood, "'A Public Want and a Public Duty': The Role of the Mechanics' Institute in the Cultural, Social and Educational Development of Ballarat from 1851 to 1880" (2007). 73.

been resolved, and few, if any, systemic changes have been made to address them. This, along with the choice to remain subscription-based, not public, is part of today's inheritance.[68]

Barker concludes that developments of government funding and different Institutes:

> reflect elements of ideological disposition and crude political advantage. They also represent an attempt to reconcile the public interest—grants of money conditional on public access to library collections—with the essentially private nature of most institutions represented as they were by a subscription paying membership.[69]

Internally, Spielvogel notes that, in 1916, JM Bickett died after forty-one years of service and with him the last link with the "old order which thought of Art Unions and Bazaars and Promenade Concerts and the new order which preferred to manage things by purely business methods".[70] This suggests a shift away from the organisation's broader cultural role towards a greater insularity. Attempts against this can be observed in HC Batten's period of leadership; he seemed interested not merely in financial matters but also in being connected culturally and intellectually with the city. For example, he instigated school tours and student essay-writing competitions, and did regular spots on local 3BA radio. Spielvogel notes his influence in "bringing our library into line with the great modern libraries of the world" by overseeing the adoption in 1924 of the Dewey Decimal system, itself a new taxonomy of knowledge. In discussing the BMI and its external relations with the city,[71] Davison acknowledges HC Batten's efforts to develop these, but still concludes that "the institute usually looked at benefit to itself, often with a short-term view to financial gain".[72] HC Batten, it can be argued was both an innovator and victim of a management model that was at times inward-looking

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[68] Margaret Bowman observes similar patterns at the Melbourne Athenaeum: "Although there were annual elections for office holders, the turnover was not great and, socially, the same kinds of people were elected. While this made for stable management and internal harmony, as well as fostering a club-like atmosphere for the like-minded, it did nothing to extend the reach of the organisation or to ensure that the leadership was representative. the only full list of members, together with their postcodes, that has survived is for 1946, near the end of Wilmot's long period as secretary. Using the postcodes as a rough indicator, analysis affirms that the membership was predominantly middle class, the vast majority of members coming from the more affluent areas of Melbourne, with no more than 15 per cent living in the lower status northern and western suburbs. this list also reveals that the majority of members (57 per cent) were by this time women, although the leadership remained entirely masculine. At the outset and until 1867, when Mrs Best became the first woman member, the Athenaeum was an entirely masculine organisation. Even when the number of women subscribers had reached a majority, it took another 30 years before women became office bearers in 1976

Bowman, "Middle-Class, Masculine Management: The Melbourne Athenaeum and Its Secretary 1909-1949". 80–81

[69] Barker, "Funding Communal Culture." 256.

[70] Spielvogel, *The Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1927 'Born in Hope, Nurtured in Adversity.'* 94.

[71] Davison, "The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute 1859-1951 and the Influence of Henry Cole Batten 1911-1951". 88.

[72] Ibid.

and averse to change. The leadership of the BMI in recent decades has included female presidents, and seen some broadening of the social-capital base of the Committee, and promoted outward-looking activities. Despite this, the management approach and structure remains essentially unchanged. It is therefore still working at the traditional end of the RMT paradigm shift: internal focus rather an expansive perspective; exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness; obligatory oversight rather than inspired investment; and stability over sustainability. The ways in which these issues can develop towards the reinvented model are explored in the chapters to follow (interviews with GLAM and MIs in chapters three and four and curatorial work at BMI in chapters five, six, and seven).

BMI has had periods (and initiatives from individuals) that placed the Institute at the forefront of local culture and as a key stakeholder in the evolving story of the city, and there has also been criticism around management approaches and tensions between government funding and public access. Barker states that a continuing feature of MIs was financial difficulty and so supportive income was always sought beyond membership subscriptions, (provided by many fundraising events, exhibitions and art lotteries). The government support for BMI's establishment in its early years was also vital: as Barker says, without special grants of both land and money, most of the early institutes would have quickly failed.[73] After a pivotal 1935 report into Australian libraries led to eventual moves toward the public library movement, public-library advocate Austin McCallum commented that, rather than joining this movement, BMI, "now at an historic moment, retreated to the constitution, content to remain a permanent 'Victorian-era curiosity'".[74] Despite efforts to move beyond this, the question of cultural relevance remains a key one today. The relationship between the usefulness of the BMI library and its other assets, and the composition of the Committee is also a direct one, and, as in other matters, is tied up with the ongoing question of funding, purpose and values. This thesis draws connections between these historical legacies of stable management but of limited diversity and ambition that have ultimately led to challenges today around succession planning, public profile, and an ability to adapt and enable new leadership and ideas that engage with the contemporary city and broader museological shifts.

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[73] Barker, "Funding Communal Culture: Opportunism and Standardisation of Funding for Mechanics' Institutes in Colonial Victoria". 247.

[74] McCallum, *A History of Ballarat Libraries*. 34.

BMI into the future

The main existing source of critical thinking on the BMI's future in the twenty-first century has been undertaken by Frank Hurley. He has made propositions for the organisation's 'useful survival' that raise questions for the articulation of different kinds of value, the capitalisation of government policy, accountability and public interest, and the call for imaginative and local leadership that are particularly relevant to this PhD study. Hurley admits that for the last sixty years or more of the last century, the collection, and much of the building itself, was allowed to languish, and that only in the new century has its time of usefulness returned.[75]

Specifically, Hurley made a case in 2004 for the BMI to connect with the Ballarat arts precinct, via the Federation University Arts Academy and Her Majesty's Theatre (South Street Society having purchased the theatre in 1965 and then gifted it to CoB in 1990 on condition of free use for their Annual Competitions), to build on the opportunity for it to become part of Ballarat's high heritage tourism profile; and to draw on the notion that "socially and politically there is abroad an angst about a perceived loss of community".[76] He notes government response to this, in 2002, whereby libraries and heritage were grouped together within a Department of Victorian Communities, that had funded various MI's initiatives in recent times, and discusses the value of volunteerism and community co-operative endeavours that have characterised MIs since their inception. He argues that MIs "were and are means of harnessing and deploying creatively and productively a community's social capital". He notes that members have been able to socially capitalise on ideas by networking with various parts of the community, citing Jill Blee and the establishment of Twilight Talks, Ron Southern producing a BMI journal, and Rex Bridges applying skills in information technology to create a computerised index of BMI holdings. "The glue in all these enterprises is the BMI".[77] In a 2012 *Courier* article titled "The Mechanics' Institute: Minerva's Challenge", published whilst the BMI was under Blee's presidency, journalist Elliot Cartledge concluded: "Determined to continue the influence of esteemed Ballarat identities like Humffray, Learmonth, Sutton, Brazenor, Spielvogel and Withers, all of whom served the BMI with distinction, Blee and her board and volunteers have

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[75] Hurley, "Useful Survival: Reflections on a Mechanics' Institute in the 21st Century".
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

the energy and skills—and some funding—to make it work. Time will tell if they can succeed".[78]

This open conclusion is part of an ongoing challenge for the BMI, where despite efforts by various passionate staff and volunteers, the drawing together of strategic vision and action, and the balancing of financial, cultural and educational responsibilities, remains problematic. This is reflected in the gaps that can be seen to arise between stubborn reality and the ideals which strive to change it. That is between the clarity of theory and the messiness of actual practice. Or conversely, strong practice not backed up by organisational structure, resourcing and a clear value proposition.

Historically, the BMI's belief in obtaining liberal patronage was recorded in 1860: "We trust therefore that both today and on future occasions, such response will be made in aid as the necessity of circumstances demand, and the means of our citizens generally enable them to make".[79] Here, a belief in popular support is expressed that shifted with government provision of services in the later nineteenth century, along with recognition of its capacity to financially contribute. Today the question is less around seeking funding from the citizenry and rather of being able to demonstrate the support (and need) for the activities of the Institute to be funded in other ways, whether governmental or philanthropic.

In 2000, eleven Victorian MIs were granted State Government funds as part of the Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program Grants. This was reported to demonstrate "a very strong policy commitment to working with the community" recognising that "mechanics' institutes are still an important part of many communities across Victoria".[80] This grant program followed a 1999 report Libraries of Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria (funded by the Planning and Local Government department and undertaken by Frances Clancy[81]). Graham Dudley from the Local Government Division, Department of Infrastructure, wrote that the report was the first of its kind in Victoria, possibly Australia, examining MIs "existing collections and their future".[82] Its recommendations and funding focused on digital capacity

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[78] Elliott Cartledge, "The Mechanics' Institute: Minerva's Challenge," *Ballarat Courier*, April 27 2012.

[79] "The Mechanics' Institute," *The Ballarat Star* 1868. 2.

[80] Graham Dudley, "Victoria's Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program" (paper presented at the Rediscovering Mechanics Institutes: Australian Mechanics' Institutes Conference 2000, The Melbourne Athenaeum, 2000). 113.

[81] Frances M Clancy, "The Libraries of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria: Report Prepared for Department of Infrastructure," (Department of Infrastructure 2000).

[82] Dudley, "Victoria's Mechanics' Institutes Community Partnerships Program". 114.

and building strategic connections between MIs local public libraries through shared computer links where these did not already exist.

BMI received the largest sum out of the eleven MIs ($20,000 out of the total $85,000 allocated funds) with the designation being for "collection infrastructure maintenance and computer links, including internet access, with Central Highlands Regional Library Corporation".[83] At the starting point of this PhD candidate's curatorship in 2016, it was evident that some collection maintenance had been performed and that computer links had been developed to digital catalogues and systems, but no evidence remained of any partnerships with other libraries such as Central Highlands. Here historic resonances arise: tension with the public library and fears of losing independence, along with no clear systems in place to enable collaboration, despite the best of intentions.

The BMI's unique relationship to government, to other cultural organisations, and to tourism will continue to be explored in this thesis as a way of tracing its history and, in turn, its possibilities for the future. This sits within John Holden's twenty-first century understanding of culture as being ever more contested,[84] where cultural leaders needed to create opportunities and space for this, reflecting the trends in GLAM to be more diverse and participatory.

The BMI is caught between traditional structures and ways of doing and knowing (represented in a lack of diversity within leadership and partnerships, and in poor communication and cohesion throughout the organisation), and financial pressures which, while common throughout the organisation's history, in the early twenty-first century sit in the context of economic rationalism where public and cultural value are often considered secondary to financial gain. The focus on largely tangible outcomes can also be seen to parallel a focus on the tangible heritage of the building (conventional heritage practice from the HUL table notes the focus on physical fabric, "especially the exterior fabric and appearance of historic buildings" Figure 1.2[85]). The history and structure of BMI (and other MIs) is that of community owned for community purposes, but through the approaches to management and funding discussed above, the question of what is being offered and for whom must be urgently asked.

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[83] Ibid. 115.

[84] Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership". 186

[85] Cooke, Buckley, and Fayad, "Using the Historic Urban Landscape to Reimagine Ballarat: The Local Context".

Today, this question of how future leaders are being enabled, or not, is pertinent. This also relates to the degree to which institutes are in a position, or are ready, to enable and transform. The Victorian optimism of the BMI founders reflected the ethos of an enthusiastic city involved in identity building amidst competing ideals. Currently, a tussle continues between various energies and aspirations, that as before, are entwined with Ballarat city's imagining of itself. This vision is at once of a premiere destination for arts, culture and heritage (driving various projects for economic development) and an historic city (and its cultural organisations) grappling with a complex inheritance. By studying MIs, and the BMI in detail, various kinds of value can be assessed through new collaborations, and the interplay between heritage, organisations, cities, and people. However, this research has also revealed the way in which this can be hindered by organisational histories and structures. Here parallels can be drawn between Ballarat city and its organisations with regards to leadership and management, and in how creativity, heritage and GLAM form key interconnected parts of the city ecology.

Ballarat city today, twenty-first century

To conclude this contextualisation of Ballarat, three central approaches, or lenses, will be outlined to complete the background to this thesis' data and the findings analysed in the following chapters. These lenses demonstrate the interconnectedness of arts and heritage and the role of GLAM in the contemporary city. Each has its own philosophies, agendas and methodologies, and they represent three very contemporary and distinct ways by which Ballarat as a city is attempting to define its cultural identity and future direction. First is the 2017 CoB Heritage Plan, incorporating the HUL approach—described by the Australian heritage consultants, Context Pty Ltd, as a response to managing the latest growth projections, which are "unprecedented since the time of the gold rushes"[86]; secondly, the CoB Creative City Strategy (2018/19)/Creative Victoria initiatives, developed from an approach to addressing post-industrial society with the economic power of creativity and the concepts of creative city and creative industries; and thirdly, cultural and heritage tourism in the city, and the example of Visit Ballarat's 'Made in Ballarat' tourism and marketing campaign (2018/19).

All of these strategies meet in the idea of the good city. Justin O'Connor, creative industries scholar and critic, describes this idea as a concept that connects to much older notions of creativity and to culture's essential role in cities, but notes that it is one that has been

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[86] Susan Fayad, "The Historic Urban Landscape- in Theory and Practise," (2013). 2.

"progressively reduced to its economic dimensions".[87] This thesis seeks to counter that reductionist tendency, and to support ways to establish and maintain a healthier civic ecosystem where **"**the economic, environmental-spatial and social-cultural [values] are balanced…not only defined in economic-spatial terms, but also, and importantly, in socio-cultural terms: as inclusive, resilient, vital, sustainable innovative urban life".[88] With this in mind, the three city approaches that cross heritage, creativity and tourism are now outlined, first addressing the relationships shared between them.

Ballarat through three city lenses: 2017 CoB Heritage Plan and HUL; 2019 CoB Creative City Strategy; cultural tourism and the example of Visit Ballarat's 'Made of Ballarat' campaign

Figures 2.4 and 2.5: Images from the Made of Ballarat tourism campaign, 2018 (Visit Ballarat)

In the 2019 final Ballarat Creative City Strategy document it is recognised that since Florida's work highlighting the role that "creativity and ideas generation play in attracting talent and encouraging vibrant and prosperous cities", new challenges for cities have emerged such as "rapid gentrification, rising unaffordability and social segregation".[89] In this circumstance the notion of the good city is key and tensions can arise between areas such as liveability and equity, tourism, and expressions of creativity. The strategy states that "Ballarat's aspirations for a creative city share strong alignment" with both CoB policies and the State Government's Creative State. Reference is made to the Ballarat Strategy (2015) and its vision for the planning and growth of the city to 2040. This includes activating the CBD in "streets, laneways, and public spaces through arts, culture, events and illumination".[90] The strategy also notes connection to the HUL approach to managing Ballarat's unique heritage, landscape and

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[87] O'Connor and Shaw, "What Next for the Creative City?".

[88] Nienke van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate," 366.

[89] City of Ballarat, "Ballarat's Creative City Strategy," (Ballarat, Arts and Culture, 2019). 5.

[90] City of Ballarat, "Our People, Culture & Place: A New Heritage Plan for Ballarat 2017-2030," (Ballarat, 2017). 30.

character captured in the 2017 Heritage Plan Our People, Culture & Place. The two are also linked via CoB's application to become a UNESCO Creative City which was confirmed in 2019. Throughout this same period, the Ballarat tourism body Visit Ballarat was looking at ways to both draw on the city's heritage and attract new audiences. They created the 'Made of Ballarat' campaign—an example of branding the city using creativity, albeit a particular kind, of makers with sellable wares. Their linked publication *Unearth* Seasonal Quarterly showcased some of this campaign but also expanded to include GLAM exhibitions and events and arts festivals like the Ballarat International Foto Biennale. This filled a gap that perhaps the Ballarat Creative City newsletter would come to cover, bringing together the marketing of various cultural events that cross arts, tourism, and heritage. In this way 'Made of Ballarat' aimed at a cohesive image of the city, targeted at certain audiences. More detail on the three lenses now follows. These relate specifically to Ballarat but the analysis could be applied to other locations in order to examine different city strategies and the role of heritage and creativity within.

2017 CoB Heritage Plan Our People, Culture & Place incorporating HUL

Figures 2.6 and 2.7: City of Ballarat 2017 Heritage Plan and Ballarat Imagine documents

In 2013, Ballarat became a pilot city for the human values centred HUL approach and the CoB 2017 Heritage Plan (Figure 2.6) built on this. That is, the model of the city as multi-layered and relating closely to the cultural landscape concept of "layers through time replete with social

meanings".[91] HUL offered a framework to reimagine the city's sustainable future,[92] to manage change in historic cities—from things such as sightlines to the more intangible cultural practices. UNESCO's 2030 sustainability agenda, linked to the UNESCO Creative City program also defines "culture and creativity as powerful enablers for sustainable development" and of making human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient.[93]

The Ballarat Heritage Plan 2017–2030 brings heritage together with cultural tourism in presenting its value in both market and non-market terms.[94] Research collected during CoB's 2013 Ballarat Imagine consultation (Figure 2.7) used the HUL approach of collecting data from multiple stakeholders and found that "Ballarat's citizens listed the city's cultural, natural, historic and architectural heritage as their most loved elements". The plan also states that Ballarat's heritage assets "are a 'public good', contributing to our city's culture, liveability and community wellbeing".[95] In market terms, and in the context of cultural tourism, arts and events, the plan asserts that heritage and culture are a fast-growing sector in Ballarat, "worth $505 million per annum, through the emerging 'sixth pillar' of Ballarat's economy—tourism". The plan states that tourism is the sixth-largest employer group, with more than 1100 businesses engaged in tourism-related activity.[96] GLAM organisations sit within this sixth pillar, though not always easily, as various objectives are at play where the city's "heritage exists within a complex and constantly changing living landscape and policy environment".[97] This environment has come to cross over with arts and culture.

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[91] Taylor, "The Historic Urban Landscape Paradigm and Cities as Cultural Landscapes. Challenging Orthodoxy in Urban Conservation". 471.

[92] Cooke, Buckley, and Fayad, "Using the Historic Urban Landscape to Reimagine Ballarat: The Local Context". 100.

[93] UNESCO Creative Cities Network, "What Does It Mean to Be a UNESCO Creative City?" accessed 25th May 2020, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/content/management-documents.

[94] City of Ballarat, "Our People, Culture & Place: A New Heritage Plan for Ballarat 2017-2030". 3.

[95] Ibid. 3.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

2016–2019 CoB's Ballarat Creative City strategy consultation and development and Victorian Government's Creative State strategy
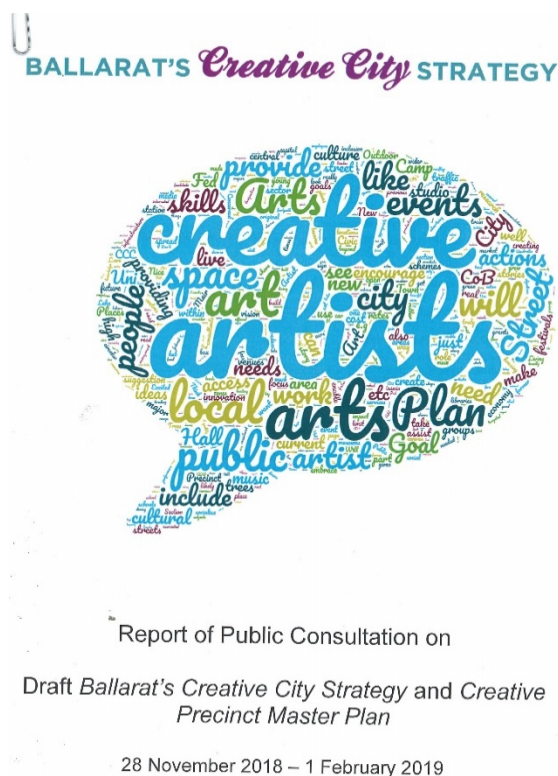
Figures 2.8 and 2.9: City of Ballarat Creative City documents

In 2016 Creative State was released, described as "Victorian Government's strategy to strengthen and grow the state's creative industries and the value they bring to Victorians. Following extensive sector and public consultation, the four-year strategy is backed by $115 million in new funding".[98] Following similar guidelines and policy, CoB developed their Ballarat Creative City Strategy between 2017 and 2019. The Project Overview document, 2017 sought to achieve:

> Improved confidence of the city to pursue new creative industries and endeavors;

> An enriched cultural life for the community;

> A flourishing cultural sector which enhances Ballarat's reputation nationally; and

> Greater overall sustainability for creative industries in the city.

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[98] Victorian Government, "Creative State: Victoria's First Creative Industries Strategy 2016-2020," (Victoria: Victorian Government, 2016).

The objectives of the project were to:

> Articulate the contribution creative industries make to Ballarat

> Establish a collective vision and objectives for the future development of the creative sector in Ballarat

> Understand how to reduce any physical or cultural/structural barriers to further developing a thriving, vibrant creative sector in Ballarat

> Develop a vision and master plan for the physical development of the arts precinct in the CBD, to support the development of a nationally recognised creative city[99]

As part of the consultation that followed, issues of what was included in the Creative City plans were raised. This involved the subsequent potential for the emergence of van Boom's concept of fuzziness and loss of meaning around what creativity is, as well as restriction in terms of what is capable of producing dollar value. Below are the definitions and categories listed in the final 2019 strategy,—ranging from advertising, to music, to gastronomy—that demonstrate the broad definition of creativity applied. It is key to note that the Ballarat GLAM sector advocated for inclusion on this list (listed as 'museums, galleries, and libraries'), highlighting the creativity and innovation within their work.

The Charlotte Smith Collection fashion show over Ballarat Heritage Weekend, where fashion and heritage collide, Civic Hall, 2019

What is Creativity?
definitions and categories

The creative sectors are growing in importance to our local economy. These sectors employ people, sell goods and drive forward-thinking. They tend to be innovation-led and knowledge intensive, and can fall into the following categories:

· Advertising	· Digital games development	· Multimedia	· Publishing
· Architecture		· Music	· Research and development
· Broadcasting	· Events	· Museums, galleries and libraries	
· Ceramics	· Fashion		· Sculpture
· Crafts	· Film	· Performing arts	· Software and technology
· Curation	· Gastronomy	· Photography	
· Design	· Moving image	· Public Art	· Visual Arts
			· Writing

Figure 2.9: 'What is Creativity?' *Celebrating Ballarat's Creative City strategy* June 2019

Issues discussed around the overemphasis on the instrumental value of creative industries can be viewed in aspirational but vague language such as "creative thinking is what will help all sectors to blossom, and underpin a healthier, happier, wealthier city".[100] The planned objectives noted in 2017 were carried through to the final 2019 plan. In the executive summary Ballarat is lauded in the following terms:

Ballarat has always been full of creative energy. It also has a past that will continue to be questioned. It is a city with tensions of history pulling against the spirits of future

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[99] City of Ballarat, "Ballarat Creative City Strategy Project Overview," (Ballarat, 2018).

[100] "Ballarat's Creative City Strategy". Iv.

optimism to reveal a whole new set of stories. Herein lies the Ballarat creative ecology. What talents do we wish to celebrate and share with the world? What is it to be a city that has found its creative edge? What is it to be a city which is culturally confident, ambitious, always regenerating—celebrating our past, present and future?[101]

Statements such as these are all too commonly found in submissions to and from local and state and (perhaps especially) federal governments in matters relating to cultural heritage, the arts and the GLAM sector. Their prose is characterised by a glossing-over of fundamental issues (for example, the "tensions of history" noted and elided above) in favour of a rhetoric whose bright surface often conceals a lack of substantive meaning (who or what is intended by "the spirits of future optimism"?). Issues such as funding and disparate visions of the public as being variously participant, client or consumer, and even acceptance of agreed terminology, lead to challenges in implementation of policy.

2018 Cultural and heritage tourism and Visit Ballarat's 'Made of Ballarat' campaign

Figures 2.10 & 2.11: Visit Ballarat's 'Made of Ballarat' *Unearth* publication, Winter 2019

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[101] Ibid. iii.

Hurley has made reference to Ballarat's "high heritage tourism profile"[102] as an asset for Ballarat and the BMI. One example of Ballarat's heritage and creativity feeding into tourism can be studied via the example of Ballarat tourism body Visit Ballarat's 2018 campaign entitled 'Made of Ballarat.' Visit Ballarat director at the time, Noel Dempsey, described the campaign's aim to tell "a new Ballarat story…[about] doing old meets new in a more contemporary engaging way" and drew on a year's worth of market research.[103] The campaign came to be based on four pillars: "legend", "earthly riches", "creating" and "rebellion". The campaign, as the *Ballarat Courier* reported, aimed "to challenge perceptions of Ballarat by promoting the city's 'entrepreneurial heritage', 'earthly riches' and 'creative energy' to Melburnians". 'Made of Ballarat,' the *Courier* article went on to say, "is designed to engage more than just Melbourne visitors. Mr Dempsey said it also aimed to create a sense of pride by telling the stories of Ballarat's creators. 'Ballarat is so much more than old, cold and gold', he said".[104]

This campaign looked at new ways of presenting Ballarat's identity using both heritage and contemporary elements, and with a commercial slant. As Richards notes, in the pursuit of city identity and regional development (particularly tourism and marketing) "creative resources are now regularly employed to generate more distinctive identities, offering regions and cities a symbolic edge in an increasingly crowded marketplace".[105] The positioning of cultural values within the marketplace, and the use of such terms as marketing edge, suggests an approach that would seek to commodify intangible as well as tangible values, and risks the reduction of value to those metrics relevant only to economic outcomes. The strategy also risks becoming a re-badging exercise when the tellers of these new Ballarat stories are agencies whose expertise lies in advertising and marketing. As it turned out, regardless of both the campaign's supporters and detractors, it came to an abrupt end, highlighting again the vulnerability of such approaches to the development of a city identity, and the inability of the city to find a cohesive and sustainable shared plan. The cynicism this feeds in the broader community is neatly captured in the mock sticker (found in a Ballarat pub) using the campaign's branding, which is pictured in Figures 2.12 and 2.13.

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[102] Hurley, "Useful Survival: Reflections on a Mechanics' Institute in the 21st Century".

[103] Rochelle Kirkham, "Made of Ballarat Campaign Tells a New Ballarat Story," *The Ballarat Courier* 2018.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Greg Richards, "Creativity and Tourism in the City," *Current Issues in Tourism* 17, no. 2 (2014). 291.

Figures 2.12 and 2.13:
'Made of Bullshit' sticker designed by Jay Rankine and pictured at The Eastern pub Ballarat

In 2019, the city's tourism services were controversially shifted from the Visit Ballarat body and moved back inhouse as part of the council. During an industry information meeting, Mayor Cr Samantha McIntosh said the council's decision was not taken lightly saying: "we hope to continue to work with them, this is about a better bold and vibrant Ballarat".[106] The article on this meeting reported that a new municipal plan, known as 'Ballarat is Open' would be implemented, based on consultation with industry sectors and the broader community. CoB CEO Linley responded to concern over lack of consultation with the industry by saying that the 'Made of Ballarat' brand devised by Visit Ballarat would continue: "We are very conscious of high-end tourism and we are not stopping this campaign", she said. The Visit Ballarat website was, at the time of writing, a broken link. Here it can be seen that strategies can lack legitimacy through coming from top down, where consultations are closely managed, and can lead to public distrust where *ad hoc* approaches lead to lack of validity.

To conclude discussion of these three city lenses, (CoB Heritage and Creative City plans, and Visit Ballarat tourism campaigns), multiple attempts are made at capturing and selling city identity and exploiting creative possibilities. HUL and creative industries intersect in Ballarat becoming a UNESCO creative city where "culture and creativity [are] recognised as powerful enablers of sustainable development and human settlements as inclusive, safe and resilient".[107] The Ballarat Creative City Strategy has the aim of building self-sustaining creative practice that drives other growth; the cultural tourism example of 'Made of Ballarat' involved

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[106] Carol Saffer, "Meeting Looks at Visit Ballarat's Future," *Times News Group*, July 10th 2019, accessed 24th May 2020, https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballarat/news/meeting-looks-at-visit-ballarats-future/.

[107] UNESCO Creative Cities Network, "What Does It Mean to Be a UNESCO Creative City?" accessed 25th May 2020, https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/content/management-documents.

showcasing a certain kind of local makers, and Visit Ballarat aimed at enticing visitors from elsewhere in its attempt to generate dollars. Ballarat heritage is recorded as having a market value of $505 million per annum and a non-market value reflected in a belief in its public good, contributing to city's culture, liveability and community wellbeing.[108] How these varying aims play out in practice is complex. Whether assessed from the point of view of what is being measured (or what is not being measured) or from a consideration of the ambiguous and shifting senses of "create" and "creative", the creative city and creative industries concepts—and other city strategies —cannot be accepted uncritically.

The approaches all appear to be good willed, aiming at the breaking down of silos and building prosperity and sustainability for the city in a way that combines past, present and future. However, they also reveal a parallel to BMI in providing a lack of central vision and strategy or tensions between conflicting ones, something that can also be applied to contemporary Australia more broadly, as it grapples with different views on Indigenous history and a questioning of national identity. A more ecological view of value and cities is argued for here, one that is multi-layered and that goes beyond the purely instrumental. Perhaps this could be achieved in a return to Hall's initial creative city hope for density, diversity and openness where "ultimately the aim is to create a certain quality of space, in which people come together in meaningful social practices of an economic, spatial, cultural and /or social nature".[109] This city context provides the backdrop for discussion of Ballarat GLAM organisations in chapter three. Findings show that these organisations offer ways of collaborating and working with Ballarat's heritage in creative ways, through the work of curators and programmers, that could be instructive in guiding city strategy, although it also reveals fractures. As Holden asserts, the legitimacy found in cultural value involves publics, cultural professionals and policy makers being part of a shared conversation and understanding that seems a challenge to achieve.

Creating this legitimacy, Holden states, "will depend on institutional innovation that engages the public in understanding and contributing to the creation of cultural value".[110] This concept can be applied both to the CoB and its cultural institutions, including the BMI. With these various city approaches in mind, this PhD uses organisational case studies in GLAM and MIs to test how such value and legitimacy might be built. This is through collaborative, localised,

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[108] City of Ballarat, "Our People, Culture & Place: A New Heritage Plan for Ballarat 2017-2030". 3.

[109] van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate". 365.

[110] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy". 56.

projects that utilise "new ways of making and sharing"[111] and move away from the neoliberal focus on 'jobs and growth' or purely tourism markets. These projects develop art forms at the same time as providing new perspectives and relationships (cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, and intergenerational). Through bringing together creativity and heritage in this way, narratives of both past and present can be celebrated and challenged in a critical framework, offering a model perhaps more sustainable than one-off spectaculars or policy rhetoric about creative industries. Value created through such creative activation projects can aim for relevance and connection not just as a "door momentarily flying open"[112] but rooted in deep values, lived out in action.

Cultural leadership is also required here. As Holden asserts, institutional value - which can be both created and destroyed - works through how organisations act and operate, and in turn how they articulate that value back to government and funders. This means having strong organisational aims, strategy and resourcing, that provide a clear, albeit dynamic identity. This point is vital for both organisations and cities and can be problematic as can be seen in later chapters. BMI's internal focus and financial mind-set for example, that can be traced back to the late nineteenth century as noted earlier in this chapter, minimizes their ability to be part of creating, and advocating for cultural value; value that in Holden's ideal balances, intrinsic, instrumental and institutional elements. Holden describes this role as enhancing "the public realm" (public goods of creating trust and mutual respect among citizens)[113]. This is also echoed in Barrett's ideal of democratic museum spaces that create "cultural public spheres," and HUL's people-centred approach, that are also central to the Reinventing the Museum tool (RMT) applied throughout this thesis.

Conclusion

These frameworks allow engagement with the problems this thesis addresses of relevance, diversity, and organisational innovation and cultural value. This is both on a local level - through practice as curator at the BMI – and more broadly to Ballarat city, and beyond through

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[111] Justin O'Connor and Mark Andrejevic. "Creative City, Smart City...Whose City Is It?" *The Conversation*, June 11th 2017, accessed 25th May 2020, https://theconversation.com/creative-city-smart-city-whose-city-is-it-78258 2017.

[112] Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance*, 55.

[113] John Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy," 17.

analysis and interviews. Through mixed- methodology, creative activation is studied on the three levels of arts practice, organisational thinking, and what heritage can mean and do. The BMI shares similar challenges and opportunities to other MIs and GLAMs in regard to diversity and engagement. Of particular emphasis are historic legacies discussed in this chapter around the role of women, exclusive membership, narrow leadership, and reluctance for change. There are also the positive historic ideals of access to knowledge and the BMI's role in Ballarat's cultural life. However, a recurring gap was identified between high ideals and the everyday reality. There were also contested visions of the BMI's role and future that continue to resonate between 'traditionalists' and 'progressives'. Funding and notions of value came into play as the question of whether or not the BMI was deserving of public funds. This remains relevant today.

This chapter has established Ballarat and BMI historically within cultural networks, and outlined contemporary city strategies, and the issues they raise, that provide important contemporary context to the research. The two opening chapters of this thesis have established essential frameworks and context and introduced reviews of relevant literature. Their application to the data collected and the research findings therein is now presented. Chapters three and four use qualitative interviews, undertaken between 2016 and 2018, to discuss five Ballarat GLAM organisations and five MIs. Considered here, are the processes of organisational change and creative activation projects used, as a way of creating multiple forms of value and contribution to the cultural life of their cities. Chapter five studies the city-wide event *White Night Ballarat 2017* in the context of creative industries and the creative city, and chapters six and seven utilise action and practice research to analyse the work undertaken by the author as curator at the BMI.

Chapter Three: Contemporary Ballarat GLAM organisations

Figure 3.1: Gold Museum curator Snjez Cosic (*Ballarat Courier*)

This chapter uses qualitative interview data, annual reports and digital marketing to investigate five GLAM organisations in Ballarat, allowing investigation of the thesis question of how organisations and their collections can interact creatively with the publics they serve and progress towards greater connectivity and relevance. The sub-questions of cultural value and organisational capacity for change are also addressed (where heritage streetscapes and gold rush history contribute to cultural tourism, a major industry in Ballarat with both market and non-market impacts).[1] Creative activation is explored in creative projects undertaken within GLAM organisations where material from the past is reassembled or renegotiated in the present. It is also investigated through organisational structure, and relationships with the Ballarat city ecology and cultural identity. A snapshot is offered of the city during a time of significant change and the subsequent cultural and creative possibilities explored. Tensions are laid bare, though not necessarily resolved, and the research contributes valuable data to what is an ongoing project of unravelling Ballarat's complex past and possible futures.

Figure 3.2: Sovereign Hill Main Street (The SHMA)

Interviews were undertaken with staff members at five GLAM organisations in Ballarat during 2017 and 2018. These were: Julie McLaren, curator at the Art Gallery of Ballarat (AGB); Barry Kay, interpretive programs manager and Jennifer Ganske, director of marketing at Sovereign Hill; Michelle Smith, manager/curator and Snjez Cosic, curator from the Gold Museum; Sarah Masters, former general manager and acting CEO from the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka (MADE); and Tony Godfrey, first executive manager of the

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[1] City of Ballarat, "Our People, Culture & Place: A New Heritage Plan for Ballarat 2017-2030". (Ballarat: City of Ballarat, 2017). 3

BMI. This mix of curators, programmers and managers allowed coverage of all sides of curatorial projects and organisational issues.

This chapter outlines each of the five organisations through examination of the organisation's background: its origins, operating structure, building and collections; and secondly its discourse for change and representative projects. In chapter four, five Mechanics' Institutes in Australia and the US will be the subject of a similar study. The interview data was categorised into topics via NVivo then analysed through themes. These themes are discussed via the framework of broader shifts in museology and heritage, and also within the specific Ballarat context and city strategies, as they play out in the selected Ballarat GLAM organisations and events. Key themes involve: the role of the curator; the approach to objects and visitor; gap filling and reinterpretation of collections and stories; the opening up and diversifying of organisations and their activities and their role in civic engagement and activism. RMT shifts and interrelations within the traditional and reinvented paradigm will be traced. These are movements from: inwardly driven to responsive to stakeholders; collection driven to audience driven; limited representation to broad representation; internal perspective to community participant; focused on the past to relevant and forward looking; assumed value to earned value; and stability to sustainability.

Ballarat GLAM and gold

The association of Ballarat with old, cold, and gold may be traced back to the title of a 2008 literary and artistic podtour of Ballarat created by artist and storyteller Anne E Stewart for ABC Ballarat.[2] This virtual tour took people around to various city sites and told stories of their connections to writers and artists. The tour also encouraged people to spend time exploring Ballarat's galleries, museums, cafes and heritage sites. At the time of its production, this digital walking tour was a creative way of presenting some of the city's stories and places of interest, and raising the profile of the city's past and present culture. It is interesting to note that in the following decade, it is that very old, cold and gold image which is perceived by some to be a negative.

The 2018 Visit Ballarat marketing campaign, 'Made of Ballarat' spoke of the need for "challenging [older] perceptions" of Ballarat, and for promoting an entrepreneurial spirit and

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[2] Anne E Stewart, "Old, Cold, and Gold: A Literary and Artistic Podtour of Ballarat,"
https://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/04/17/2203763.htm.

creative energy where "Ballarat is so much more than old, cold and gold".[3] Perceived tensions between heritage and conservative connotations and more innovative creative practices were also reflected around this time in the Ballarat Creative City Strategy consultations. This thesis challenges the usefulness of this divergence, and aims to establish the grounds for a more comprehensive understanding of the possibilities that bringing heritage and creativity, and past, present and future together in projects can offer. Data regarding the various approaches of organisations to their curatorial, interpretive and marketing work, and their operational structures, will be presented here through consideration of their backgrounds and discourses for change, and analysed as a whole following individual description.

The Art Gallery of Ballarat (AGB)

Interviewee: Julie McLaren, curator

Figure 3.3:　　Art Gallery of Ballarat (Image courtesy of Art Gallery of Ballarat)

Figure 3.4:　　Ballarat Art Gallery's Julie McLaren and director Louise Tegart, 2019
　　　　　　　(Brendan McCarthy, Ballarat Courier)

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[3] Kirkham, "Made of Ballarat Campaign Tells a New Ballarat Story". See also two alternating public views here from tourist operators in 2019: "Made of Ballarat is helping our town break away from the "Old, Gold and Cold" stereotype and proves there is more to Ballarat than a nice place for families to visit. The lessons of MADE show us that our rich history, however valuable, is not enough to drive visitation forward and to remain firmly rooted in the past would be to our own detriment".
https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/6272466/ballarat-needs-to-break-the-old-gold-and-cold-stereotype/ and business established 2013-

"Old, Cold and **Gold**, that is what Ballarat is best known for. Though over the years, Ballarat tourism has tried to shun itself of this title, and tried to portray Ballarat as the New trendy Place to Be.
Golden Nugget Discovery Tours has embraced the **OLD, COLD** and **GOLD** title, because that what Ballarat really is".

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

The AGB was established in 1884 and was independently run until it became part of CoB operations in 1979. The gallery is a not-for-profit organisation, managed by a board, with the key stakeholder the CoB, paying wages and covering HR, OHS, and managing the physical purpose-built facility. The Art Gallery Foundation, established in the 1880s by James Oddie, described as "the father of Ballarat",[4] also continues, as does the social committee for the gallery, which organises member events and hosts most exhibition openings. The foundation supports the gallery financially in contributions to conservation and acquisition of artworks, and the organisation of significant occasions. They also manage gallery membership, essentially a Friends of the Gallery club, similar to many such support groups in other GLAM organisations. The gallery also has a volunteer team, consisting of about forty people who act as gallery guides, and others who help with special exhibitions and events. Support is also received from the state government through Creative Victoria, and from philanthropic support for specific projects.

The gallery's collection comprises over 11,000 artworks and their marketing describes it "as a valuable and vibrant expression of Ballarat's—and Australia's—history and of our diverse identity, and looks for ways to display it in new and engaging ways".[5] This reflects some of the RMT shifts from exclusiveness to inclusiveness, and limited representation to broad representation. More traditional approaches towards collection objects are evident in the gallery's role as custodian of the original flag from the 1854 Eureka Stockade rebellion. In the 1970s, the Gallery undertook conservation works on the flag and instituted a new prominent display and increased attention towards "the acquisition of works of art that help to interpret the story of Eureka".[6]

The discourse for change and representative projects

At the time of interview, the AGB was looking for ways to expand its demographic reach and to use its collection to tell stories in new ways. It was also concerned with the gallery's evolution and role in the city, from initially focussing on "artworks from Europe: (Australian art was not considered fashionable)…[to being] very supportive of local artists and looking at

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[4] Art Gallery of Ballarat, "History of the Gallery," accessed 25th May 2020, https://artgalleryofballarat.com.au/collection/history-of-the-gallery/.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

art on a national and international level".[7] McLaren states that the gallery "has evolved over time to be less elitist, but we still fight against that to a certain extent".[8] The contemporary Ballarat context was characterised by McLaren as seeing "huge changes in the past ten years with new businesses, and food culture, bringing in different kinds of visitors and locals". She notes the last two years as a time when the city has become more collaborative with a shift away from operating in silos, something also addressed through HUL. This recent period has also seen the gallery build up its relationship with volunteers[9] as another form of engagement and resourcing. The specific AGB exhibition example discussed was *Romancing the Skull* (2017) and future exhibitions were planned that would bring out underrepresented perspectives, such as *Becoming Modern* (2019), showcasing Australian female modernist artists. These were also a particular focus of the new gallery director, Louise Tegart, who started in 2018 with an emphasis on "new ways to tell the stories contained within the collection, and within the building itself".[10] This work fits with trends in museology and critical heritage and Witcomb and Buckley's call for recognition of the constructed nature of heritage and the resulting "politics of representation".[11]

The official title of curator was given to McLaren only recently, which had previously been a combined director and curator role (something, she notes, not unusual for a regional gallery). McLaren's work in the *Romancing the Skull* exhibition and in her programming demonstrated the role the curator could play. This involved specific expertise and knowledge about the collection, and the more traditional writing of essays for the exhibition catalogue, as well as connecting with a range of stakeholders: artists, local businesses, the CoB, Federation University, and MexVic, a non-profit organization that seeks to promote and share Mexican culture in Victoria. McLaren also refers to being on the CoB's Creative City Strategy committee, led by the CoB economic development team. She states that Ballarat as a creative city "is making people think a little bit outside of the square—art is not just about seeing it on the walls of the gallery. I am all for this as art isn't something you have to go to a specific building to see, it should be all around you". This was one outcome of *Romancing the Skull*,

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[7] Julie McLaren, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2018, Art Gallery of Ballarat.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Caleb Cluff, "ABG Director Louise Tegart Is Putting Her Brand on the Gallery," *Ballarat Courier*, January 14th, 2019.

[11] Witcomb and Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies': Looking Back in Order to Look Forward". 39.

where various RMT-type shifts can be identified, for example moving from: status quo to informed risk-taking, protective to welcoming, individual work to collaboration, and ethnocentric to multicultural.

Romancing the Skull, as curated by Julie McLaren, involved an exhibition and program of events led by a vision around the theme of skulls in art, through time and across cultures, that reached out into the city in different ways. It utilised the gallery's collection along with a rich combination of works from around the world, both historic and contemporary, and saw creative activation of the past through "artists exploring themes such as *Dance Macabre*, *Memento Mori* and *Vanitas* [that] have inherited these concepts in the same way that practical techniques of painting and art-making have been passed down through the centuries".[12] The exhibition was also driven by its targeting of a different demographic. McLaren was aware of the need to not alienate the current audience while seeking to fill the gap of those in their late teens through to people in their late thirties and early forties. McLaren notes the aim to engage "people interested in popular culture who may not normally come into the gallery because they see that we have beautiful and well-researched exhibitions that we pride ourselves on, but might not see it as a place they feel comfortable in".[13] The exhibition and its various associated programs aimed to reach out to a new audience. McLaren states: "It has been a bit of a risk but it's been really well received and it's been amazing seeing people in the gallery space that we've never seen before".[14] This approach towards broadening engagement and moving towards greater connectivity, relevance and inclusion indicates the value of these moves, in the shifts happening across the GLAM sector.

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[12] Julie McLaren, "*Romancing the Skull*," ed. Art Gallery of Ballarat (Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2017).

[13] McLaren.

[14] Ibid.

Figure 3.5: Art Gallery of Ballarat promotional material for *Romancing the Skull*, 2018 (Image courtesy of Art Gallery of Ballarat)

One component of this approach was a campaign Show us your Tats where people with skull tattoos gained free entry to the exhibition. McLaren notes how it "made people realise that you don't need a knowledge of art to go in and enjoy" the experience, breaking down some of the elitist perception. In another form of invitation, and moving in accordance with the RMT protective to welcoming mode, the gallery experimented with late Friday night openings with food, drinks and music, following trends like Melbourne Museum's Nocturnal series which was described as an "after-hours party where you are invited to explore the galleries after hours, talk with curators and scientists, and see rare back-of-house collections".[15] The National Gallery of Victoria's Friday Nights with its "Art/Bars/DJs" concept was another of these innovations. The AGB also worked with local schools to create public artworks that were placed around the city, extending the project beyond the physical institutional boundaries. McLaren sees a greater current appetite and excitement in the city around collaboration on projects, and the impact of the additional driver of Creative City work. *Romancing the Skull*, while using the gallery as a base and core, extended out into the city in a number of ways. She notes the value of "sharing skills and resources in collaboration, doing what each do best and also bringing in different experiences and working with different organisations allow[ing] us to target different audiences each time". She stresses the value of partnership with the CoB here, in providing support with, for example permits.

A major component of the project saw the AGB partner with community organisation Mex Vic to stage its annual Day of the Dead festival in Ballarat (traditionally held at Federation Square in Melbourne). McLaren explained how the exhibition incorporated the work of artist

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[15] Forte, "Nocturnal X Midsumma Are Hosting a Lunar New Year Disco," accessed 25th May 2020, http://fortemag.com.au/arts/nocturnal-x-midsumma-are-hosting-a-lunar-new-year-disco/.

Jose Guadalupe Posada and the partnership with Mex Vic:

> We had around 4000 people come to Alfred Deakin Place, that is an underutilised space in the city, and we had Mexican music, dancing, food, performance, face painting and a traditional alter set up. It meant we not only engaged with the Mexican community in Melbourne who came down to Ballarat for a few days but also the Spanish speaking community in Ballarat. We also held an event about the Mexican Day of the Dead at the Ballarat cemetery that engaged a whole other group of people so that was a pretty incredible response to things within the exhibition…We also created a large-scale artwork that we did a time lapse video of. To have this massive Mexican artwork created by artists who have flown over from Mexico as part of Ballarat's cultural history is pretty amazing.

As seen in these examples, the current drives to expand audiences and enhance ways of connecting people with collections and institutes can be achieved through a number of approaches to combining arts, heritage and engagement, and reflect the move towards cultural diversity and the new perspectives such diversity brings. In this example, history and traditions relating to the skull allowed new interpretations, collaborations, and experiences that extended Ballarat's gold rush identity, and accentuated the city's ability to present unique cultural events. In this way, Barrett's description of the early museum's conceptualisation of the public as a singular mass to be filled with knowledge, becomes nuanced as multiple publics and local contexts are included.

The *Romancing the Skull* project allowed the gallery to develop its creative connections with various communities and address perceptions of elitism. The reinterpretation of collections themselves is also an opportunity for GLAM organisations to critique or reframe, and address previous gaps in representation, what Kidd has described as "absent voices".[16] McLaren reflects that "there's a huge trend at the moment of artists mining collections and I think it can't be anything but a positive thing because when you've been trained in art or looking after cultural heritage you look at objects in a particular way, but if you invite someone else to come in it calls to them in a completely different way".[17] In 2018 she extended this thinking into projects with artists at the gallery "as a bit of an intervention and responding to issues, for example an exhibition responding to the Heidelberg School featuring women in the landscape as depicted by men, so redressing that from a women's perspective and bringing

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[16] Kidd, "Filling the Gaps? Interpreting Museum Collections through Performance". 61.

[17] McLaren.

about complete re-imaginings of how to display works and how things can go together".[18] In this way collections and artists and visitors can be engaged in new dialogues. These opportunities are provided by cultural organisations with the willingness and capacity to experiment and collaborate, and curators that bring both specific collection knowledge and facilitatory skills and vision.

Sovereign Hill Museums Association (SHMA)

Interviewees: Barry Kay, interpretive programs manager and Jennifer Ganske, director of marketing

Figure 3.6: Barry Kay in costume at Sovereign Hill (The SHMA).

Figure 3.7: *Winter Wonderlights* – Sovereign Hill celebrates biggest weekend in 48 year history, 2018 (The SHMA)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

Sovereign Hill (which is comprised of an outdoor museum, the Gold Museum, an education program, and the regional property Narmbool) opened in 1970 and is an internationally renowned outdoor museum that centres around the 1851 discovery of gold in the region. It presents a nightly sound-and light show called *Aura* (created in 2019) that is described as a

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[18] See also the work of Megan Evans and installation work *Parlour* in the AGB 2018 exploring issues of colonisation and providing new perspectives. https://artgalleryofballarat.com.au/gallery_exhibitions/megan-evans-parlour/).

"stunning, all-new, $8 million sound-and-light show that takes you on a spectacular journey though time and space to experience the story of gold and its power to change everything".[19]

Figure 3.8: Sovereign Hill advertising material for *Aura* Sound and Light Show, 2019 (The SHMA)

Sovereign Hill operates as a not-for-profit organisation, as well as receiving funds from government and philanthropic sources. They also have the Friends of Sovereign Hill volunteer program who "undertake a large range of interpretive activities to enhance the visitor experience and provide invaluable support to the functions of the Outdoor Museum".[20] The Sovereign Hill collection includes an entire recreated town complete with carriages, forges, costumes and so on. The Gold Museum oversees this collection.

The discourse of change and representative projects

Sovereign Hill, as a hugely popular tourist destination, is working both on an international level and within Ballarat's city ecology of heritage, arts and tourism. It draws on gold rush history to tell stories of the past that also aim at contemporary relevance.[21] The 2018/19 Annual report states its purpose as: "connecting people through our history to adapt for a better future" and its mission as: "providing meaningful immersive experiences that tell stories of our humanity,"[22] thus bringing in a connection between past, present and future, and aiming for

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[19] Erin Williams, "Ballarat's Sovereign Hill Officially Launches New Sound and Light Show Aura" *Ballarat Courier,* March 29th, 2019.

[20] Sovereign Hill Museums Association, "Annual Report 2018-19," (Ballarat: Sovereign Hill Museums Association, 2019). 27.

[21] Barry Kay, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Sovereign Hill.

[22] SHMA, *Annual Report 2018-19*. 2.

common human experiences. Due to its size and the iconic status of the organisation, interviewees noted some issues with the public perception of it locally: the opinion "that tourists come to Sovereign Hill and get their goldfields experience and others don't get the same benefit",[23] and a "misconception from our local audience that think it is either council-run or it should be free to them".[24] Marketing Director Jennifer Ganske counters these views by highlighting the organisation's role in "propelling a visitor economy" as well as providing a large amount of local employment.[25] A 2015 economic impact study records that Sovereign Hill provided 780 direct jobs, and contributed $173.8 million to the Ballarat economy.[26]

These issues of public perception of Ballarat GLAM organisations and their role in city identity and storytelling are a common theme and part of critical heritage's questioning of how stories of the past are told and by whom. Ganske notes development over recent years between tourism and different levels of government that focus on place-making and the questions: "Why is Ballarat an interesting place to go? What are the stories that are there?" Tensions can be seen to exist here between the needs of the local and the visiting publics, as well as potential conflict between more commercial tourism aims and a deeper heritage critique.

In terms of storytelling content, where McLaren at the AGB states that "Ballarat can get tied up in being a gold rush town but there's so much more going on here", Sovereign Hill (and the Gold Museum in different ways) is exploring ways to use the gold story as the starting point for everything that follows, with marketing campaigns such as 'Gold Changes Everything.' (Figure 3.8) Ganske discusses the core role of Sovereign Hill telling the gold rush story whilst "being able to bring the new generations into that story" and interpretation manager Barry Kay, speaking of history, maintains it is "not something removed from us now but a continuous ongoing story and I strive as much as I can for relevance….We look at ideas and issues relevant to both now and then and there are so many". [27] He cites multiculturalism, the monarchy versus republic debate, citizenship, and the environment, stressing the importance of highlighting how these issues are part of ongoing narratives. Ganske also considers the role of gold in establishing the history and organisations now vital to cultural tourism for the city and region:

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[23] Kay, 2017

[24] Jennifer Ganske, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2018, Sovereign Hill.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Alex Hamer, "Sovereign Hill Study Looks at Economic Boost to Ballarat, Victoria," *Ballarat Courier* February 16th, 2015.

[27] Kay, 2017

"Sovereign Hill sits on that border of telling a really strong cultural story here as well as a story of foundation for Victoria, where the money came from that built all the other art galleries, where the money came from that filled all the other art galleries and collections.[28]

Beyond how the story of gold is used within the museum and its marketing, other elements of a change discourse include Ganske's role in assessing market trends and walking the lines between commercial and historical elements. New offerings, like *Christmas in July* and the hugely popular *Winter Wonderlights*—where the "1850s township [is] transformed into a winter playground complete with falling make-believe snow, carollers, fairy lights, warming…through the magic of large-scale light projections in a dazzling *Winter Wonderlights* show" makes a positive impression, she claims, of the cold for which Ballarat is known. For Kay, as interpretive programs manager, using the arts to bring people into magical experiences like *Christmas in July* is important, but so, he recognises, are what might be the more difficult histories—the experiences of the Chinese and Indigenous on the goldfields for example.

Seeing Sovereign Hill's point of difference as creating living stories through immersion, Ganske suggests "that there's a very fine line between caretaking an object and keeping it secure and showing it to people occasionally versus maintaining a living story".[29] This view connects to museological debates around objects and their uses in heritage interpretation and storytelling. In connecting tangible and intangible heritage, Ganske also discusses the increased focus on immersion and creating the "emotional tie to things" in the work they do (this emotional affect is discussed further in chapter six). "It has to grab them in a 360 degree fashion to hold their interest to tell that tale, to get them to understand it, so we really moved into an experiential way of showing things".

At the same time, she referred to research revealing that audiences don't want history sugar-coated. She discussed the need to "embrace it and…tell those tales, whether they're great or not great," and allow opportunities to make connections between the past and today where discrimination and inequality continues. As a result, Sovereign Hill's programming is at once market-driven, with people looking for immersive experiences, as well as the authenticity that addresses contemporary issues. There is the potential here for using the past as a way of connecting with the present, though its commercial, visitor focus is always present.

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[28] Jennifer Ganske, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2018, Sovereign Hill.
[29] Ibid.

Examples of Sovereign Hill looking to develop more challenging stories include a theatre project Barry Kay is developing with an Indigenous playwright, based around the archival documents of the 1888–89 select committee inquiry into the Aboriginal people of Victoria. He says that "my feeling is part of the challenge, why we haven't come to a point of reconciliation is we are still so shaped by those Colonial attitudes and I think the piece has real relevance and power".[30] He also cites the interpretive piece as part of the Sovereign Hill experience around the Chinese on the Goldfields, where through performance and a Q & A that follows he states it is about:

> people who can connect their own experiences, or be shocked that this country they love has this shameful aspect. It's about coming to terms with who we are. And with live performance you are also witnessing the audience response—laugher, surprise, answering questions afterwards.[31]

He notes that in the past they didn't do a lot of challenging or controversial subjects in the theatre program and there was some early "resistance from staff".[32] Kay states that "when we trialled the Anti-Chinese League piece that we still do to staff, and a voice from the back said 'it's not very uplifting is it?'" There were concerns that Chinese visitors would be upset but Kay notes that rather than this, the show has won an award at the Chinese Interpretation Conference. Kay stressed the potential of arts in connecting people to stories in this way and a connection can be drawn with Ganske's reflection on cultural tourism and museums being in a position—unlike politicians or the media—she says to "really help influence and debate and change people's minds. Museums/culture have that really easy foot in the door for debate".[33]

In contrast to more challenging material, Kay discusses the popular *Christmas in July* and *Winter Wonderlights* as "the other end of the scale, pure entertainment,…to see children absolutely transported by the experience. It's very different to *White Night*, immersive, buildings all lit up and down the street, children are inside a magic spell and they will come up to me in costume and say 'this is the best night of my life' and run off again. It's extraordinary, and that instantaneous response with live presence". Ganske notes the popularity of the *Winter Wonderlights* event, bringing their biggest audiences to date, as being about "building new traditions for new audiences". Again, there is an affective experience, as Witcomb has

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[30] Kay, 2017.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ganske, 2018.

observed, that functions differently to the presentation of straight historical fact or narrative.

One project that enabled some bridging between the museological and commercial elements was *A Victorian Silhouette.* This project brought together various departments across Sovereign Hill and the Gold Museum, along with differing art forms and public programming opportunities. Working with costume manager Erin Santamaria, a performance/fashion show was created that also involved the production of an award-winning film "presenting a glimpse behind the door of the boudoir to experience the secrets of the 1850s *Victorian silhouette*".[34] The performance, first presented in Ballarat, had a showing at Melbourne Museum as part of the 2017 Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival Cultural Program promoted as "*Sovereign Hill* in partnership with *Melbourne Museum* bring together history, museums and performance*".[35]* This was then followed by an exhibition at the Gold Museum in 2018: "Fashionistas will love *A Victorian Silhouette*, the fascinating new exhibition highlighting Victorian-era fashion trends and what they can tell us about the place of women in society during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837–1901)".[36] This project follows other projects discussed, in opening up collections through storytelling to engage new audiences, but also demonstrates the possibilities of collaboration within a large organisation, utilising the skills and energies of relevant staff.

Figure 3.9: Erin Santamaria presenting Victorian undergarments (The SHMA)

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[34] Erin Williams, "Film About a Victorian Silhouette Wins Fashion Film Award " *The Ballarat Courier* 2018.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ballarat Gold Museum, "A Victorian Silhouette," May 18th, 2018, accessed 25th May 2020, http://www.goldmuseum.com.au/a-victorian-silhouette/.

A significant recent development has been Sovereign Hill's updating of its Sound and Light Show with the new *Aura*, funded by the federal government as part of its tourism icon program. The update follows the HUL premise of a more layered and diverse city heritage by including local Indigenous stories and artists (including the Gilson family discussed further in chapter six) and also the creative use of technology. However, *Aura* ultimately maintains a traditional focus on the goldfield and Eureka narrative demonstrating the tension between saleable heritage identity in a tourism sense and the reinvented museum model, and critical heritage approaches towards how stories of the past are told. The case of Sovereign Hill presents the tension between entertainment, commercialism, and the need to maintain tourism dollars whilst also attempting to address historical and ongoing social inequalities and challenges that still resonate today. It does so by extending the central story of gold, with curators and interpreters, along with collaborating staff (including those in marketing), experimenting with new ways of creatively connecting audiences with stories.

Gold Museum

Interviewees: Michelle Smith, manager/curator and Snjez Cosic, curator

Figure 3.10: Gold Museum external (The SHMA)

Figure 3.11 Gold Museum Gold Pavilion (The SHMA)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

The Gold Museum is part of Sovereign Hill and was opened in 1978 with the support of Jessica and Paul Simon, and included the donation of their collection of over 900 gold samples, nuggets and coins. The Gold Museum also has access to the Bolte fund for acquisitions (established on the opening of the museum), with Creative Victoria providing 15 percent of funding for heritage collection care, and additional funding for specific projects. The museum acts as the de facto Ballarat museum[37] and holds, for example, the Ballarat Historical Society Collection of artefacts and photographs. The Gold Museum collection includes items of social history, rare books, costumes, postcards, Eureka items, and more. The Pern Collection of Aboriginal and Pacific island artefacts is also held there but it is the policy of the Museum to "return Aboriginal or Islander material to the original owners if such can be identified".[38] The Gold Museum also oversees the Sovereign Hill collection, so the breadth is significantly wide.

The discourse for change and representative projects

The Gold Museum, in contrast to the outdoor museum of Sovereign Hill, focussed on an immersive experience of the goldrush for audiences, is expanding its storytelling from gold to the social history of Ballarat with a focus on using its extensive collection to tell these stories. Manager/curator Michelle Smith notes the aim of providing "a more holistic picture of the region"[39] and using a museological approach that is not just about entertainment and tourism

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[3737] Michelle Smith, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Gold Museum.

[38] Ballarat Gold Museum, "About Our Collections," http://www.goldmuseum.com.au/about-our-collections/.

[39] Smith.

but is also fun and engaging. The intention was also expressed by Smith and curator Cosic to raise the museum's profile since it appeared little known, often seen as being out of town. "Not a lot of people in the community know that we exist. Which is why we're focusing more on local content and pulling our collections out. The other thing that people don't realise is that we are a social history museum for Ballarat. So it's not just about gold. We started out as a museum about gold, but we've broadened out to social history".[40] This approach provides space for dialogue between tangible and intangible heritage, a relationship that Harrison has argued for, rather than their being artificially divided.

As part of recent restructuring, Smith's job title changed from curator/manager to manager/curator. The roles of collections manager and curator were also developed. She explains: "It sounds like a small thing but by putting manager at the top there it's saying that my job is to keep an eye on the big picture…to see what we're doing [museologically across the Gold Museum and Sovereign Hill] from a more aerial view.…Having a restructure for the organisation has meant bringing in that collection management position and also upgrading the curatorial position [Cosic's role]".[41] Smith notes that, in this way, new people bring new ideas and energy. She states that in "giving permission to the collections manager to do the work that she needs to do, we've actually been able to provide access in a whole different way to do back-of-house tours, to invite school children in to look at the indigenous collections, really think about it quite differently".[42] This reflects the RMT shift from business as usual to reflective practice. The Gold Museum's work also looks at expanding limited to more open access as a key way of connecting creatively with its publics.
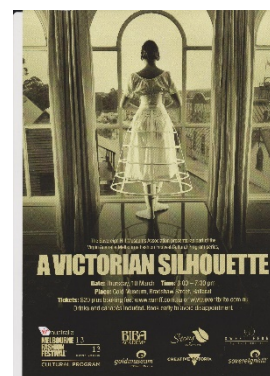
Figure 3.12: Snjez Cosic with *House of Lucas* exhibition, 2016 (Danniker Bonser, *The Weekly Times*).

Figure 3.13: Promotional material for *A Victorian Silhouette,* 2017/2018 (The SHMA)

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[40] Snjez Cosic, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Gold Museum.

[41] Smith. Note here role title was changed again as of 2020 to Head of Collections & Curatorial.

[42] Ibid.

Changing practice is represented in the current updating of the permanent galleries of the Gold Museum, and particularly those of the Gold Pavilion (Figure 3.11). Cosic explains:

> At the moment, that really tells a story that's a bit of a time capsule. In 1978 the objects that were donated to the museum were gold nuggets and gold coins, so it tells that global history of gold and numismatics. And that is very much representative of that museological tradition which was the museum has all the knowledge, and the audience is there to come in and absorb that information. Whereas now what we've learnt is that people want to contribute stories. They also want to see themselves in those stories….Again, it's more focused on our collections. And using our collections to tell the stories of Ballarat and using some of those more personal objects to tell those stories.[43]

Some examples of exhibitions and projects that function in this direction, and expand creative connections with various communities, include the 2016 *House of Lucas* exhibition, (Figure 3.12) which worked with the local community and experimented with expanded programming as part of exhibitions. The 2017 exhibition *Doctor Blake's Ballarat* connected with the popular Australian television series, *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*, which was produced by December Media and set in 1950s Ballarat. Related programming included events such as a murder mystery night in the museum and The Writers Room, a Q & A with writers from the show. This was participatory and promoted as "providing attendees with a glimpse of what goes into producing the show, character development, and how storylines come to life"[44] thus making connections between the exhibition and creativity, and using the popular series to raise awareness of the museum's existence and its collections.

Cosic also notes a shift in Ballarat towards greater collaboration between arts and heritage and the exciting work that can result. It can have a generative effect: following its success with projects like *A Victorian Silhouette*, and after seeing creative projects like *Imprints: Storytelling the City* at the BMI (discussed in chapter six), the Gold Museum commissioned a composer to create a work in dialogue with the collection for the *Wonderful Things* exhibition in 2019. This was in partnership with the Ballarat Arts Foundation where "Sovereign Hill's Gold Museum commissioned talented composer Daniel Tusjak to produce a piece of music for their current exhibition *Wonderful Things* which showcases the museum's strange and eclectic

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[43] Cosic.

[44] Female.com.au, "Doctor Blake's Ballarat: The Writer's Room," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.female.com.au/the-writers-room-2017.htm.

collection".[45] Such collaborations are exciting developments in Ballarat's cultural ecology, bringing heritage and creativity together in new ways. They have the potential to offer alternative creativities that, instead of focusing on economic agendas as critics of the creative industries have noted, might be based instead on the value found in reciprocity, and public goods,[46] or, as pointed out in Meyrick and Holden, culture being treated beyond purely as a *function[47]* towards other outcomes.

As with the broader Sovereign Hill, there is an ongoing challenge to engage visitors in meaningful ways and this is being met by an approach whereby the Gold Museum are "providers of research material, providers of advice for our colleagues, and also a space where people can really engage and learn about the past. And hopefully learn about it in a really fun and interesting way. That's the direction that we're going".[48] This involves shifts towards the reinvented museum model of being a learning organisation, incorporating the RMT standards of limited to open access, individual work to collaboration, and internal perspective to community participant. Common themes of diversity, inclusion and creative connections with heritage are evident, along with the challenges of evaluation and funding and those of public perception.

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[45] Ballarat Arts Foundation, "Ballarat Arts Foundation Partners with Sovereign Hill Gold Museum," December 4th 2018, accessed 6th June 2020, https://www.ballaratartsfoundation.org.au/news-1/2018/12/4/ballarat-arts-foundation-partners-with-sovereign-hill-gold-museum.

[46] Gibson and Klocker, "The 'Cultural Turn' in Australian Regional Economic Development Discourse: Neoliberalising Creativity?". 100.

[47] Meyrick et al., *What Matters?: Talking Value in Australian Culture*. xvi.

[48] Smith.

Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka (MADE)

Interviewee: Sarah Masters, former general manager and acting CEO

Figure 3.14: Entrance to the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka (MADE)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

MADE opened in 2013 and replaced and redeveloped the previous Eureka Stockade Centre, which had been closed some years prior. These museums were sited on land believed to be where the Eureka Stockade was built and where the subsequent battle took place. MADE received an annual grant from the City of Ballarat of approximately $1 million and also received triennial funding from Creative Victoria's Organisations Investment Program (OIP) grant program. As a recipient of Creative State priority funding, this had the aim of "providing a stable base for smaller, more vulnerable organisations that are delivering strong creative or cultural outcomes. More than 20 per cent of the organisations are regionally based, 10 percent are Indigenous and 10 percent are dedicated to working with young people".[49]

After initial contributions from all levels of government for the establishment of the museum, operations were funded in the following manner: 54 percent by CoB and 46 percent from the

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[49] Creative Victoria, "Over $113 Million to Support Independent Arts Sector," July 12th 2016, accessed 25th May 2020, https://creative.vic.gov.au/news/2017/over-$113-million-to-support-independent-arts-sector.

earnings from its café, schools, entry fees, and venue hire.[50] Digital activities were a key focus under the inaugural CEO, Jane Smith, so that the museum was not just about objects but also the presentation of ideas. The flag was the museum's main collection item (on long-term loan from AGB) and many other items were also on extended loan. The image above (Figure 3.14) of the museum entranceway expresses the focus on active role in civics through means such as participation and protest. The museum's opening marketing described it as follows:

> Australia's newest museum MADE presents the Eureka story in the context of the 21st century on the site of the Eureka Rebellion in Ballarat. It is a digitally-immersive, state-of-the-art museum that has been curated in collaboration with some of the best Australian and international historians, museum experts and innovative minds. With the evocative 158-year-old Eureka Flag as its centrepiece, MADE's interactive and immersive exhibitions explore the evolution and the future of democracy—looking at culture, civics, history and citizenship. MADE features high-end, technical interactive exhibits, two formal education spaces, a purpose-built display gallery for the Eureka Flag, a theatre that seats up to 120, a cafe, gift shop and an outdoor precinct.[51]

The discourse for change and representative projects

The discourse for change as it relates to the story of MADE, from its opening in 2013 to its closure in 2018, centres firmly upon the issues of (largely hostile) public perceptions of its role and the contested obligations of publicly-funded institutions. Former MADE general manager and acting CEO, Sarah Masters, recalls never having worked before at an organisation which commenced "so universally loathed in the city".[52] She also recognised that the amount of funding coming out of the City of Ballarat's arts and culture budget was substantial and that reaching out to key stakeholders was key to building more positive relationships. Other reasons for the hostility arose around concepts of value for money for taxpayers, how local, national and international storytelling and engagement could be integrated—the setting of the local Eureka story within the bigger picture of democracy and civics today—and in museological and strategic differences from the previous centre (which, for example, used dioramas of the Eureka event as its central display strategy compared to the use of digital touch screens). MADE's objectives in this regard were ambitious, and the questions it strove to ask were contemporary and provocative. One aim was to connect younger people with the idea of

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[50] Sarah Masters, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Federation University Australia.

[51] Much of MADE's online presence is no longer accessible but some older descriptions remain, for example https://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/made#.UsUME9JgySo.

[52] Masters.

democracy and voting by reminding audiences that many of those at Eureka were young people standing up for their rights. Masters states that the aim of the museum was to "tell the Eureka story in a contemporary way".[53] The discourse for change faltered, it can be argued, because it was unable to contain the disparate voices, and to resolve long-simmering tensions. MADE was formally closed by CoB in 2018.

While MADE, from its foundation, was seen as problematic, some successful elements that involved various kinds of creativity were in evidence. Masters discusses community engagement as a response to community stakeholders and their needs, such as a pop-up library serving young families, U3A education for older learners, and, through institutional partnerships with the Wheeler Centre, ACMI, and Melbourne Writers Festival, the presentation of talks, film screenings and other cultural events. MADE also produced exhibitions and projects with multicultural communities, for example, *Chinese Fortunes*, and worked with creative communities addressing painful heritage, such as institutional abuse in Ballarat, with communal artworks and exhibitions such as the *Quilt of Hope* and *Loud Fence* (pictured in Figures 3.14 and 3.15). *Loud Fence* was a movement, initiated in Ballarat, associated with the 2013 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, that has since spread worldwide. Members of the public tie ribbons to the fences of religious buildings and other institutions as a show of support for survivors and victims.[54] Creative forms such as textiles exhibits and installation were used to allow community storytelling and healing around the past in contemporary forms. The value of bringing together creativity and heritage is not saleable but important both for affected community members and the broader understanding of the complex Ballarat city identity and its darker aspects.

Figures 3.15 and 3.16: Exhibitions at MADE (Charlotte King)

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Sarah Jane Bell, "Loud Fence ribbons in show of solidarity for sexual abuse survivors in Ballarat cut down." 28th December 2019. Accessed 6th June 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-28/loud-fence-ribbons-in-show-of-solidarity-for-sexual-abuse-cut/11830160.

In terms of the MADE exhibition space itself, Masters discusses the importance of sensory experience and various art forms in the original design of curator Ethne Owen. Masters says "if you think about the way that the touch tables at MADE work, for instance, you've got illustration, media arts, history, curation, design, you've got an aural component and you've also got fun, cartoon, playfulness".[55] She makes the connection here to "the move that Martin Foley [Minister for Creative Industries] made in expanding the brief of Creative Victoria and pushed it into the creative industries area"[56] allowing for this expanded sense of what creativity might be, including the role of technology. The touch tables also allowed MADE to commission new digital content that filled existing gaps of Indigenous Australian and women's stories (created by local creatives Wind and Sky Productions and Yum Studio respectively).[57] The museum also presented the first solo exhibition of local Wadawurrung artist Marlene Gilson's work (2015) that reinserts Indigenous peoples and their roles into depictions of Eureka.[58]

Figure 3.17: Marlene Gilson with her artwork, 2018 (Barry Gilson)

These examples arguably link MADE with the local creative community, show greater inclusivity, and bring new perspectives on the past. This involved Kidd's gap-filling approach, in the case of Indigenous and women's roles in the Eureka story, and provided the space to highlight and reflect on challenging local histories in living memory with ongoing implications in examples like *Loud Fence*. Here, the value of creative activation work also sits within Witcomb and Buckley's "interpretation of new types of material, especially around memory,

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[55] Masters.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Wind and Sky Productions, "Aunty Marlene Gilson," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKCeRwUakQo.

[58] Alex Hamer, "Wadawurrung Elder Has First Solo Show at Made" *The Ballarat Courier* 2015.

feelings, traditions and the social value of place and social interactions".[59] Through partnering with kindred organisations and diverse communities MADE was able to deliver programming around contemporary civics, society, and ideas to connect with various publics. These things were made possible through the willingness and capacity of the organisation to collaborate and provide the space to explore and question. The local response however remained mixed.

Ultimately certain tensions were unresolvable. Issues included: revenue raising and public access (the entry fee was criticised as a barrier to viewing the Eureka flag for example); the public's understanding of the connection between the Eureka story and issues of broader contemporary democracy, and more activist elements; and the museological focus on objects as opposed to the new storytelling technologies. Metrics also became problematic where, despite funding from Creative Victoria that invested in supporting "smaller, more vulnerable organisations that are delivering strong creative or cultural outcomes", the local council-led closure was based on the contrasting evaluation of financial viability "in light of floundering visitor numbers".[60] These issues of focus on accounting metrics and long-term sustainability are common across the GLAM sector and can also be applied more broadly in the global neoliberal environment in relation to heritage and arts. It is also of note that during the CoB's deliberation on the decision to close the museum and return it to a focus on Eureka, the digital infrastructure of the organisation seems to be largely lost (evidenced in broken links). This reflects a lack of cohesive strategy across Ballarat cultural organisations and the way heritage is dealt with in the city, albeit a city that in HUL terms is an evolving landscape constantly adding new layers.

The four Ballarat GLAM organisations discussed here have been shown to possess various links to government funding and subsequent operating structures. The BMI, while largely independently operated, is presented here as part of the Ballarat GLAM sector and provides the link to the following chapter that places MIs in the GLAM context. The considerable overlap, and potential for shared learnings, between GLAM organisations and MIs is of particular interest.

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[59] Witcomb and Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies': Looking Back in Order to Look Forward". 40

[60] Charlotte King, "Eureka Democracy Museum Closes with Future Unclear for Exhibits Not Associated with 1854 Rebellion," *ABC Ballarat* April 2nd, 2018.

Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute (BMI)

Interviewee: Tony Godfrey, inaugural executive manager

It must be noted here that the interview with Godfrey was conducted during the first month of this new role. His relative lack of experience in the role limits to some extent the usefulness of the interview as it relates to bringing about or managing change. At the same time, it provides a unique snapshot into the aspirations of a new leader in the opening weeks of his tenure. A BMI press release of March 2018 states:

> Tony Godfrey has been appointed to the newly created position of Executive Manager of the BMI. The appointment is a clear affirmation of the significant role the Mechanics' Institute continues to play in modern day Ballarat. Tony brings to the position a strong interest in the Mechanics' Institute, a wide breadth of previous experience, financial capability, enthusiasm about the Executive Manager role and commitment to the future directions of the Institute.[61]

Management of the BMI is a key focus of this thesis, which investigates the value of creatively activated heritage and questions the capacity for organisational change. The role of the Executive Manager became key to this focus.

Figure 3.18: The BMI 2015 (BMI Collection)

Figure 3.19: The BMI and 'The Corner' (BMI Collection: MH1433 Unicorn Hotel circa 1882)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

Following the MI movement outlined in chapter one, the BMI's founding principle was "the diffusion of literary, scientific and other useful knowledge and the supply of rational in-door recreation to its members".[62] Established in 1859, the BMI is a not-for-profit organisation with

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[61] "Press Release: Executive Manager of the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute Announced," BMI, https://ballaratmi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BMI-PressRelease-ExecutiveManager-150318.pdf.

[62] "About Us," Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, accesed 25th May 2020, https://ballaratmi.org.au/about-us.

operating funds raised through grants, venue hire, membership and philanthropy. A large team of volunteers work across various areas of operations, including board and committee membership, events, heritage collections, building maintenance, and marketing. Part-time paid roles, in addition to that of the Executive Manager, include those of lending librarian, venue manager, and cleaner.

The BMI building and collections are heritage listed. In 2007, the collection was described as "a wonderful array of objects that dates back to 1586 and is the largest and most intact collection relating to Mechanics' Institutes in Victoria" [63] (See Appendix 3.1). The collection contains institute archives, books, newspapers and artefacts dating back to the 1859 founding. In 2016, the Max Harris Photography Collection of 3000 historic Ballarat images was added via a philanthropic donation and a BMI audio-visual collection was established as part of the heritage collection.

Discourse for change and representative projects

Following the BMI delegation to the 2016 Mechanics' Institute conference in San Francisco and subsequent planning sessions, the need for overseeing a paid professional management role was identified (see Figure 7.14). In 2018, Tony Godfrey became the first executive manager in BMI history as part of a three-year strategic partnership with the CoB.[64] Two years earlier, the new curator role (funded by philanthropy, and the only role of this name since the honorary Professor Abel in the 1860s) had been introduced to work with the Max Harris Photography Collection and other parts of BMI to activate and develop its organisational viability. Relatively recent heritage building renovations, funded by government and philanthropic sources, offered new possibilities, but the need to raise the profile and sustainability of the organisation, both financially and culturally, was still evident. Introducing the role of partnerships, starting with the direct link with the CoB via funding for the executive manager role, was also desirable.

Godfrey was interviewed in the first month of his tenure and saw the "need to both maintain the physical components [of BMI]—building, library, archives—but also connecting that out

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[63] "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute," Heritage Council Victoria, accessed 25th May 2020, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/1393.

[64] Jeremy Venosta, "Ballaarat Mechanics Institute will receive $100,000 over three years from the City of Ballarat to help ensure its long term viability," Dec 18th 2017, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/5124927/ballarat-institution-to-receive-massive-financial-windfall/.

to the community".[65] The issues he identified, of low profile and connectivity, came from his personal observation that people were maybe aware of the building from the street view but had little knowledge of its function. He spoke of clarity of purpose: "Trying to be too many things for too many reasons and for too many people in an environment where money and resources are tight it's just not going to work".[66] He claimed achieving this was about getting the right balance between 160 years of history and future viability where "taking that to the broader community, we are very true in saying we are and want to be part of the Ballarat community, and we have the opportunity to flip that around and say rather than getting the community to come to us, how can we take ourselves to the community?"[67] This involves moving from assumed value to earned value according to the RMT's concept. He referred to hopes of BMI being part of broader Ballarat "whether that be through participation, membership or using the facility or reaching out to the cultural and arts community to become more within that conversation". His approach was through focussing on strengths rather than weaknesses and in being clear in the aims to deliver these strongly: "Let's be the best with people's relationship with the library, and research services lets strive for excellence with that, rather than only hiring facilities out to run the library".[68] This desire to move beyond basic services, with the aim to remain relevant and dynamic in the contemporary day, is similar to that of other MIs. One factor here is competition from public libraries and other community and cultural services after the MI's initial monopoly in the mid-nineteenth century.

The role of organisational capacity in building these community connections and the provision of excellence in services is clearly linked. Godfrey noted, from past experience as well as from his limited time at the BMI, the essential need for encouraging "capacity for reflection and continual improvement" and that this required "willingness and openness to questioning where some 'insiders' think things are fine as they are".[69] Godfrey identified that there "needs to be an intent and a resourcing and a risk-taking appetite to do that, that will need to be thought through as well".[70] His focus on a learning mindset is reflective of the RMT shifts, that move beyond the transactional[71] and business as usual to the reinvented reflexive practice.

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[65] Tony Godfrey, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2018, Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

Key themes here were around greater links to the community and the organisational approach and capacity. In this way, opportunity and also challenge is presented as being in actuality the marketed claim of the BMI of being "part of the historical and cultural heart of Ballarat CBD".[72] It is worth noting here that, despite early optimism, Godfrey resigned from the role one year into the three-year contract.

While various creative projects have been conducted by the BMI as practice research for this doctorate, these predated Godfrey's appointment. They cannot, therefore, be the subject of discussion in this section. They will be treated in chapters five, six, and (one during his term) seven.

Conclusions

The five organisations studied here have different histories, operating structures, resources, public profiles, and approaches. All contribute to, and provide opportunities for, creative ways of connecting people not only to the past, but also to the present and future, as part of the cultural life of the city. They have also all been involved in change processes around their public engagement and sense of value. Various interests compete for value and recognition within this ecology: the role of the arts, of museology, of GLAM organisations in the tourism sector. Their place as part of the creative industries and GLAM's capacity to create value (economic, cultural and social; intrinsic, instrumental and institutional) are spaces in which struggles for unity of approach, and for funding arise. Activations of the past range across critical engagements to more commercial ventures, and cover forms including theatre, digital, music, photography, visuals arts, installation, film, and fashion, and the use of these arts to connect people to places and stories. In organisational creativity the capacity to reflect, experiment, collaborate and adapt is also of significance (the RMT move from accepted realities to a culture of inquiry); as is the role of the curator in connecting people with objects, ideas, and stories in ways that allow new perspectives and ways of working, for example, as Barrett advocates, in collaborations that are mutually beneficial and respectful. These are not purely visitor oriented over a collection focus, but about how the two interconnect. As such, Harrison's dialogical heritage is enacted through new uses of collections, buildings, and the facilitation of new creative connections.

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[72] "About Us," Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute.

Ballarat identity and city ecology

The Ballarat GLAM organisations profiled here are part of Ballarat city's cultural and creative ecology. They hold collections of heritage materials, occupy significant buildings and sites, and work to engage various publics with research facilities, programs and events that both draw on and produce cultural value, tangible and intangible. The particular creative activation projects discussed here point towards RMT shifts to greater diversity and openness and raise Smith's concept of heritage not as static but something always in negotiation where a range of values and meanings are in processes of being affirmed or contested.[73] This also involves the historic legacies of organisations (and cities).

The AGB and BMI are both housed in their original CBD heritage buildings established in the second half of the nineteenth century. These organisations were part of the early development of the city as a place of culture and civilisation, importing these ideals from Britain and Europe, with the significant support from philanthropists who had done well during the gold rush era. Sovereign Hill and the Gold Museum were established in the 1970s as a way to recreate and therefore preserve 1850s Ballarat, complete with buildings, industry, shops and costumes. Whilst capitalising on the increased interest in history, they use the internationally significant historical events of the gold rush to tell stories of the period and attract tourism. They have also become a major local employer. MADE was in operation between 2013 and 2018 and aimed to connect the historical Eureka story with contemporary civics and democracy. After MADE's closure, and the return of the site to CoB operations, public consultation led to the creation of the current Eureka Centre, which continues to tell stories relating to the rebellion, house the original flag, and hold events and exhibitions. This phase of the centre is not within the scope of this thesis but it is noted that the CoB library has had its heritage collection relocated to the Eureka Centre as part of a new Ballarat Research Hub, which also houses the Ballarat branch of the Public Records Office. This move was made in the interests of a greater consolidation of heritage material and services. In 2020 the new Eureka Centre also launched an exhibition space for visual art; the first exhibition by Lily Mae Martin linked art and heritage together to reflect on their relationship with nature, and the effects of gold mining and colonisation—ongoing themes still relevant today.

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[73] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*. 71.

In terms of Ballarat's identity, Sovereign Hill interviewee Ganske considered that Ballarat has "had a bit of an identity crisis as a city"; the debate over the abandonment of the old, cold and gold mantra in favour of 'Made of Ballarat' is just one manifestation of this (marketing) identity confusion. And Sovereign Hill takes "gold" as its starting point: the *Aura* sound and light show marketing slogan is: 'gold changes everything.' The Gold Museum, on the other hand, is attempting to move with museological developments from a focus on gold to the social history of Ballarat, but again the root of the gold rush, and its branching stories and heritage material in the museum's collection, provides the platform. As interviewee Smith commented, *A Victorian Silhouette* provided a mix of strong branding (its heritage past) with what audiences want: exploiting their curiosity about what was underneath dresses to create an artistic and multilayered program. This crossed different art forms, events, parts of the organisation, and stakeholders. McLaren at the AGB and Dempsey at Visit Ballarat believe that "Ballarat is so much more than 'old cold and gold'", and their program of events tries to reflect this. Hurley on the other hand stressed the heritage building, foundational history and collections of the BMI as being significant assets.

While moves towards greater collaboration and a desire to move away from silos is evident, the fragmented approach to the issue of Ballarat's identity remains. Ganske mentioned place-making, and there are parallels to HUL here where urban heritage can form the link with tourism and sustainability if managed carefully. Roders and Banderin note: "As the growth of cities is dominated by industrial models, the need to give cities their distinctive character and quality has become a major concern of policy-makers at national and local levels. Urban heritage can provide an answer to many of these needs, both as a place that represents history and traditions and as a repository of long-term social practices in place-making".[74] Here the mixture of tangible and intangible heritage, how the past relates to the present and future, and appreciation of human relations with place provide a strong model, yet dangers remain in a policy focus on how cities can instrumentalise arts and heritage value. As O'Connor has stated "the challenge of the good city is before us"[75] and bringing creativity and heritage together in meaningful ways in GLAM organisations might be one way to drive discussion and development of this, though it is not without its challenges.

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[74] Ana Pereira Roders and Francesco Bandarin, *Reshaping Urban Conservation the Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Action* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019). 4.

[75] O'Connor and Shaw, "What Next for the Creative City?" 170.

Political elements at play

The data show a general shift towards a more collaborative approach, both between GLAM organisations and the city, and with the creation of programs that involve working with the communities of the city and its artists, for example. The need for collaboration between and across various stakeholders is part of the HUL ethos, but the depth of some fault lines which divide parts of the community from itself is all too evident. The fate of MADE is instructive: established on unclear or contradictory principles (its funding model and entrance fees, for example), its failure prompted the CoB to close it and, in a way, revert to the familiar with the focus on Eureka. This could be seen as locking down an historical narrative, rather than opening it up to questioning and broadening links with it. Mayor Samantha McIntosh stated that exhibits that "do not fit with the new centre's focus" (for example *Loud Fence*, dealing with institutional abuse) would find "other homes".[76] This points towards a rejection of museum moves towards activism and the reinvented museum's civic engagement and can be understood as a sign of avoiding difficult heritage. The decision to refocus on Eureka, as the safe option, is ironic given its own history of rebellion and questioning of the status quo.

At the time debates about MADE's fate were raging: Federal MP Catherine King took her disappointment to Parliament citing a "conservative dominated council" not honouring the commitment (and funding from all government levels) made to the museum five years ago.[77] These knotty issues of funding, city identity, public perception and approaches to the city's heritage provide the background to creative activation work in the Ballarat GLAM organisations explored in this chapter. The following chapter is a connected discussion of five MIs also undergoing change discourses that reposition them in the twenty-first century. While evidently with unique issues, the significant and fruitful cross-overs with the GLAM sector are central to this thesis.

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[76] King, "Eureka Democracy Museum Closes with Future Unclear for Exhibits Not Associated with 1854 Rebellion," April 2nd 2018, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-02/national-democracy-museum-made-closes-in-ballarat/9609708.

[77] Siobhan Calafiore, "King Cautions Council Ahead of Decision on Museum's Fate," *Ballarat Courier* February 6th, 2018.

Chapter Four: Contemporary MIs in the GLAM context

Figure 4.1: Interior of Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts Library ca. 1920–1936,
(Sam Hood, courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales – PXA 626 / 1).

Figure 4.2: Melbourne Athenaeum 2000s (Athenaeum collection)

The urban Mechanics' Institutes profiled here provide broader context to the in-depth study of BMI and also highlight the ways in which opportunities and challenges are shared across MIs and the GLAM sector. MIs are prime sites for exploring the research question of building creative connection with various publics, and linking past, present and future through new uses of heritage towards greater connectivity and relevance.

Five MIs are discussed here using the same structure as in chapter three: investigating operating structures and assets, and the discourses for change with representative projects. Interviews were conducted, between 2016 and 2018, with staff members at the Melbourne Athenaeum (Sue Westwood, Business Manager); the Prahran Mechanics' Institute (PMI) (Steven Haby, Secretary librarian); the Sydney Mechanics' Institute and School of Arts (SMSA) (Brian Johnston, Secretary); the Mechanics' Institute, San Francisco (The Mechanics) (Taryn Edwards, Strategic Partnerships manager); and the BMI (Tony Godfrey, Executive Manager, outlined in the previous chapter as part of Ballarat's GLAM sector). Those interviewed were all part of management and their experience covers a wide range of backgrounds from librarians and historians to consultants, managers of arts organisations, and finance and business administrators. This mix demonstrates some of the variety of backgrounds that those involved can bring to MIs. All of the institutions studied owe their foundation to gold-rush wealth and the establishment of cultural institutions in their respective cities. Whilst the BMI has particular regional implications with regard to issues such as local government and population, in this study it is aligned with more similarity to other large urban institutes than those more closely affiliated with country halls.

The MIs considered here, whilst operating in their own distinct contexts, share a set of similar circumstances. They are all urban MIs located in busy cities, with long histories and shared founding ideals, operating largely independently from government, and looking at ways to connect to the publics they attempt to serve for future relevance and sustainability. A key difference between other cultural organisations and MIs, important to note here, and something that is part of their historical legacy, is that their characteristic operation is independent from ongoing government funding. A large proportion of their income derives from venue hire and tenancy within their own buildings with some additional funding from membership fees, grants and philanthropic contributions. Interviewee Brian Johnston at the SMSA, for example, explains that "membership fees contribute a mere fraction of revenue gained from leasing spaces in the building",[1] and interviewee Sue Westwood at the Melbourne Athenaeum states that "we don't hire out spaces, but do have long term leases, so as landlords it means we are self-sufficient".[2] The PMI owns the building from which it currently operates, and has other investment properties that bring in revenue; and the BMI's 2016 financial records show that rent and room hire accounted for 69 percent of their income for that year.[3] In San Francisco, 40 percent of The Mechanics' annual income derives from rented spaces, and Taryn Edwards cites this as the "only reason we are still around today…many independent libraries existed when we were founded, but they're all gone because they didn't have an alternative source of funding, and membership dues don't cut it".[4] The implications of this for each institute in terms of their remit, purpose and sustainability will be discussed throughout this section. The MIs are now discussed in turn, followed by analysis and conclusions.

The Mechanics' Institute, San Francisco (The Mechanics')

Interviewee: Taryn Edwards, Librarian, Historian and the Strategic Partnerships Manager at the Mechanics' Institute of San Francisco.

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[1] Brian Johnston, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Sydney Mechanics' and School of Art.

[2] Sue Westwood, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Melbourne Athenaeum.

[3] Grantley Hastings, "Handout for Planning Day- BMI 2016 Financials " (Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, 2017). 1.

[4] Taryn Edwards, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2016, San Francisco Mechanics Institute.

Figure 4.3: San Francisco Mechanics' 57 Post Street (Courtesy of Mechanics' Institute Archives).

Figure 4.4: San Francisco Mechanics' interior library 2000s (Courtesy of Mechanics' Institute Archives)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

In 1848 San Francisco's population was roughly 800 people. By 1852 the population had grown to 34,000. The Mechanics' Institute (known locally as 'The Mechanics') was founded in 1854, at the height of San Francisco's gold rush. When the easily extracted surface gold was exhausted, the city had to deal with many social and economic issues in circumstances of sudden population influx and diminished resources. As part of the response, and not unlike Ballarat in this period, the MI founders were interested in the development of "libraries and schools and law and order. They also were businessmen and they were eager to see their own businesses thrive. And they needed trained workers, so they decided to start a Mechanics Institute".[5]

The original aims are described on their website as being very clear, and included that library stacks be open to all members along with a game room for chess and checkers, and that classes "would stretch the mind and teach new skills". It would also be an organisation that "welcomed everyone regardless of race or gender" and "cost as little as possible".[6] A logo designed by architect Thomas Boyd (pictured in Figure 4.5) was produced to illustrate these aims. The logo is described as being "common to mechanics' institutes in general, especially the arm and hammer—a common symbol of labour. The beehive connotes industry and the plumb line and leveller, compass, square and rule are all symbols of the craftsman. The cornucopias

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[5] "Mechanics' Institute, since 1854," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.milibrary.org/.

[6] Ibid.

represented California's agricultural potential, and the anchor its role as a port. The scales remind us to lead a balanced life and the motto *'Be just and fear not'* admonishes one to act according to their principles".[7]
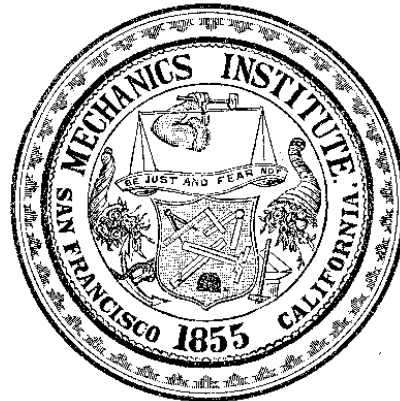
Figure 4.5: Original logo designed by Thomas Boyd (Courtesy of Mechanics' Institute Archives)

The original building and its collection of some 200,000 books was lost in the 1906 earthquake and fires that devastated San Francisco city. The new Post St building (constructed in 1910), which replaced it, was nine storeys high, and by 1912, its collection totalled some 40,000 books. Edwards states that the bulk of the Institute's archival material relates to the Institute's own history (some annual reports and the like that had been printed en masse and were returned to the Institute after the fire) or to the history of Industrial Fairs. This connected them with technological and scientific advancements similar to those in the UK and Australia. She notes that "we do have books that are rare, but for the most part we're a contemporary library".[8]

The Institute today has over twenty staff members across administration, library, events, chess and IT. There is a board of trustees and an executive manager who oversees the library director, the events director, and the chess director, who in turn then manage the staff working in these three areas. The stated mission is "to provide a center for intellectual and cultural advancement. Located in the financial district of San Francisco, it serves individuals and families throughout the Bay Area, offering a vibrant library with full-time professional staff, expert instruction and competition in chess, and a full calendar of engaging cultural events, programs, and classes".[9]

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Edwards.

[9] "Mechanics' Institute, since 1854".

The discourse of change and example projects

Edwards was initially hired as a librarian but notes that her role has evolved over this time to that of Strategic Partnerships Manager. Her role is multi-faceted, but is built around "reaching out to other cultural entities and businesses to see how we can work together to forward our individual aims".[10] This is reflective of the trend to work more collaboratively, and strategically, and is marked by RMT shifts from individual work to collaboration, and from a static role to strategic positioning. She describes the Institute as "the oldest library on the West Coast designed to serve the public. We are a 162-year-old organisation that attempts to be a cultural and civic hub in the San Francisco Bay area, and our mission is to help our members and interested public with their intellectual growth and creative achievement".[11] The focus on strategic partnerships is of interest, with attempts being made to move beyond one-off events and to build natural affinities, and the sharing of resources and various kinds of capital. For example, one project involved the San Francisco Writers Conference, where meeting-room spaces were made available in return for conference tickets, and joint classes were hosted. Areas are also leased to such complementary tenants as the *Lit Quake Literary Festival*. The Mechanics' also maintains its historic connection to science and technology via contemporary makers movements, linking the past and future of the organisation as a key part of the city's cultural life.

Edwards sees the evolution of her role as an important element in the positioning of the organisation as a cultural hub. She values cooperative endeavours, and offering space to those organisations, or for those events, with affinities to The Mechanics' aims. The creative nature of these events and organisations is also of interest within MI histories of creative connections to writers, artists and innovators.

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[10] Edwards

[11] Ibid.

Sydney Mechanics' and School of Art (SMSA)

Interviewee: Brian Johnston, Secretary SMSA
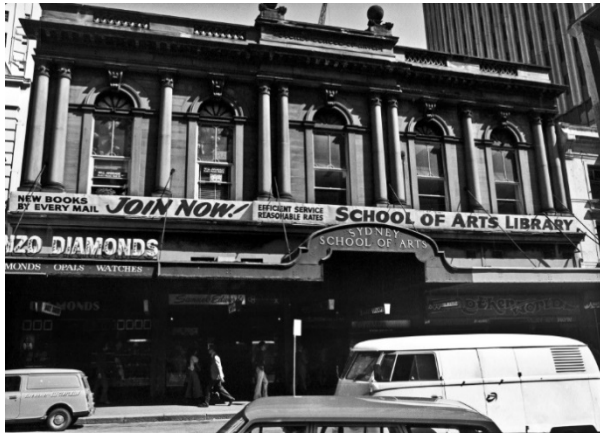
Figure 4.6: Sydney School of Arts, 275–277 Pitt St 1970s (City of Sydney archives [036 036036441]).

Figure 4.7:
SMSA exterior current building
(collection of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts)

At the time of interview Johnston was in a part-time role providing support and advice to the governing Board focusing on issues of strategy, risk management, financial performance and services to members.

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

Garry Wotherspoon's history of the SMSA notes that few institutions survived from the earliest days of Australia's colonial past, but that the SMSA is one of five which did—the others being the Benevolent Society of NSW (1813), the Bank of NSW, now Westpac (1817), the Australian Museum (1827), and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (1831).[12] The institute's purpose was dedicated to "the cultivation of literature, science and art".[13]

Johnston also notes that the School played a large role in adult education and the drive towards literacy in the nineteenth century. When need outstripped space, the SMSA was involved in building the first technical college in Sydney, at Ultimo. "That program in many ways

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[12] Wotherspoon, "The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts". 6.

[13] Ibid. 7

metamorphosed into the University of Technology and the University of New South Wales because they were both technically oriented. In this way, this organisation can trace its inheritance if you like, to those institutions".[14]

The School operated from various premises until it moved to the Pitt Street building in the 1840s, which still exists today (see Figure 4.6). Its original building functions as the Arthouse Hotel which provides "courses in drawing, photography and art as part of their program at the hotel, continuing a link with the cultural and educational programs that had been a focus of the SMSA".[15] After some years of uncertainty in the latter twentieth century the SMSA is now based at 280 Pitt St, where between 1996 and 2000 an existing building was refitted.

Despite this new opportunity for refitting in 2000, Johnston notes that the entrance in particular was not designed to promote the identity and existence of the organisation. "It's quite nondescript and that's reflected I think in the choice of colours and the actual entrance itself. Yet, they had a blank slate when they bought the building. They could have done something grander but they did not and that's a pity".[16] This is significant in two ways: firstly, the issues of welcoming and public access. The nondescript entrance reflects serious PR failure. Secondly, as Johnston points out, a priority for the choice and use of the new building was attaining the maximum revenue from lettable spaces on the bottom floor of the building.[17]

In terms of collections, SMSA have a lending library, and Johnston refers to a very small in-house heritage collection. Some historical documents were transferred to the Mitchell Library in the NSW State Library. He notes that these are catalogued and accessible, and the choice to relocate them was seen as the most appropriate option as the cost and responsibility of maintaining them in-house would have been too high. At the same time, the SMSA has taken on some other collections as part of expanding the engagement of broader audiences. Johnston discussed, for example, how the Institute would be displaying some material from the Royal Society which "has a vast collection that is all in storage".[18] SMSA also houses the Thomas Keneally centre and collection, which is devoted to Australian literature and history and retains Keneally's personal collection of books and memorabilia. The central space is

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[14] Johnston.

[15] Mark Dunn, "Arthouse Hotel," The Dictionary of Sydney, 2010, accessed 6th June 2020, https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/arthouse_hotel#ref-uuid=bef3c6e0-d3b8-6a58-7cca-64bc4f01d4e2

[16] Johnston.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

available for hire and is regularly used for literary events and workshops. While some effort has been made, Johnston acknowledges the need to "try [harder] and make the Tom Keneally Centre which is a nice space, more used by a variety of people to enrich it".[19]

The discourse for change and project examples

"The school often faced what it saw as a struggle to find new purpose in a rapidly changing world, a dilemma it might well be facing again today".[20] Johnston first became involved with the Board in 2015 when the School was developing its governance structures and processes; he hoped to draw on his past experience with not-for-profit organisations as the SMSA "repositioned itself for the future".[21] Some recent work had been done to raise its profile but the demographic it attracts is, Johnston guesses, around the average age of 70. Despite the limited demographic, he claims membership is growing and suggests a reason for this as being the benefits of being in the centre of Sydney with quiet spaces to read, access the internet and so on. "I think accessibility, our location in relation to the various modes of transport makes us attractive".[22] This includes being near a new city train line, but the issues with the façade and the general profile expressed above may still be problematic.

In addition to the library services, the SMSA presents events and administers grants, as well as providing venue hire and programs. A program of talks, lectures and discussions is run there which is, as Johnston describes it,

> quite broad in nature and attracts varying audience sizes but because of the location of this organisation, it's really easy for people to get to because it's in the transport hub, right in the CBD. It's going to be even more of a transport hub when the city metro and light rail projects are finished which are all happening at the moment.[23]

In regard to extending current offerings and making the most of opportunities, Johnston thinks that as an organisation "we could do things that were more socially adventurous, hit some of the topic areas which were more likely to attract a younger, more diverse audience", which is a common aim across GLAM and MI organisations. He expresses aspirations to develop and use funds to go out "into the community, reaching out, promoting. I mean to me it would be a

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Wotherspoon, "The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts".

[21] Johnston.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

wonderful thing if the biggest thing we had to do is manage our grants program from year to year".[24]

He notes the need (at the level of the board and its thinking) to be "more emboldened, and think beyond running a library and a few lectures." He asks: "How can the aims of the original act be maximised rather than just delivered at a minimal level?" It is his belief that the mission could be broadened, less narrowly pursued as simply "running a building" and that funds could be used to "facilitate and provide services…to encourage arts, literature and science under the name of the school".[25] He cites important areas of literacy and access to the arts particularly for young and disadvantaged communities. Example projects that have been supported through the SMSA grants program include *Moorambilla Voices*—an arts program with Indigenous youth, and the *Goulburn Strings* music program in Goulburn, an area where, Johnston notes, there is a lot of social depravation.[26]

Johnston appears to see value in seeking to diversify the offerings of the programs of the SMSA, and by so doing make those programs more inclusive and relevant to the experiences of marginalised sections of the community. The need to address historically contentious issues (such as Indigenous disadvantage) is also implied in the aspirations he voices. He sees value in moving beyond a focus on the physical building, to utilising funds for social and cultural outcomes. He also raises the issue of focussing on lettable spaces in the 2000 rebuild, rather than it being an opportunity to maximise the profile of the organisation and its activities. The opportunities for urban MIs to connect with new populations and city developments, such as transport, is regarded as something to be taken advantage of.

Melbourne Athenaeum

Interviewee: Sue Westwood, Business Manager at Melbourne Athenaeum

Sue Westwood has been Business Manager at the Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated since 2010. Prior to her appointment, she was Business Manager at the Australian Tapestry Workshop in South Melbourne for 5 years and has previously worked as the Finance Manager with the contemporary dance company Chunky Move; as a theatre reviewer for Melbourne's

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

Herald Sun newspaper; and as a project manager with numerous theatre companies in Canberra and Tasmania including Jigsaw Theatre, Zootango Theatre, and Gorman House Arts Centre.

Figure 4.8: Melbourne Athenaeum, 1957 (Athenaeum collection).

Figure 4.9: Artist work by Anne Kucera (Athenaeum collection)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

Founded in 1839 as the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution, its original purpose was "the diffusion of literary, scientific and other useful knowledge to members and the general public". This was achieved by maintaining a library, museum and reading room, and offering classes and lectures. The Athenaeum website states that "much of Melbourne's standing today as arguably Australia's cultural capital can be traced back to the Athenaeum, this building and the role it played in the early promotion and development of music, visual arts, literature, science and theatre".[27]

The Melbourne Athenaeum is an incorporated association governed by a committee of management that states its aims as follows: "The association's principal activity is to manage a heritage building, provide a recreational library for members, manage an archive and encourage interest in the organisation and its activities". Its collections include institutional

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[27] "The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, the Pleasure of Words," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au/.

archives and the lending library holds 30,000 books.[28]

Described in its marketing as "the most unique building in Collins Street" the Mechanics' Institution's first building was completed in 1842, and has been added to since. The façade features the goddess Athena as figurehead (the Greek equivalent of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom). "The building housed Victoria's first art gallery and the stage of the Athenaeum Theatre has been graced by such luminaries as Dame Nellie Melba, Sir Laurence Olivier and Barry Humphries. The Melbourne Theatre Company called the building home for many years and, today, the theatres are venues for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and Melbourne Opera city performances".[29] The Athenaeum continues to lease out the popular Athenaeum Theatre as a way of creating income.

The discourse of change and example projects

The Athenaeum has expanded its programming through an updating of the library space and the creation of opportunities for collaboration and participation amongst members and beyond. Westwood describes playwright Patricia Cornelius as "working in the library over the next year and bringing all her friends into the library. She loves it, and we have an artist in residency during Rare Book Week so all this is adding to that renaissance and reinvigorating the space".[30] These Residencies are unpaid, but artists are provided with a workspace and exhibition space, and the Athenaeum purchases works for their collection as a form of support, which are often then displayed in the library. Westwood confesses to being "really proud of these initiatives that also build ongoing relationships".[31] An example of this was commissioning past artist in residence, Nicholas Jones, to create an artwork utilising quarterly lists from the 1930s that used to be sent out to members for the one-hundred-and-seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations. "The little booklets from the 1930s are just beautiful, with colourful covers and design of the time, so we gave him these to create an artwork for us. It's great to have those friends in the arts community as well".[32] These residencies and creative projects draw out aspects important to the library's books and literary life, and the institutes own history, and create links between

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Westwood.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

past and present while looking to its future viability. See resident artists in Figures 4.10 and 4.11.

Figure 4.10: Anne Kucera at work (Athenaeum collection)

Figure 4.11: Chris Gooch working (Athenaeum collection)

The Athenaeum organisation sees itself as a building owner (the way it drives its self-sustaining operational model) but Westwood also notes its "role as engaging in the community by offering the cultural programme that is interesting and diverse and different and that is enhancing the cultural life of the city as well". In this way, it suggests, it is building on its historic role in Melbourne city as well as looking to the future. It is connecting with local creative communities to expand its audiences as well as to offer creative spaces and events of relevance, and is enthusiastic about contributing to city culture beyond basic library services.

Prahran MI

Interviewee: Steven Haby, Secretary Librarian, General Manager (Background in public libraries)

Figure 4.12: 140 High St, 1916 (PMI Collection).

Figure 4.13: 140 High St, 2017 (PMI Collection).

Figure 4.14: Current PMI building at 39 St Edmonds, 2019 (PMI Collection)

Background: origins, operating structure, building and collections

The PMI was established in 1854 as a community owned and run library.[33] It has had properties on Chapel St and High St (in the inner-city Melbourne suburb of Prahran) with various leases and sales taking place over the years. In 2009, the PMI began mediation with Swinburne University, a long term lease-holder at the High St property (which had itself evolved out of the PMI affiliated Prahran Technical School). PMI were able to sell the buildings to the University and relocate to a new purpose-built space nearby in 2014, with the new building opening in 2015 (Figure 4.14. The original building retains its heritage signage (Figure 4.13).

PMI holds its own archives and heritage collection and library, with a focus on Australian content. The umbrella organisation, Mechanics' Institutes Victoria (MIV) is also based there, along with the Railway Historical Society collection, and the Cinema and Theatre Historical Society (CATHS). Haby notes the collection, and associated events, are important as a means to growing membership: "We've had so many new members join this year either as a result of the events we've done or as a result of them finding material, and we're talking like, architectural companies, archaeologists and so on that have come in and said, 'Oh, this is a

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[33] "Victorian History Library, Prahran Mechanics' Institute," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.pmi.net.au/.

fabulous collection'".[34] The collection includes resources for family history research as well as books on local history, Australian art and literature and Indigenous history.[35]

The discourse of change and example projects

The official name today is the Prahran Mechanics' Institute and Circulating Library, although Haby notes that this full title has been cut back to the PMI Victorian History Library for ease of reference and to capture its focus on local history. When the PMI celebrated its 150th birthday in 2004, Secretary Librarian and Member for Prahran, Tony Lupton MP, announced a grant for the establishment of PMI Press, a publishing arm of the library that publishes local history.[36] Along with such initiatives, Haby states that "given our value proposition is around history, then we run events that promote an interest in history and local history in particular, for example the history of local milk bars or trams".[37] Events have included talks and slide nights showcasing photographs from its collections and partnering with the Chapel Street Traders to host Poetry Slams. Here links are made between its historic literary role into contemporary forms and creativity, and inviting more diverse audiences that reflect local communities. Events reflect the PMI opening up in various ways, demonstrating links with the GLAM sector. A recent zinemaking workshop was held "to remake Melbourne's LGBTQI+ history during this year's Midsumma Festival … [so as to] learn about queer history in Melbourne". Attendees were invited to "bring your ephemera and/or photos and join us for this zine-making workshop using stories, inspiration and assistance from staff, volunteers and the Australia Lesbian and Gay Archives (ALGA)/PMI collections".[38] These kinds of events highlight the useful crossover with contemporary GLAM around the creative use of collections, diversity and relevance, which are also key to the study of the BMI.

Haby features on *Cardicast,* a podcast[39] produced by New Cardigan (New Cardi for short), which is "a professional network for people who work in or with Galleries, Libraries, Archives

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[34] Steven Haby, interview by Amy Tsilemanis, 2017, Prahran Mechanics Institute.

[35] "Victorian History Library, Prahran Mechanics' Institute".

[36] Prahran Mechanics Institute, "Media Release: The World Is One Kilometre, Greville Street, Prahran by Judith Buckrich," July 24th 2019, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.pmi.net.au/news/new-book-the-world-is-one-kilometre-greville-street-prahran/.

[37] Haby.

[38] Midsumma Festival, "Make Zines to Remake Melbourne's Lgbtqi+ History," accessed 25th May, 2020 https://www.midsumma.org.au/whats-on/events/ama-zine-adventures-in-remaking-history/.

[39] New Cardigan. "Cardicast Episode 24 – Steven Haby – Prahran Mechanics' Institute." Melbourne, November 2017. GLAM and Mechanics' Institutes. Accessed 25th May, 2020, https://newcardigan.org/cardcast-episode-24-steven-haby-prahran-mechanics-institute/.

and Museums". New Cardi organises tours of GLAM organisations and has recently included the BMI, in Jan 2018, and the PMI in 2017. These are examples of new ways a younger GLAM community is engaging with and sharing GLAM enthusiasm and information, and initiating links with MIs.

Again, the PMI demonstrates both the need and desire to activate its collections. The GLAM-initiated "New Cardi" is a particularly encouraging venture that demonstrates to all institutions involved the value of cooperation and the sharing of their skills, collections and heritage. The PMI, as a member of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), is also more connected into other library systems than some other MIs, and offers inter-library loans, reflecting this interest in connectivity and collaboration. PMI draws on its collection and partnerships with other organisations it houses, to offer historical resources as well as contemporary offerings that it sees as central to growing membership and relevance.

The findings of the MI interview data will now be analysed as a whole around key themes that, like the Ballarat GLAM organisations, sit across internal organisational issues and external engagement with their publics. The themes include historical legacies, change processes, resourcing and leadership, value, sustainability and the linking of past, present and future through creative activation. Similarities and difference between the GLAM organisations and MI organisations will be discussed.

Discussion of MIs–Renaissance, renewal, rebirth, reinvention

Figure 4.15: AVAT04 BMI *Spring Celebrations* poster (designed by Peter Gaulke).

Figure 4.16: Amazine adventures at PMI, 2020 (PMI Collection)

Some of the shared MI challenges include their limited public profile[40] and a public perception that these institutions are somehow private. They are often little known beyond small, committed audiences of members and volunteers; MI researcher Kirstin Loach has found the common concept of the hidden gem and the tension between those who might like to keep the institutes this way.[41] Conversely, others want to open them up in the hope of offering their historic assets to wider audiences. These assets consist both of the tangible physical buildings and collections, and the intangible ethos of supporting (originally educative) culture in broader communities. Edwards counters this common perception of limited access as follows: "since we aren't the public library [it's believed] that we're somehow exclusive, and we aren't".[42] Further shared challenges include aging demographics; the difficulty of maintaining financial viability; maintaining cultural relevance; problematic governance structures; and unresolved issues of misalliance between notions of value and purpose in contemporary practice. These sit alongside the more positive opportunities provided by MIs being independently run organisations with unique offerings, which have demonstrated the historic ability in some cases to adapt to changing circumstances (as discussed in chapters one and two).

Reinvention (the title of the 2016 Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institute conference, see Figure 7.10) might be seen as a form of regeneration: an ecological concept of relevance that connects here with similar language being used in discussion of the contemporary role of MIs. Gideon Haigh, writing in 2016, described MIs in the twenty-first century as having been "improbably rediscovered, their heritage celebrated and their purposes recommitted to".[43] Edwards sees the journey in these terms: "we got busy after World War II. That's the time I see in our history that we stepped back from being a civic leader and became just a library and a chess room until the year 2000 and then slowly we started doing more activities that would excite people".[44] She notes that, despite some difficult early days, "here we are 162 years later and we are right now experiencing a renaissance of sorts".[45] Sue Westwood of the Melbourne Athenaeum has also noted that its role in Melbourne's cultural life "is having a bit of a

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[40] See Multimedia Link 21 via figshare for audio piece created in San Francisco *Have you Heard of it? San Francisco Mechanics' Institute,* presented as part of paper "Innovating Traditions: Activation at the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute" (San Francisco, November 2016).

[41] Kirsten Loach, "Independent Libraries and Cultural Sustainability," (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2018).

[42] Edwards.

[43] Haigh, "Rebirth of History".

[44] Edwards.

[45] Westwood.

renaissance" and BMI's branding for their 2016 Open Day and *Spring Celebrations* event was Ballarat's oldest and newest treasure, alluding to the Spring association of renewal and regeneration. These interviews allow a deeper look into what is happening in this under-studied space, with a particular focus on the contemporary lives of these urban MIs and their creative links with communities in the context of historical structures, aims and assets.

Again, the focus here is on urban MIs of comparative size and context and does not focus on the many country MI halls, as captured in the MIV newsletter image (Figure 4.18). These have a smaller, community and neighbourly focus. This research instead places Ballarat, as a large regional city, in the context of the larger urban MIs in Melbourne, Sydney, and San Francisco, and links them with the professional cultural sector. The historical legacies of these Institutes' names, buildings, collections and staffing will now be discussed.
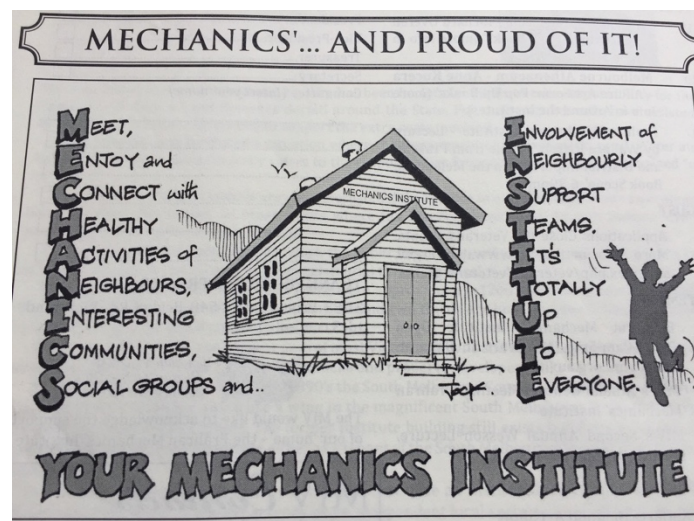
Figure 4.17: MIV newsletter No 40. Autumn, 2016

Historical legacies through to today– names, buildings, collections, staffing and their implications

Since the level of connection into local communities affects the capacity and relevance for ongoing viability of any institute purporting to contribute to the cultural life of a city, the level and quality of the public's perception of MIs becomes a key factor in their continuing operation. Just as the GLAM sector more broadly is exploring and articulating its value and refining its contemporary role in cultural life, so too must MIs. To these shared challenges, the MIs must add the extra burdens imposed by the relative ignorance of the public of their aims, the relative inaccessibility of their collections, and the ambiguous position they occupy in the sector. MIs struggle with different challenges around physical buildings, names and histories, as well as

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the membership and paid component issue which impacts upon the public perception of their cultural role. Edwards, for example, states that in San Francisco the "Mechanics' name is a hurdle but once [people] understand they can get past and think: wow! that place is special…[the] perception can also be that we're a private organisation and [we] have to say we are a membership organisation, independently financed, we don't receive local or state tax money but anyone can join, and that's been the case since 1855".[46] In Ballarat, Tony Godfrey noted that, prior to his appointment as manager of BMI, he "knew it by location and description but not through any participation or entry so that was a good learning for me, instructive as to the attitude of a significant percentage of the Ballarat population, [who] happily walk past and think oh that's a lovely building but not much more than that".[47]

The SMSA states that that Schools of Art concentrated on literature, history and the arts, while Mechanics' Institutes offered vocational training for tradesmen. This duality is reflected in their current name. Meanwhile the Melbourne Institute (established in 1839) solved this identity or branding conundrum by changing the name in the 1870s to the Athenaeum. Names matter here; and the meaning of the word mechanic in the twenty-first century (and much earlier) has lost its original broad application to skilled tradesmen. Names, like buildings, act as identifiers and signs, which can be problematic when they have long been part of the heritage and identity of historic institutes. But they can also be reimagined in contemporary contexts, for example, the case of San Francisco linking the Mechanic to the modern Makers movement and an interest in craftsmanship and the handmade in industrial society. Edwards remarks that "the new phrase now is Makers, and the Makers movement. People start to think oh yeah, I'm a mechanic— I'm a woodworker, or a writer, or an artisan baker".[48]

Today the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute retains its original name but in the form of the acronym BMI (or BMI Ballarat on social media) to facilitate twenty-first century usability and branding; similarly, Prahran Mechanical Institute and Circulating Library is shortened to PMI Victorian History Library. In BMI's case there is another lexical matter of some interest. In Ballarat, the spelling of the modern city Ballarat is sometimes to be found as Ballaarat, with the double 'a'. This spelling (an anachronism sometimes used to signal the city's heritage) has the advantage of reminding us, through the name's history, of the relevance of the inclusion of

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[46] Edwards.

[47] Godfrey.

[48] Edwards.

Indigenous history, the name being two local words in Wadawurrung language meaning 'resting place' or 'bended elbow'. This historical link and its potential contemporary usage (in the case of the BMI) perhaps reflects an increasing awareness and desire in Australia to engage with Indigenous history and culture. The BMI now draws on its history of both practical education and arts as a forerunner to local TAFE and tertiary education in the Ballarat School of Mines and Federation University's Arts Academy, as does PMI and SMSA.

With issues of public profile and clarity of branding (especially as to names) along with a relevant membership model being among the challenges for contemporary MI's, it is not surprising that these are directly addressed in all the About Us sections of the five MI websites. Each is careful to highlight that they are not-for-profit, community owned and run, independently-run cultural hubs, and that their message is one of welcome, not exclusivity. This is expressed in their insistence that joining is easy, affordable and open to all, that anyone can join for a small fee, that some activities are also open to non-members, and that all are welcome.

The Melbourne Athenaeum highlights on its website that payment of an annual subscription fee allows one to "become part of this extraordinary institution, part of Melbourne's history", thus bringing together the implied value of historical importance as well as contemporary events, and earnt value through library services, regular talks, book clubs and a film screening club. There is certainly a shared anxiety to broaden the scope of its appeal to the public, and to dispel what it considers to be misconceptions about the place of MIs in contemporary cultural life.

Another distinction that the MIs examined here strive to communicate is that between public libraries and their own (private) ones, emphasising a quiet place in the city. The BMI promises that a member will "receive personal service and enjoy a unique peaceful and friendly setting in the heart of the Ballarat CBD".[49] Member testimonials on The Mechanics' website describe "a vibrant cultural oasis" and "an egalitarian oasis in fast-changing San Francisco".[50] Haby states, in regard to the PMI, that members have joined because it was considered a quieter space than the State Library or the Melbourne City Library, and also because those libraries were too

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[49] Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, "About Us".

[50] The Mechanics' Institute San Francisco, "Who Are We," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.milibrary.org/about.

crowded.[51] A clear tension is revealed here in that the institutes are ambivalent about the value and relevance of their hidden gem niche marketability, and their desire to bring new opportunities through an interest in history and cultural tourism (as stressed by Hurley), and so provide culturally relevant activities to a more general and diverse public.

Heritage buildings and collections present one kind of value (often through heritage listings), along with institutional histories that include names and iconography such as: BMI's icon Minerva the goddess of wisdom (a statue on top of building and also represented in the organisation's logo) (Figure 4.18); its Greek equivalent, Athena, at the Melbourne Athenaeum; San Francisco's coat of arms with arm and hammer and the motto Be Just and Fear Not; the PMI's contemporary abstract logo image referencing books; and the similarly contemporary SMSA logo, a far cry from its 1848 membership card, which depicted mixed imagery of Advance Australia, Athena, reference to classical Rome and Athens and included an Aboriginal supplicant. (Figure 4.19). Choices around how institutes are presented, and in turn understood, dramatise the dilemma currently facing MIs. A final point on choices around names and implications: Spielvogel's 1929 history of the BMI references a suggested name change in 1911 as the name Mechanics' "no longer suits", however this was not explored further being considered too expensive.[52] Here again, financial imperatives are put before cultural ones.

Figure 4.18: BMI logo 2000s

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[51] Haby.

[52] 89.

Figure 4.19: Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts Membership card no. 155, issued to John Armstrong in 1848, held in the collection of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts

Change processes and leadership

A comment from Haby at the PMI neatly frames some of the issues to be explored here. He notes that "there's always debate between individuals" and refers to the staff that have been there longer finding change challenging, responding with "we can't do that, or that's not going to work". Haby, in reply, stresses the need to evolve with the times and his philosophy of experimentation: "Let's try it, if it works it works, if it doesn't it doesn't".[53] The possibility of personality clashes, clashes over the direction of the institute, clashes over the responsible spending of public/private funds (with their competing and not always congruous aims), clashes over leadership style and function, clashes over the security of the status quo versus the risk/reward strategy of the entrepreneur all play their part. Statements such as: Johnston's to the SMSA board "You've got to become more emboldened…we could be so much more at a time when I think society needs so much more";[54] Haby's at the PMI (after joining the

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[53] Haby.

[54] Johnston.

marketing committee): "You guys have got to get a really serious marketing plan happening, because most people don't know who you are or what you represent"; and Westwood's when at the Athenaeum she was asked how the organisation fitted within the cultural life of the city replied it was about: "seeing ourselves as more than just a library service for members. We could be doing that, but we feel like we want to embrace our opportunities a little more"[55] demonstrate both the value of new and vigorous leadership, and the strength of the entrenched structures and practices within and against which they must operate, and the complex relationship between insiders and outsiders.

John Holden discusses the new role of cultural leaders as "reaching out rather than down" in a network structure opposed to hierarchy.[56] This may be a way to address BMI's narrow social capital at the top, and is what is described as a governance move to distributed leadership in RMT terms. A commonality in the interviews has been the discussion of a hands-off approach from the boards, a tendency toward trusting and supporting the staff in various areas to do their assigned work. At San Francisco for example, members of the board "do big picture strategy and are on committees, and day to day decisions are made by [the] Executive Director and [the] Library Director".[57] Haby at PMI notes that the board "takes a very much hands-off approach".[58] The various relationships MIs have with local councils is also significant, for example: PMI having a history, which carries through to today, of board members being local city councillors; Sydney and Melbourne MIs of being quite independent from government; and BMI recently forming a new relationship via shared funding of the executive manager role with the CoB. These various structures of leadership demonstrate different levels of functionality, and approaches to larger strategic work and thinking and day to day operations—ones that can be seen as still in development at BMI although Godfrey was hopeful that the complex strands of those involved with the BMI could be brought together. Holden asserts that leadership is a way of being, not a badge, and part of a continuous process of adjustment; it is part of a network, while also adaptable, based on the contemporary fluid world.[59] This was key to Godfrey's approach of the BMI being a learning organisation and open to continual improvement.[60] The ability to step into this world of fluidity and flexibility is one that

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[55] Westwood.

[56] Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership". 186.

[57] Edwards.

[58] Haby.

[59] Holden, "Current Issues in Cultural and Strategic Leadership". 181.

[60] Godfrey.

Mechanics' Institutes have struggled with, finding greater and lesser success through time, and with which they are faced again today. Internal capacity and style effects the ability to engage outwards, as does different institute approaches to linking past, present and future contexts. A major finding of the research has been this connection between operational structure and leadership, and creative ability and capacity for change. That is, the potential for creative activation work that engages more critically with historical narratives and encourages Harrison's hope for a more open, diverse, inclusive, representative and creative approach to heritage work.

Linking past to present and future—creative activation

BMI markets itself as "part of the historical and cultural heart of Ballarat CBD" and connects its past uses for "balls, lectures, markets, cinema, library, concerts and cultural events" to its continued significance in Ballarat's rich cultural heritage. As discussed in chapter two, the BMI was also a forerunner to the Schools of Mines, and local art and design education. The Athenaeum also highlights the role it played in developing Melbourne's cultural capital through the "early promotion and development of music, visual arts, literature, science and theatre". The SMSA celebrates the fact that they are the oldest operating School of Arts and lending library in Australia, with a continuing "lively community that has existed since 1833". Similarly, San Francisco describes its offering as a "vibrant library… [with] chess…and a full calendar of cultural events, programs, and classes". Edwards states: "We're very proud of our history and I really see that our history is relevant to our future". She cites Andrew Hallidie (father of San Francisco's cable car,) as a disruptive technology, linking to "today [where] we have a population of entrepreneurs that are disrupting other industries, so I'd like to see Mechanics Institute be a centre for that kind of discussions and explorations, and the library can certainly help support that". Haby at PMI also stresses the need for this ongoing promotion of the link to historic roles in arts and culture, science and technology, and education. He takes the opportunity, when representing the organisation, to tell that story linking MIs to modern day TAFE: "I think there needs to be more awareness-building about how these organisations started and what their original purpose was".[61]

The hybrid nature of MIs (discussed in chapter two) that continues today in places like the BMI, having multiple GLAM elements—library, museum, archives and gallery—in addition

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[61] Haby.

to its arts and educational roles, can also be seen to trace back to the history of institutes, in the interviews of the MIs' representatives. The Melbourne Athenaeum, for example, operated a significant Art Gallery between 1911 and 1971: "Many artists and art groups exhibited paintings, including such famous names as Arthur Boyd, Rupert Bunny, Arthur Streeton, William Rowell, Max Meldrum, Albert Namatjira, and H Septimus Power".[62] The BMI and the Athenaeum also played important roles in presenting theatre and cinema locally, foregrounding their potential of being significant creative and cultural hubs today.

How might these creative histories and hybridity positively inform contemporary use? Wotherspoon notes that the SMSA founding mission of cultivating literature, science and art held no restriction over who might "avail themselves of this desiderata".[63] In practicality, there were, of course, issues of membership fees, and of class and gender (discussed in chapter two), but a parallel could be made to today where missions maintain a broadness of service to an intellectual, cultural community that may in fact be useful in terms of opening up. MIs could offer a flexibility with which to work. Here there is potential to address GLAM issues of diversity of participation and Buckley and Witcomb's aims for museology and critical heritage to move toward democratisation of heritage production and "recognition of the constructed nature of heritage and therefore the politics of representation".[64] Key to this potentiality is will from the organisation, combined with the energy of the particular staff involved in curation and programming (which sometimes also comes under librarian or collection management roles). Examples of this are events such as that in the 2020 PMI partnering with the Midsumma Festival and the running of a LGBTI zine making workshop. These events blend heritage and creativity to bring alternate perspectives and links between past and present through collections and collaborations.

Through the energy of specific staff and skills, the MIs discussed in this chapter have been able to establish and facilitate artist residencies and projects that connect with various cultural communities of the city, that go beyond the provision of simple library services. As Westwood states: "We're custodians if you like, of a historic building and in some respects we're custodians of the history of the mechanics institute organisation here…But we also see our role

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[62] "The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, the Pleasure of Words".

[63] Wotherspoon, "The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts". 7.

[64] Witcomb and Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies': Looking Back in Order to Look Forward". 40

as engaging in the community by offering the cultural programme that is interesting and diverse and different, and that is enhancing the cultural life of the city as well". These examples present ways of moving beyond implied value to earned value (RMT) and the value of collaboration and exchange.

Conclusions

Interviewees expressed a general optimism about the challenges ahead, and an excitement and energy about the opportunities, seeing them as a chance to expand the roles of their institutions from historical novelties, or set pieces, to integral hubs of connection in their cities (as they originally operated). However, these challenges and opportunities are taking place in a crowded cultural and strained financial landscape. Competition for funding is fierce, and the mixed private/public nature of MI funding can place their management in an ambivalent position. With many MIs being lost over time, there has often been a focus on survival, and the complexity of being both community-owned and member-based has confirmed the need to decide upon a clear role, purpose and leadership to resolve these complexities. The greatest challenge to leaders was found to lie in such things as outmoded governance models and a corresponding reluctance to take action in new ways.

Tension around tangible heritage and value and more intangible elements is also evident. MIs often identify as heritage buildings with historic functions, and this mindset is one factor which compromises their capacity to go beyond the implied value of tangible heritage. This is a practical concern and it has been shown that the Institutes studied are financed today largely through leasing parts of their buildings. Financial imperatives such as these have the potential to restrict the ability to develop broader ideas for future sustainability that can combine economic, social and cultural value. Putting into place strategies to bring about the intrinsic and institutional values implicit in the full achievement of cultural value is seen as a priority.

Tangible and intangible heritage, and the dialogue between them, which is always in processes of negotiation, must be recognised. The work examined in this chapter and the previous one, provides examples of building creative connections between heritage materials, places and diverse communities as a way towards greater connectivity and relevance for organisations and the publics they serve. This can be seen as part of the broader shifts in heritage practice and the HUL approach that move from a conventional heritage focus on physical fabric and formal

Statements of Significance (or Smith's Authorised Heritage Discourse- AHD[65]) to significance being fluid and contestable, and from values being embedded in place to values being embedded in people (Figure 1.2). The energising role of the curator, or similar personnel in the MIs discussed, can facilitate new connections and understandings in these areas.

Many of the themes discussed in chapter three (regarding museological shifts and moves to increase engagement in creative ways for ongoing viability in GLAM organisations) are also those shared by MIs. Issues of funding, institutional histories and questions of value affect them all. Through looking at change processes and creative projects, Nina Simon's concept of relevance as unlocking meaning[66] emerges in a relationship that combines objects, places, specialised knowledge and other kinds of knowledge, audiences, participants and stakeholders in interconnected relationships. These processes may also raise Harrison's assertion in relation to heritage and the question of what to keep and what to let go of: "One cannot properly form new memories and attach value to them without selecting some things to also forget".[67] In this way organisational histories and legacies, as discussed in chapter two, must be considered, and new leadership and ways of working embraced.

Whilst resourcing and the public knowledge of MIs might be generally less than that of GLAMs, they can share similar challenges and institutional knowledge. For example, and while on a very different scale, MIs could look to Sovereign Hill and international exchange networks for best practice, and to have an international MI exchange program. The Melbourne Athenaeum's website has a section called Creative Friends where all the artists it has worked with are listed, [68] presenting these relationships as a valued part of its operations. This approach could be something taken on by the BMI and other organisations. Inspiration and resources can also be built on from organisations such as the State Library of Victoria's Creative Fellowship program, and The Johnston Collection's programming of artist interventions.[69]

The generative quality of creative action work is also worth mentioning as part of its value beyond the purely economic. Since the BMI commissioned the film *Silver Rememberings*, with the Anderson family archives and filmmaker Erin McCuskey in 2016, the Anderson collection

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[65] "History, 2012 Manifesto."

[66] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 22.

[67] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 231.

[68] "The Melbourne Athenaeum Library, the Pleasure of Words".

[69] These were two of the organisations interviewed for this PhD that could not be included due to final thesis scope

has been acquired by ACMI.[70] There has also been a new film project, led by McCuskey and in partnership with the Ballarat Arts Foundation (BAF), featuring Jack Anderson's life and archives, screened at the Regent Cinema in 2020.[71] This screening event included the launch of a new BAF grant offering for filmmakers, funded in perpetuity by the Anderson family. BMI can be seen here as a leader in creative GLAM practice, being a starting point from which further work could evolve. Similarly, artist Barry Gilson reflected on the *Imprints: Storytelling the City* exhibition at BMI (chapter six): "It was a great event. Who'd've thought I'd end up writing the whole second part of Sovereign Hill's *Aura* show. The storytelling event was certainly a catalyst for much".

In arguing for the fruitful placement of MIs in the GLAM context, benefits can be seen in the example of the New Cardi Ballarat GLAM tour, that included BMI, in 2019. The event is captured in Figure 4.21 below by organiser Nik McGrath, from Melbourne Museum, for the BMI newsletter.

We kicked off the day with curator Julie McLaren at the Art Gallery of Ballarat and a tour of the beautiful new wall hang up the stairs at the entrance to the gallery then into the gallery spaces where McLaren is working towards acquiring more works for the collection by female artists, depicting contemporary viewpoints to counter the historical work in the collection. Then on to the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute (BMI) with curator and PhD scholar Amy Tsilemanis. We all fell in love with the Heritage Room, the rich archive collection, the original 1859 building, the cinema, and all that BMI has to offer the community, historians and film societies! We braved the heat and walked to the Gold Museum meeting curator Michelle Smith for a highlights tour of the Goldasaurus nugget, beautiful panoramic historical photograph of Ballarat, and finally enjoyed exploring the temporary exhibitions Wonderful Things and Eclectic Things. I'm sure many of us will be back for spend more time with these beautiful collections.

Figure 4.20: New Cardi Ballarat GLAM tour described by organisor Nik McGrath
from Melbourne Museum for the BMI newsletter, February 2019

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[70] Australian Centre for the Moving Image, "Amazing Amateurs: John Anderson," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.acmi.net.au/ideas/read/amazing-amateurs-john-anderson/.

[71] Alex Ford, "Ballarat Celebrates Jack Anderson and the Regent with Large as Life", *Ballarat Courier* February 1st, 2029.

Figure 4.21: Art Gallery of Ballarat, New Cardigan Ballarat GLAM tour, 2019 (Nik McGrath)

Figure 4.22: BMI, New Cardigan Ballarat GLAM tour, 2019 (Nik McGrath).

Figure 4.23: Gold Museum, New Cardigan Ballarat GLAM tour, 2019 (Nik McGrath)

The various forms of value of the collections sector offer is succinctly captured by the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA) as:

> a resource for innovation and creativity, and a basis for learning and knowledge production on many levels. Museums and galleries are sites of social inclusion and opportunities for Indigenous reconciliation. They are integral to community identity and wellbeing as well as drawcards for cultural tourism.[72]

Whilst Barrett has warned of the dangers of unrealistic expectations in museums, the organisations discussed here are working in innovative ways to creatively connect with the publics they serve. The following chapter explores the Ballarat city ecology via its cultural organisations and the city-wide event *White Night Ballarat*, 2017.

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[72] Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA), *Email Correspondence* (10/12/2019).

Chapter Five: The city ecology of Ballarat and *White Night Ballarat*

> All parties involved in the creation and support of culture are of equal standing. Artists are as important as audiences, governments as important as cultural organisations. In this ecology of mutual need, no view of culture should dominate in evaluation strategies and, given the diverse forms of culture today, no view can dominate.

> –Meyrick et al, *What Matters?: Talking Value in Australian Culture*

Figures 5.1 and 5.2: AVAT06 White Night 2017 BMI exterior (David Berry) and
AVAT07 White Night 2017 BMI interior (David Berry)

This statement, in *What matters?: Talking Value in Australian Culture* by Meyrick et al is a response not only to the general challenge around defining culture and value, but also to the increased focus in the last few decades on the economic value of culture, demonstrated in the current debate around the creative industries and the influence of neoliberal politics and policy. In this text, the authors are critical of the emphasis on short-term effects over long-term trajectories, culture treated as a marketplace eschewing public value, and of the value of culture being reduced to the expression and evaluation of its social benefit in monetary terms, both directly and indirectly.[1] These issues are part of the ecology of need in cultural organisations as they assess their role in the twenty-first century; they are also reflected more broadly in the city context, and both will be discussed in this chapter where cultural and financial viability are intimately interconnected. This discourse is set against the many and rapid changes facing cities like Ballarat, including population growth, conflicting approaches to city identity, and the growing expectations around diversity and inclusiveness. The challenge is complex, as the president of the Critical Heritage Association (established 2012) has noted: "In an ever-changing world, the renewed complexity of issues related to the construction, appropriation,

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[1] Julian Meyrick et al, *What Matters?: Talking Value in Australian Culture*. xv.

and meaning of places, of the past, and of traditions has not yet been unravelled, and reflects the scale of the challenge that awaits us".[2]

This chapter explores how these issues sit within cultural organisations and cities, as they position themselves by means of events, marketing, and planning for the future, through the case study of *White Night Ballarat* 2017 (case study 1) and the event within *White Night at the BMI* (case study 1.1). Analysis continues this PhD's inquiry into ways in which to bring creativity and heritage together to connect with publics, and the possibilities and associated problems raised in relation to value, sustainability, and diversity of engaged communities, leadership and cultural activities.

The particular timing of this case study in Ballarat is significant. Changes in the cultural leadership of the city were in process with new directors being appointed, for example, at the AGB and Sovereign Hill. In addition, the first Ballarat International Foto Biennale was held under the directorship of Fiona Sweet (Figure 5.3) who aimed to build local community engagement along with national and international links. This year also saw the early stages of the development of the CoB Creative City strategy (Figure 5.4) that in 2018 planning put forward "the intent and framework for Ballarat to become Australia's leading regional creative city".[3]
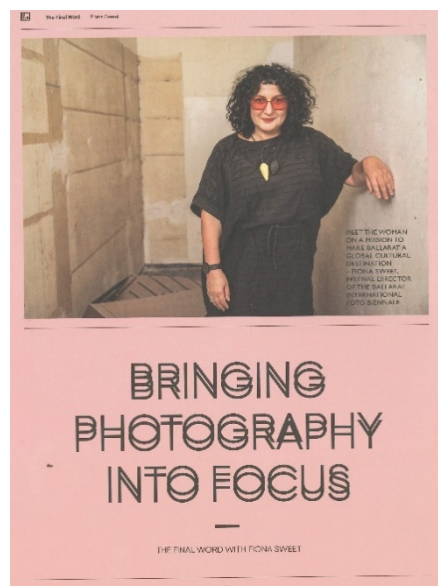
Figure 5.3:Feature on Fiona Sweet and the *Ballarat International Foto Biennale* in
Visit Ballarat publication 'Unearth', Winter 2019.

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[2] Lucie K. Morisset, "President's Welcome." Association of Critical Heritage Studies, July 2017. Accessed 6th June 2020, https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/presidents-welcome.
[3] City of Ballarat, "Ballarat Creative City Strategy Project Overview 2018."

Figure 5.4: Ballarat's Creative City Strategy promotion 2018

The *White Night Ballarat* and *White Night at the BMI* events will now be examined in turn, considering Ballarat city and its ecology of stakeholders, with particular focus on value, creatively activated heritage, and sustainability. Various sources of data are used for analysis: government strategy documents; print media; social media; Visit Ballarat tourism reporting; and BMI sources: 2018 BMI event survey (Appendix 0.4); records of action research in event debrief notes and subsequent event evaluation report (Appendix 5.2); curator's action-research reflective journal; and collected photographs and multimedia. The chapter will conclude with a broader discussion of value in relation to arts and culture, heritage and GLAM.

The curatorial practice and rationale in this instance built on the Spring Celebrations event objectives of raising internal capacity, engaging with local artist and business communities, and connecting the BMI more strongly into the cultural life of the city. As such it could address the research questions of connectivity, relevance, diversity and cultural value, as well as examine the challenges of organisational structure and values. In turn it provided possible solutions towards achieving greater sustainability. The role of the curator was key in bringing all these connections together and looked at the three points of creative activation of this thesis; arts practice, organisational dynamism, and new ways of thinking about heritage places and collections.

Case study 1: *White Night Ballarat* 2017

Figure 5.5: White Night Ballarat 2017 promotional material

White Night is an event that has happened in multiple cities around the world, and it positions the city and the way people engage with it as a major focus. The event uses large-scale projections, street art and installations as a way for the public to experience familiar spaces in novel, creative ways. The team behind White Night Melbourne since 2017 has been David Atkins Enterprises (DAE); this company brought the first regional city event to Ballarat that same year. Marketing stated that "White Night Ballarat is an all-night celebration of art and culture. It transforms the CBD streets and public spaces into a dusk 'til dawn spectacle of light, colour, movement and music. The event is inspired by Paris Nuit Blanche, with an international network of White Night programs which has grown to [include] 20 cities globally".[4]

The Ballarat event took place on a hot March night across three blocks of the CBD that were closed to traffic, and featured artworks taken from White Night Melbourne along with locally commissioned work. Large-scale projections were featured along Lydiard St on iconic buildings such as the Art Gallery, Mining Exchange, and Craig's Royal Hotel while further works were situated along laneways, streets and in green spaces. The event came about through a partnership between state and local governments and DAE enterprises (known for producing large scale cultural events such as Olympic ceremonies). Victorian arts minister, Martin Foley,

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[4] IER Focussed Event Thinking. "Give Me the Night Economic Impact & Market Research Report."
(Melbourne: IER Focussed Event Thinking, 2017).

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spoke of two key Creative State focuses: the role of the regions and Indigenous Arts, and used *White Night Ballarat* as an example.[5] This linked into trends towards greater inclusion of Indigenous artists and knowledge in arts and heritage events. On expanding regionally, director David Atkins noted that "Ballarat is almost a no-brainer [for such an event] when you think of the streets, the architecture and the culture of the community there.…The 2017 *Ballarat White Night* program includes neon angel wings, a six-hour recording of live performances, and projections on historic buildings exploring the gold rush and Indigenous culture".[6] The old cold and gold image of Ballarat was placed as something to be both drawn on and reimagined.

Ballarat mayor, Cr Samantha McIntosh, stated that the event was "a great economic opportunity for the city" though it was also reported that "for those involved, money is not the top priority…Mr Atkins has only just taken over as artistic director and wanted people to see the social messages that will be put up in lights in *White Night 2017*. He says 'There is a moral obligation when you have the focus of half a million people, not only to engage and entertain them, but remind them about some issues.'".[7] With CoB wishing to put itself on the tourist and artistic map, Mayor McIntosh stated that "this is an opportunity for us to celebrate our history and heritage in a creative and modern way".[8] This thinking connects with Ballarat's HUL and Creative City aims of infusing creativity and heritage into all city planning and practices, and with the question of this thesis concerning the bringing of heritage and creativity together in new ways towards greater connectivity and relevance for GLAM organisations and their cities.

The Ballarat Creative City Strategy stated its aims for an "enriched cultural life for the community, [a] flourishing cultural sector enhancing reputation, [and] greater sustainability for creative industries".[9] Events like this raise questions about what the opportunities are for local artists and the cultural organisations that support them, the nature of public engagement with arts and heritage, and how the impacts of these are evaluated and built upon. *White Night Ballarat* was one of the regional initiatives supported through the 2016 Creative State policy issued through Creative Victoria. In this way, the event was situated within publicly funded

[5] Richard Watts, "Creative State One Year On," *Arts Hub,* April 21st, 2017. Accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.artshub.com.au/news-article/features/grants-and-funding/richard-watts/creative-state-one-year-on-253625.

[6] Iskhandar Razak, "White Night Melbourne to Expand into Ballarat to 'Share the Wealth', Organisers Say," *ABC News,* December 12th 2016, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-12/white-night-melbourne-to-expand-into-ballarat/8113310.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "Ballarat Creative City Strategy Project Overview".

culture, as well as the broader tourism and economic development drivers. John Holden notes that who gets to make meaning in cities is crucial. The different players—artists, the public, cultural organisations, tourism promoters, council, government and other funders all play a part where "a city's metabolism, its resilience and ability to regenerate itself on a continuing basis is a function of how widely shared meaning-making is among people living in a city, and also how much contact and sharing goes on between different people groups and sectors".[10] *White Night Ballarat* is an event case study that allows exploration of this ecology of players as well as value and has implications for and about funding.

A 2018 article in *The Age* states that the White Night organisers have been "notoriously tight-lipped on cost" but say that the annual festival is funded through an $80 million four-year package up to 2019. The state tourism body, Visit Victoria, has also stated that the major events fund through which White Night is financed is committed for the long term.[11] The article also notes that "cities hosting are understood to foot the bill for their festival". In another article that looks at Bendigo losing the bid to Ballarat, and questioning the cost to local governments, it is stated that "Visit Victoria and the City of Ballarat both declined to disclose the cost of last weekend's event, saying the figure was commercial in confidence".[12] This lack of information about the amount and sources of funding significantly affects evaluation of its success in key areas. Firstly, it makes it impossible to evaluate the creative industries by its own (instrumental value) financial terms. Questions such as: what proportion of public (tax payer) funds went to subsidise which events and how was this discounted against alleged commercial gain to the city and its industries are impossible to answer. In public culture terms, the question arises: are the participants in this publicly funded event paying multiple times for the privilege? Through taxes at state level, council rates at the local level, and the purchasing of their culture again through their consumption of the creative industries' offerings at street level? Sponsorship from Vic Health, for example, highlights the instrumental social value with the statement: "Events like White Night provide us with opportunities to create connections, to reflect on our community identity and diversity, and to experience joy and wonder. In this way participating in community celebrations and festivals make a positive impact on mental

[10] Holden John, "Thought Piece: Creative Cities," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 3, no. 4 (2007). 289.

[11] Ebony Bowden and Cameron Woodhead Hannah Francis, "White Night 2018: Let There Be Light," *The Age* February 18th, 2018, accessed 25th Mat 2020, https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/white-night-2018-let-there-be-light-20180218-h0w95f.html.

[12] Jason Walls, "City to Bid for White Night Despite 'Substantial' Cost," *Bendigo Advertiser,* March 8th, 2017, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/4516081/a-costly-night-on-the-town-poll/.

wellbeing at individual and collective levels".[13] Why then is its budgeted contribution towards these intangible values not made known? The lack of information about funding, and its consequent relation to the public perception of cultural value, must not go unnoticed.

The various aims as expressed by government bodies and event organisers form part of Holden's triangle of players: politicians and policy makers (with their focus on instrumental value); cultural professionals, such as artists and organisations; and the public (and its interest in institutional value). The role of the third will be considered with the results of the economic focus, and the one-off nature of such events. A description of what happened at the BMI as part of the city event will now be outlined along with some of the outcomes. Finally, an analysis of the whole event, and responses to it, will be made in the context of policies and tensions around value, identity, possibilities and ongoing challenges.

Figure 5.6: ABC article 2017

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[13] Vic Health, "Vichealth Is a Proud Supporter of White Night and the Positive Impact of the Arts on Our Community," March 8th 2017, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/white-night.

Case Study 1.1: *White Night at the BMI*

White Night at the BMI followed ground-work undertaken the year prior as part of the first major event the researcher produced as the BMI's curator in September 2016: *Spring Celebrations* and Open Day (see event report Appendix 5.3). These celebrations launched the Max Harris Photography Collection at the BMI with associated exhibitions and events, including the commissioning and screening of Erin McCuskey's short film *Silver Rememberings*, and demonstrated the possibilities for community and creative engagement and internal capacity-building facilitated by the new curator role (established in March that year). This 2016 event also acted as an informal re-launch of the BMI following building renovations undertaken during the past decade. The messaging was of BMI being a welcoming cultural place in the city centre, a place for people to explore stories and collections relating to local history, for connecting via the physical heritage building, and via the intangible connections made at these new events.

This moment of opening up in the BMI's existence coincided with the CoB wishing to put itself on the tourist and artistic map via the city-wide event, *White Night Ballarat* 2017. The White Night at BMI program was a self-funded contribution to the larger event that brought the heritage building and collections to life in new ways. BMI negotiated with the White Night team for provision of security and to be marketed in its program. The event drew on sponsorship (hot chocolate from a local supplier, and seating from a local entertainment company) along with in-kind support (local artists and Federation University Live Production students producing the sound and lighting), and used the BMI's large volunteer-base to manage the event on the night. A six-hour program was produced consisting of live music, a DJ set, visuals from the BMI collection, improvised performance, poetry performances, and an installation work by local artist Ellen Sørensen, which was inspired by items in the BMI collection. Her work involved paper-cut and projection works situated in BMI's nineteenth-century secretary Batten's desk in the historic Humffray Room (See Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7: AVAT08 Ellen Sørensen installation for White Night 2017 in Mr Batten's desk

For the BMI, their program provided an example of creatively activating the BMI building and collection, whilst being a key part of the city's arts and culture offering. Details of the event can be viewed in the *Courier* article below (Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8: Ballarat Courier article 'Goddess of the Arts to oversee acts' March 2017

Goddess of the Arts to oversee acts

Fiona Henderson
@fionagran

2 Mar 2017, 4:57 p.m.

Share   Tweet   Email

The Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute – home of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and the arts – will feature some magical White Night performances on Saturday.

From 9pm until 1am, visuals of historic Ballarat from the institute's collection will be matched with artworks by Ellen Sorensen.

From 10.30pm until 11pm, there will be improvised theatre, music and dance courtesy of Jam'n'Jar.

From 11pm to 11.40pm, the Winter Berries will bring to the stage their classical/pop blend featuring female vocal harmonies, strings and haunting guitar.

And at midnight, The Night ReVerses will make its premiere.

This is a unique, two-man show performed by poet Nathan Curnow and singer/songwriter Geoffrey Williams.

It brings together poems with a live music improvisation.

Analysis of case study 1.1—*White Night at the BMI*

How do events such as this foster creative connections between cultural organisations, their heritage buildings and collections, and contemporary curatorial and creative practice, and

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increase connectivity, relevance, and cultural value? How sustainable is this model? The various outcomes, and the value of these to the public and city, the event participants, and organisational development of the BMI are considered here.

The public

The benefit of BMI partaking in the *White Night* event was seen firstly in attendance numbers; approximately 2000 people were recorded in the BMI event report as partaking and as the survey data below demonstrates, this was the largest attendance at a BMI event during the period 2016–2018.[14] (Figure 5.9)

Q4 Have you attended any BMI run events in the last year and a half?
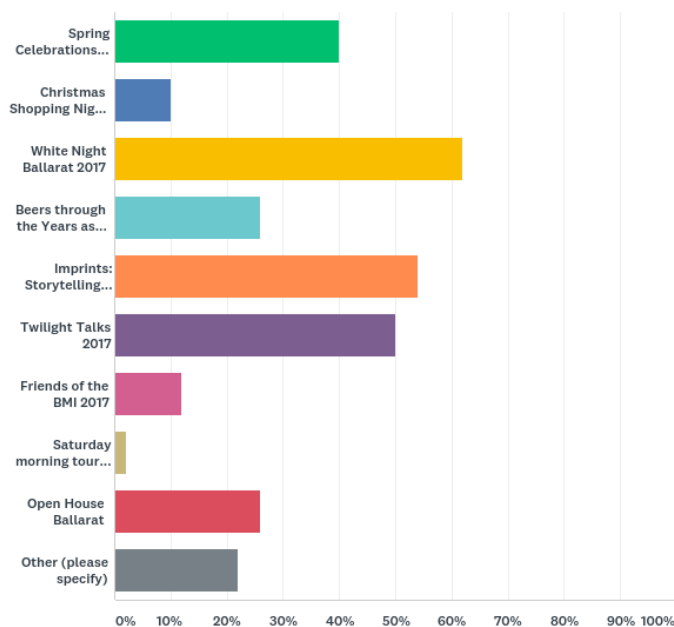
Figure 5.9: BMI events survey 2018

Thus, the event facilitated greater awareness of the BMI from the broader community. It also developed a capacity to build on the RMT's concept of earned value, as opposed to implied value, and Holden's institutional value for the public in their connection to the organisation. This was reflected in the BMI program featuring in the Visit Ballarat survey feedback that recorded: "It was a delight to see the crowd's shared delight in the thoughtful art and music.…The music at Ballarat mechanics institute was a highlight". BMI also featured in the

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[14] Jen Mann, "BMI Events Survey Report March 2018" (Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, 2018). See Appendix 0.4.

report's word cloud (Figure 5.10) as well as in feedback captured via social media Facebook Post 1 (Figure 5.11).
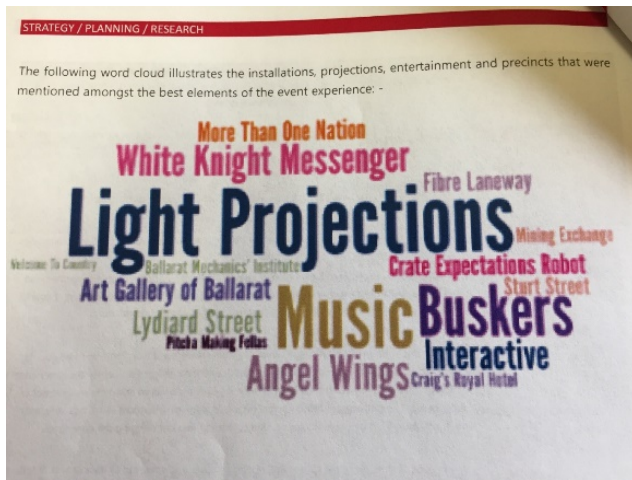
Figure 5.10
IER *White Night* Economic Impact & Market Research Report 2017, p 42
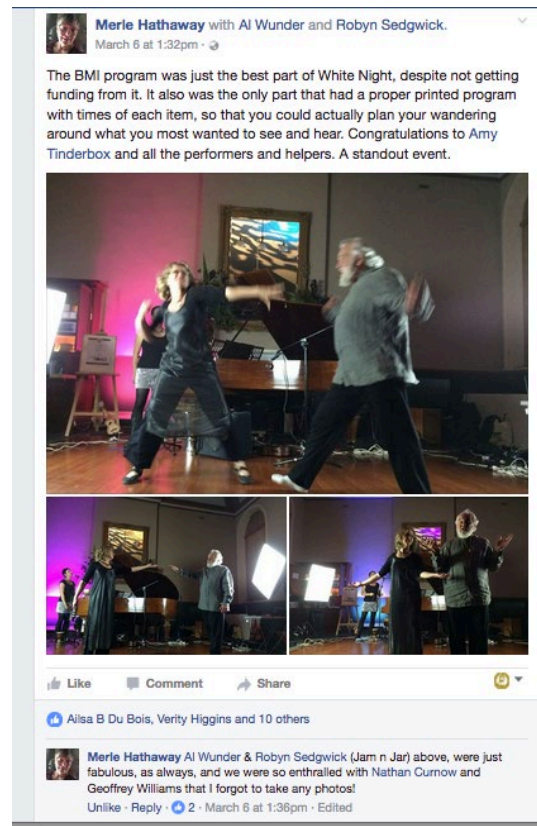
Figure 5.11:
Merle Hathaway public social media capture March 2017

Nurturing local creativity

Audience feedback, as recorded above, states that "the BMI program was the best part of White Night, despite not getting funding for it". (Figure 5.11) The focus on local artists was seen as a positive feature by the public, but it was also of benefit to the artists themselves, despite them being volunteers, as demonstrated in the debrief data. Georgie Williams, of performing band the Winter Berries stated:

> We performed to a packed room of two different attentive audiences in quick succession which was pretty special…I think we contributed something different and unique to *White Night*, with the historical slide show being shown before and in between sets in the amazing BMI. It was great to be a part of showcasing one of Ballarat's living historical treasures.…It meant a GREAT deal to be involved in *White Night* through the generosity of the BMI. It gave us great pleasure to contribute to the amazing night that happened in Ballarat for the inaugural occurrence of *White Night Ballarat* as well as kudos for future festival applications.[15]

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[15] Andrew Miller, "Event Review Template Draft- White Night 20_04," (Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, 2017).

In this way creative activation created living connections, addressing both issues of low public awareness (the BMI event report recorded a benefit as audiences "welcomed the opportunity to view the BMI, many indicated unawareness of BMI interior"), and a new institutional reputation as generous (Williams), which made a contribution towards building Holden's focus of legitimacy between public and cultural professionals.

Looking at the action research reflective journal data below, the curatorial enthusiasm, and possibilities for development of future cultural events is evident:

> *Being part of White Night Ballarat (a hugely exciting thing to take place in our regional city) allowed us to*
> *-Continue raising awareness that the BMI is an active part of Ballarat's arts and culture scene and a contributor to major events for the city like White Night (despite the event producers deciding not to use our building in their main program we pulled together a great offering that had multiple outcomes including showcasing local artists and premiering a new creative work-The Night Re-verses by Nathan Curnow and Geoffrey Williams)*
> *-Provide opportunities for creative activation through working with the arts and business communities, leading to greater connection and relevance*
>
> *This event allowed the BMI to put itself forward as an exciting and relevant component of Ballarat's cultural life. Through sponsorship and volunteerism, we put on 6 hours of entertainment, showcased the building and elements of the collection through projected images of the Max Harris collection and a local artist creating work in response to the BMI, and allowed over 2000 people to connect with the place in a new way. We were able to come together as a team as well as create new connections for future engagement and relationships with the arts and business communities.*

Figure 5.12: Action research reflective journaling

Figure 5.13: AVAT09 Ellen Sørensen performing at White Night 2017 (Dave Byrne)

White Night at the BMI provided the opportunity to continue practice research into creative activation work—linking tangible and intangible heritage and value—through curatorial and artistic practice that had begun with the BMI *Spring Celebrations* event. For *White Night at the BMI*, artist Ellen Sørensen, was invited to respond to the BMI history through items from its archives, and created the installation works pictured in Figures 5.7, 5.13, 5.14, and 5.15.
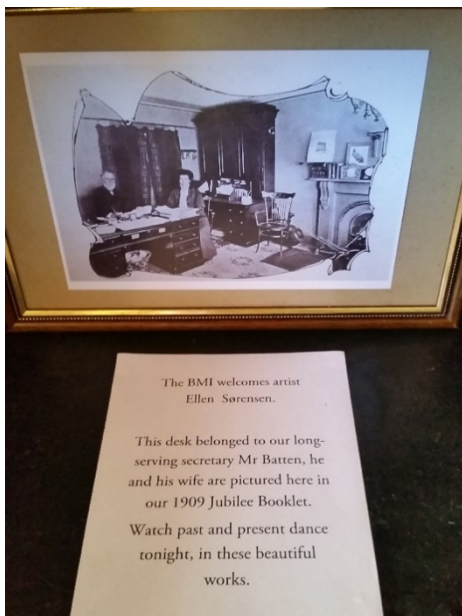
Figures 5.14 and 5.15: AVAT10 Ellen Sørensen installation interpretive White Night 2017 and
AVAT11 Ellen Sørensen installation interpretive White Night 2017

These works provided a poetic atmosphere during live music performances (Figure 5.13) and illuminated the audience's new engagement with the BMI building and its collections. Here arts that engage with heritage in creative ways are shown to be uniquely placed to produce affective experiences that deepen connections. This creative activation work continued to build new relationships and open dialogues between past, present and future; heritage and creativity; and the BMI and the publics it serves. This process was extended through an artist interview event that took place in the week following the *White Night Ballarat* event (Figure 5.16).

These works added to activation of the space for the White Night event, where Ellen also performed, then remained for the following week for others to view. We held an evening for the public to attend where I interviewed Ellen, also recorded as a document to be shared online. The mixture of these two events allowed the work to be experienced both as an element of a 'creative feast' of art, music, historic photography, beanbags, cakes, drinks and a view of the street from the balcony, as well as up close and more intimately where a small group of interested people were able to make new connections to the BMI and its possibilities as a point for creativity and community, and with each other as creative women living and working in Ballarat.

Figure 5.16: Action research reflective journaling

These generative outcomes sit outside of the immediately measurable, but build various links and access points (see also documentation that was produced[16] that is also publicly accessible online). Through having the BMI activated with various art forms and ways to engage, the significance of the BMI's icon Minerva was revived, described by the *Courier* as "goddess of the arts".[17] Following *White Night Ballarat*, and building on the concept of activated buildings, being out in the street, and showcasing local performers and writers, the local work *Minerva Speaks* (a project initiated by local artists with in-kind support from BMI for use of the venue) was presented on the BMI balcony. This was another example of creativity and heritage coming together to highlight ways of combining the tangible heritage of iconic buildings with intangible storytelling, and of staging events that bring people together in new ways across generations and backgrounds. (Figure 5.15) Such occasions build on what Smith

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[16] Multimedia Link 5: AVAT751 Ellen Sørensen discusses her White installation work at the BMI Ballarat 2017. Available at figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

[17] Fiona Henderson, "Goddess of the Arts to Oversee Acts," *Ballarat Courier*, March 2nd 2017.

describes as the "performative and embodied nature of the museum visit," questioning the dominance of learning as a main objective and the shift towards more participatory practices, that in this case centre around the enabling of creative practice within GLAM organisations and the multiple kinds of value this brings.

Figure 5.17: Facebook post March 2017- BMI social media about *Minerva Speaks*

Organisational learning

The *White Night at BMI* event produced multiple outcomes for the broader event, for the city, and for the organisation (for instance, internal learnings that led to the development of event planning and review processes, OHS and volunteer coordination). As a one-off activity, this event was a success, utilising in-kind support and sponsorship to keep costs to a minimum; but given its heavy reliance on good-will and volunteer-input, it presented as an unsustainable model for a not-for-profit, independently-run cultural organisation. This created a point of tension: being part of the free event was key, however no financial support was available. Unprecedented interest in the event meant there were also crowd control issues that had to be adjusted on the night and went into the event review as a need to develop OHS procedures and

up-skill volunteers. This event also raised issues for the organisation regarding how evaluation took place.

The following lessons were captured in the BMI White Night event report, prepared by Board member using debrief feedback (Appendix 5.2).

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">

<u>Specific Feedback was sought by Board members and others volunteering following the Event:</u>

(a) BMI President: has recommended not do White Night in future

(b) BMI President: obtain dollars from the City Council

(c) Event Plan should have been developed rather than endorsement by President alone.

This led to recommendations around the development of event plan and review templates:

(a) **<u>Development of Event Plan</u>**, then endorsed by Board for events of this scale. Event Plan must consider, among other aspects, direct and indirect costs, non-monetary value to BMI.

(e) **<u>Event Review Template</u>** - this Event Review for BMI's involvement in White Night be used as a trial template and be further developed for application to future BMI events. The Event Review should not be just received by the Board but be used to develop policy and procedures for all BMI events.

</div>

Figure 5.18: Data from White Night at the BMI event report

As can be seen here, organisational processes were lacking and raised awareness and a focus on monetary value as illustrated by the recommendation of the current BMI president to not do the event again due to lack of revenue raised. The event however provided the opportunity for organisational reflection and to develop planning and review processes that would better reflect the aims of specific events. This built on the comprehensive report and stakeholder list that was created following the *Spring Celebrations* event in 2016 (Appendix 5.3).

The BMI Event Report for White Night states its purpose as: "The Board of the BMI has not had a standard template for Event Reviews (post-BMI events) nor Event Plans (pre-BMI events), both of which, now appear to be moving towards inclusion in the BMI Strategic Plan. The purpose of this Event Review for *White Night Ballarat* is twofold: (a) to review the White Night, of which the BMI was a participant (b) to trial a format for the Event Review of future BMI events. (Appendix 5.2)

In the role of action researcher (practitioner/curator) I worked with the organisation to develop new tools for planning and reviewing events, so that aims could be viewed against outcomes by identifying whether they were intended to be fundraising or purely for cultural programming. The tools also included linking into the broader organisational strategy in order to provide information on which to make future decisions regarding how resources are utilised, and decisions made. The event plan and review templates continued to be trialled during events from 2017 to 2019 but had not formally been adopted as part of strategy by the completion of the curatorship, in May 2019.

On this evidence, the *White Night at the BMI* event allowed experimentation and learning leading towards greater organisational capacity, increased cultural activities, and connections with the city and the various stakeholders—artists, business proprietors and the public. One positive outcome of the capacity-building achieved through the first *White Night* was that a Volunteer Coordinator was taken on board (in a voluntary capacity) and with her assistance BMI went on to manage another successful event (Figure 5.19), independent of major curatorial input, and with a focus on developing volunteer processes and capacity. Again, new energy made things possible but if that energy isn't supported, and set in clear organisational values and strategy, ongoing sustainability is at question.

Figure 5.19: AVAT12 Erin McCuskey with BMI volunteer Dulcie Corbett White Night at BMI 2018

While BMI may not be cognizant, the impacts of neoliberal policies that inform the creative industries model can also be seen in the organisation's focus on financial and transactional matters (an observation also captured in its history, see chapter two). Whilst events like *White Night at the BMI* move towards greater openness, connectivity, and earned institutional value, those outcomes that are less easily measurable are at risk of being lost. The Institute is still

impacted by the degree of organisational ability for change, issues of funding, and a focus on the monetary and immediate rather than moving to the RMTs model of strategic positioning in preference to a static role; this can be the result of lack of innovation or, as the RMT labels it, informed risk-taking.[18] These are ongoing issues.

Analysis of Case Study 1 – *White Night Ballarat*

The *White Night Ballarat* case study allows investigation into creative activation of the past: the historic streetscapes of central Ballarat floodlit with colourful projections and other streets illuminated with art installations (some of which engaged in Kidds' gap filling with the focus on Indigenous artists and stories). Here, various forms of value are discussed against the critiqued creative industries and their link to the neoliberal focus on instrumental value, consumption over production, and focus on markets, as highlighted by Meyrick et al. The *White Night Ballarat* event demonstrated positive and negative outcomes as well as uncovering challenges and possibilities parallel to those found in other cultural organisations within their city contexts.

White Night Ballarat is an example of an event that came about through bringing a previously successful event model (in Paris and then Melbourne) to a regional city. It had tourism appeal as well as being publicly funded via the 2016 Victorian government policy document Creative State, drawing on the creative industries model of leveraging off creativity and cultural activity for economic, social and cultural outcomes. The Creative State approach is pictured below with five key action areas and three impact areas.

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[18] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum*. 4.

Figure 5.20: *Creative State* document outlining key action and impact areas, p 9

The economic impact of *White Night Ballarat* 2017 was captured in an economic and market research report undertaken by Visit Ballarat: "The unconstrained direct in-scope expenditure impact for the Ballarat economy is estimated at 3.09 million".[19] These kind of statistics are useful, but in Holden's call for viewing culture as a complex ecology rather than an economy, a wider ecology of value beyond the economic, creates a richer picture. Holden states that "different perspectives then emerge, helping to develop new taxonomies, new visualisations, and fresh ways of thinking about how culture operates".[20] From here it can be asked how to push future investment in arts and culture as an essential part of a functioning society and how bringing arts and heritage together might be part of this, questions that are explored further in the following section.

The content and public experience

The inaugural theme of *White Night Ballarat*—Give me the night—proved fitting as the feedback highlighted the focus of the public gathering in the streets and the meaning behind this. Cultural critic and worker, Esther Anatolitis, observed it a success for the Ballarat event in that "crowds are not the nuisance of the event; they *are* the event"[21] and public feedback recorded in surveys was that "the people, the people of the city of Ballarat came alive, and

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[19] "Give Me the Night Economic Impact & Market Research Report." 4.

[20] Holden, "The Ecology of Culture."

[21] Esther Anatolitis, "White Night Ballarat," March 5th 2017, accessed 25th May 2020, https://estheranatolitis.net/2017/03/05/white-night-ballarat/.

came out in droves to see, experience, enjoy, and share this great night".[22] Large scale events like this bring tens of thousands to the streets to explore the city through high-tech projections and arts interventions. They demonstrate clear economic value while connecting the public with creativity and the familiar city in a way that it might not otherwise do. They also connect people with art and heritage in a broader sense. Another survey response was: "Looking up Lydiard St I felt I had been transported somewhere else entirely, certainly not the old, gold and cold town I grew up in.…What really got me was the way people embraced the event so wholeheartedly, and we were united in our collective awe at such a wonderful spectacle".[23] Here, moving from the old, cold and gold is a positive shift that gave the city new meaning, one that allowed greater participation in the respondent's eyes.

Atkins also noted the moral obligation to include social content; this provided valuable contemplation and future possibilities; as seen in visitor feedback on the local Indigenous content: "*Wadawurrung Walking with Waa* [a video work featuring paintings by Marlene and Deanne Gilson accompanied by Barry Gilson singing in the traditional Wadawurrung language] and the Welcome to Country made me proud to live on Wathaurung land. The movie that played should be copied for all kids in every school and kinder. More of this local content please".[24] The balance of spectacle and substance, local and more generic, is a challenge in events like *White Night,* where elements can become simply instagrammable spots.[25] Conversely, a deeper element of this might be the visual demonstration of what people value via what is captured on social media or in photography. The image below by BMI member Michael Watson, for example (Figure 5.21), connects the White Night artwork in Sturt Street gardens with the floodlit BMI behind, centering of Minerva atop the building.

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[22] "Give Me the Night Economic Impact & Market Research Report." 41.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. 40.

[25] "If you need sanctuary from the crowds or a spiritual experience – or just an excuse to take a selfie in a church…" https://www.timeout.com/melbourne/art/white-night-melbourne-instagram-guide.

Figure 5.21: AVAT13 White Night with BMI (Michael Watson)

Discussing HUL's approach to mapping urban values, Ginzarly et al state that in the context of people-centred heritage, "posting photos, sharing and annotating them with labels is a form of cultural expression in which users determine what is cultural".[26] As such, they argue, analysis can be undertaken into an "understanding of the public interpretation of heritage".[27] In the case of *White Night Ballarat* this involved engaging with the city and its cultural organisations and heritage in new ways. In this way Harrison's view of heritage as a relationship between past and present as a reflection on the future[28] is instructive. The focus from Creative Victoria, and the popularity of the Indigenous components of the *White Night Ballarat* program are strong examples of the possibilities in this.

In the Ballarat city context, tangible heritage was activated into something beyond buildings. The Ballarat Creative City June 2019 newsletter introduced a section on festivals and events by stating that "you need more than beautiful historic buildings for a creative city to thrive".[29] In organisations as well as with cities it is not just about what an institute *has* but what they can *ignite*. Bourdieu makes the key point that symbolic and material capital is "effective capital only insofar as it is appropriated by agents and implemented and invested in towards cultural production".[30] Cities (and organisations) need to be activated in order to thrive and, in relation to *White Night Ballarat*, feedback was that while the art was what got people curious and in a state of wonder, the being out together in the streets was at the heart of the cultural production.

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[26] Manal Ginzarly, Ana Pereira Roders, and Jacques Teller, "Mapping Historic Urban Landscape Values through Social Media," *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 36 (2019). 4.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 228.

[29] City of Ballarat, "Celebrating Ballarat's Creative City Strategy June 2019," (Ballarat, 2019).

[30] Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital". 247.

Who are the agents to keep such momentum going? This will be considered further in the next section.

Sustainability and change/possibilities going forward

The *White Night Ballarat* event employed local artists and was an opportunity for cultural organisations and businesses alike to showcase their offerings. Ballarat's gold-rush streetscape acted as a spectacular backdrop for light and creativity, inviting the public to move through and explore the city in a new way. The inaugural event was also a chance for historic cultural organisations, including the AGB and the BMI (both housed in heritage CBD buildings), to be an integral part of this experience, with associated benefits. These included profile-raising and an expanded sense of what is possible through collaboration with artists, business and other parts of the city ecology in a city-wide event of this scale. However, at the end of the night, as unfunded participants, future choices around use of scarce resources come back to the issue of sustainability. Cities and organisations are caught in the bind of knowing that bringing activity and life into them is key to their vigour (and necessary beyond resting on implied value of beautiful old buildings). The challenge is how to make that work ongoing.

Returning to Ballarat's Creative City strategy aims, the *White Night Ballarat* 2017 event provided an enriched cultural life for the community, put it on the map both as a tourist destination and artistically,[31] and brought in economic value. It has also generated pride and inspiration, as captured in the audience feedback outlined above. It can be seen to fit within the Ballarat Heritage Plan aims of CBD regeneration, celebrating and inspiring with stories,[32] and its success contributes to a potential for managing city change as events like this may help identify values for future planning. However, it can be argued that a one-off event like this does little to form "greater overall sustainability for creative industries in the city".[33] Whilst providing opportunity for some local artists and businesses, it also results in many cultural workers volunteering their time and stretches resources. The strength of such work may lie in demonstrating possibilities, and it is places like the BMI that, on a smaller platform, assisted in the development of artists and relevance to the community, while in the process building their own institutional value.

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[31] Razak, "White Night Melbourne to Expand into Ballarat to 'Share the Wealth', Organisers Say".

[32] City of Ballarat, "Our People, Culture & Place: A New Heritage Plan for Ballarat 2017-2030".

[33] "Ballarat Creative City Strategy Project Overview".

Going forward, how could this be achieved to a greater extent, and sustainably, through the creative use of historic places and collections? There is a need for cultural value (not always revenue raising) to be supported and funded both within cites and organisations. Possibilities posed by cultural professionals, Bryce Ives and Esther Anatolitis, focus on building on momentum and the creation of further, more original events for the city. Anatolitis states that "momentum like this needs to be harnessed: Ballarat has just seen a whole other side to itself…something new will emerge, vindicated by the Victorian Government's investment, for a transformation all of Ballarat's own".[34] Or as Ives put it: "The Arts Academy at Fed Uni is ready for this sort of creative conversation. With over 300 training artists in Camp Street, we're asking what can we do to harness all of this energy? Let's put forward a positive narrative that places Ballarat at the centre of creative new works, a place renowned for training emerging artists, and a community ready and willing to take on the creative challenges. Let's go".[35] This provides an alternative vision of cultural leadership, that puts local skills and energy at the forefront.

Interestingly, in January 2020, the CoB released a call-out for a "developer for a major new spring city-wide event with a working title of the Festival of Big Ideas".[36] The event was described as aiming to complement the off year of the Ballarat International Foto Biennale and attract 40,000 people (like the first *White Night Ballarat*) as part of the city's "commitment to developing an innovative set of experiences that we can become known for". The focus here is clearly on visitation, and again the question of city identity. Aims included investigating "bigger, better, bolder ways of thinking" and there is a directive, perhaps taken from criticism of *White Night Ballarat*, that the proposed event "must not appear to be 'bought in' from elsewhere". The hope is that the festival will "express the unique and authentic voice of our complex community [and be part of building the city's] brand personality [by articulating] its authentic point of difference".[37] However, the concept itself seems taken from elsewhere (perhaps Sydney's Vivid Festival) and, through the described focus on "seeking a 'wow' response from Melbourne-based and interstate visitors" and a "strong capacity for sharing of content on social media platforms," similar questions to those broached following *White Night*

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[34] Anatolitis, "White Night Ballarat".

[35] Bryce Ives, "Opinion: Old Ballarat Myths Ready for New Era," *Ballarat Courier,* March 6th, 2017, accessed June 6th 2020, https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/4510468/opinion-old-ballarat-myths-ready-for-new-era/.

[36] Alex Ford, "City of Ballarat Seeks Developer for Major New Spring City-Wide Event," *Ballarat Courier* January 17th, 2020, accessed June 6th 2020, https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/6584473/whats-the-big-idea-council-seeks-massive-new-spring-event/.

[37] Ibid.

Ballarat, regarding instagrammable, short term bursts of activity, offering little to the local creative and cultural ecology long-term, are raised. Here Meyrick et al's critique of the emphasis on short-term effects over long-term trajectories, and of culture being treated as a marketplace are evident.

The document also explicitly mentions "a prevalence of darker stories that touch on Ballarat's heritage, which can be commodified and packaged" presenting a bizarre twist on critical heritage, with the focus on how difficult heritage and stories can be commercialised. Where thoughtful and meaningful work can be done in this area (future ideas in the document include a steampunk World's Fair celebration of Ballarat inventor Henry Sutton and current scientific innovations) there is also potential tension between the arts, heritage, tourism, and creative industries that raise questions of value, resourcing and taste.

This analysis of case study event 1 *White Night Ballarat* and case study 1.1 *White Night at the BMI* has provided valuable data into the investigation into a Ballarat city-wide event and its potential to connect the issues of creativity and heritage to the possibilities for cities and their cultural organisations. It has assessed the potential strain on resources as, although reliance on volunteers might be successful for one-offs, when considering the issue of ongoing sustainability, matters of funding, and attitudes towards value and city identity become problematic. In positive terms, *White Night Ballarat* expanded public participation and the concepts of art being more than just a painting on a wall, and of creative heritage as ways of telling stories of the past in new ways in order to look forward (for example approaches to Indigenous content, and the story of gold). This involves the challenge of retaining diversity, whilst maintaining some sort of coherent image for those both living in and visiting the city— perhaps one of boldness and creativity in combining the old with the new. This connects with the CoB's HUL approach of taking back ideas of heritage to ensure they can become more inclusive, diverse and community-centred. It also, however, reveals the tensions which can arise between this approach and the more commercially seductive activities of the tourism and creative industries.

The 2018 BMI event survey included feedback such as: "The BMI felt alive with great activities and events. I especially enjoyed the way collections were activated through music and performance" but also that the BMI "as it is (when events aren't on) it feels like we the

public are not allowed or welcome to be there".[38] The latter comment presents a specific challenge for the BMI as an organisation but perhaps one which could be extended to the city as well. As Briody asked in his *Ballarat Courier* opinion piece: "Why do we not explore and enjoy the city in the way of *White Night* more regularly?" He states: "The medium is the message and the medium of *White Night* is public freedom".[39] The key role of public engagement that *White Night Ballarat* inspired sits at once within tourist outcomes as well as providing potential in terms of outcomes and the valuing of arts and culture. Bryce Ives' provocation, as the then director of the FedUni Arts Academy, was to now "do our own event—a genuinely intriguing—event to reimagine and reconceptualise what Ballaarat means". He stated that "our challenge is to unite and dream big. Together we can ask how best to commission and create epic and bold new work for our community. Our existing festivals and events can take the energy of White Night and speak to new possibilities".[40] The role of cultural organisations like BMI within the city are key here. They can enable new energy and present the possibilities of creative connections between heritage buildings, collections, cities, people and ideas to fruitfully address Harrison's "entanglement of humans and objects, pasts and presents".[41]

In closing this chapter, some final comments are made with regard to value and GLAM, and policy around heritage and creativity.

Value in relation to arts and culture, heritage and GLAM

Roders and Banderin's 2019 text engages with the 2015 UNESCO *Report Re-Shaping Cultural Policies* where the relationship between culture and sustainable development is interlinked. It states that:

> the coming 10 years, thanks to a greater awareness by governments and civil society on the irreplaceable role culture can play in the strive [sic] of communities and societies to strengthen their identity and to provide new opportunities for present and future generations, will see major changes in the way in which culture is reflected in the public policy arena. Within these policies, conservation, regeneration and valuing of urban heritage are an already established reality.[42]

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[38] Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, "BMI Events Survey Report March 2018".

[39] Matt Briody, "I Spent My Childhood Playing on the Street. Now I Barely Know What Kids Look Like," *The Guardian* 2017.

[40] Anatolitis, "White Night Ballarat".

[41] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 33.

[42] Roders and Bandarin, *Reshaping Urban Conservation the Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Action*. 4.

However, in the current neoliberal context, cultural organisations and workers are increasingly called upon to justify their existence and use metric data via examples of visitation numbers or market value of heritage collections. It is beyond resting on implied value of tangible buildings themselves, that this thesis argues for the value of intangible connections formed through projects and events—and the need for activation, living value based on enacted, deep values. A value learnt through practice research at BMI in the new curatorial role, and within the organisation in the processes of change, was that of experimentation, and using events like *White Night Ballarat* to trial approaches and learn from this, building up profile and capacity. This involves Holden's institutional value, and building these deeper values around how events are evaluated, as a way to move forward. The building up of successes (documented in event reviews capturing, for example, in-kind contributions and partnerships), though hard to measure, contribute to development down the line, for example, the BMI's 2019 funding for live music series via Creative Victoria. Nonetheless the lack of operational support remains an ongoing challenge.

Creative Victoria is demonstrating attempts at responding to sector needs and to be inclusive and strategic. In their most recent consultation for the 2020–2024 strategy, four principals lead: First People's first, whole of state, whole of ecosystem and all voices welcome.[43] The question remains of the way in which aims and strategy are lived out and resourced. A response to the call for feedback on the strategy raised the issue of GLAM funding. Creative Victoria tweeted that the average income of a creative worker is 21 percent below the Australian workforce average and asked: "What can government do to improve conditions for creative individuals, organisations and businesses?"[44] Lee-Ann Raymond (@MuseumLAR) responded that "suppressing overall the pay and conditions of creative workers is the prevailing attitude that one should just be grateful to have a job in the sector at all. An opportunistic contributing factor to poor operational funding levels of GLAMS".[45]

This comment picks up on the challenge of operational funding for GLAM organisations across government and philanthropic sectors and links to funding often being for capital projects but

[43] Victorian Government, "Creative State 2020+Help Shape What's Next for Victoria's Creative Industries," (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, September 13th 2019), accessed 25th May 2020, https://engage.vic.gov.au/creative-strategy.

[44] Creative Victoria. Twitter post. July 30, 2019. 10.12am. https://twitter.com/Creative_Vic/status/1155994413782491136.

[45] Leanne Raymond. Twitter post. July 30, 2019. 12.19pm. https://twitter.com/MuseumLAR/status/1156026593002704897.

not for operational costs or events. A lot can be achieved by partnering and collaborating across cultural organisations, as well as with local councils, artists, businesses and so on, and funding for specific projects involving multiple kinds of capital, but the struggle is constant. MIs have the additional challenge within their history of member-based structures and, whilst technically owned by the community, the challenge to actively participate and innovate continues. Holden calls for a "new research and development agenda that capitalises on the growing interest in cultural value. One aspect of such a new regime would be to focus on issues of organisational capacity for change, as much as on outputs and outcomes of cultural endeavours".[46] The BMI case study examples as part of my curatorship (*Spring Celebrations* and Open Day, *White Night at the BMI*, *Beers through the Years*, *Imprints: Storytelling the City*) utilise different kinds of exchange and value as suggested. These include capacity building, presenting possibilities, and generative outcomes towards further creative projects, that move beyond the neoliberal as critiqued by Gibson and Klocker.[47]

Some perceptions arose, during the Ballarat Creative City Strategy consultation, of heritage and arts being seen as at odds, heritage being equated with conservativism and stifling innovative creative practice. Leftbank consultant's *Creative ecology paper* 2019 stated that

> the tension between the cultural core and contemporary creative industries is a barrier to a truly creative city: there is a need to overcome the conservatism and tradition in Ballarat to allow space for creativity to thrive, shifting attitudes to make room for contemporary and innovative work, and appreciating the value they can bring to a city.[48]

The creativity within, and possible in, the local GLAM sector has been assessed in chapter three at places like the Gold Museum, the AGB, and the BMI, as well that of individuals and businesses working in creative ways with historic material in Ballarat, such as Wind and Sky Productions, Yum Studio, and Tales from Rat City. Recognition of this was argued for as part of the creative city consultations in Ballarat and in the list defining what fits into the strategy's final concept of creativity—the GLAM category is included. This however could be developed more, as it is important in addressing perceptions of heritage as being unconnected to creativity and innovation.

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[46] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy". 59.

[47] Gibson and Klocker, "The 'Cultural Turn' in Australian Regional Economic Development Discourse: Neoliberalising Creativity?".

[48] Left bank Co, "Background Paper Two: Ballarat Creative Ecology".

The role of cultural organisations is key. The 2019 Creative City consultant report on Ballarat's creative ecology stated: "The flagship institutions are overall performing their remit well: the major cultural institutions are attracting healthy audience numbers and contributing to a strong identity for Ballarat, but could do more to engage with local audiences and support the creative community; while the organisations supporting the sector could do more to connect those they support with the broader community, industry and audiences. Overall, the flagships [ie Art Gallery of Ballarat, Her Majestys Theatre] are in need of more strategic leadership and a vision they can commit to and work towards". There appears to be a focus on what cultural professionals (the university, organisations) can do for others, not on how they are to be enabled to do this or their part in an interdependent relationship, although the leadership and vision that are mentioned here are key. This is reduced however to the commercial concept of a unified Ballarat brand. The report described how "a coordinated approach to the creative Ballarat brand can uplift the creative sector and broader community, but requires strong leadership, a willingness to take risks and try something new, and buy in at all levels of the community". The multiple forms of the value of creativity and GLAM are complex, as are their roles in city ecologies.

The *Creative Industries, a Strategy for 21st Century Australia* (2011) states:

> The Australian Government acknowledges the role of the collections sector in the creative innovation economy. The sector inspires new practice, enables research, provides access to cultural property and preserves our cultural heritage. Curatorial practice often generates innovation in creative content and creative practitioners can benefit from institutions with collecting expertise in specific areas of creative industries such as design collections. The Government also recognises the significant work undertaken by the sector to facilitate online access. It will be critical for the creative industries, alongside other sectors of the economy, to leverage these significant national foundations and contribute to Australian economic growth.[49]

Clearly, the tension between creative and cultural potential and the focus on economic and instrumental outcomes persists, but as van Boom posits in relation to achieving a healthy creative city, balancing value is key as being "not only defined in economic-spatial terms, but also, and importantly, in socio-cultural terms: as inclusive, resilient, vital, sustainable innovative urban life".[50] In Ballarat, this involves the various city lenses, discussed in chapter

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[49] Australian Government Department of Innovation, "Creative Industries, a Strategy for 21st Century Australia," (2011). 12.

[50] van Boom, "Rebalancing the Creative City after 20 Years of Debate". 366.

two, of heritage, creativity, and tourism, and exposes the resulting tensions and possibilities for Ballarat to be inclusive and resilient in increasingly challenging times.

Holistic approaches that take complex eco-systems into account are essential. While HUL and creative city policies and strategies might aim for this, the challenge is how these are implemented in practice. Roders and Banderin emphasise that HUL has been successful in forming a link between "the city's identity—its culture, people and place" and sustainable development, marking this as a significant shift that "ensures culture and heritage are at the centre of the transformative processes of the urban century".[51] Holden's proposed actions for government investment in cultural value, "unconstrained by numerical definitions or the need to address other priorities of local government"[52] raises the tension of emphasising instrumental value in this complex landscape of future sustainability that crosses economic, social, cultural, and environmental value and futures.

The capacity for a clear, shared vision, that takes the complexity of cultural value into account, remains a challenge across the city and the BMI. The following chapter deepens the analysis of BMI and its part in the Ballarat city ecology and GLAM themes through another creative activation case study. It will focus on the exhibition curated by the researcher while working at BMI called *Imprints: Storytelling the City* as part of the 2017 Ballarat International Foto Biennale (BIFB).

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[51] Roders and Bandarin, *Reshaping Urban Conservation the Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Action*. 145.

[52] Holden, "Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy".

Chapter Six: *Imprints: Storytelling the City*—curatorial practice at the BMI

> Let's put our cares and our knowledges next to each other and see what
> we find out. [1]

Figure 6.1: AVAT14 Imprints Storytelling the City in BMI library, artist responses 2017

The previous chapter explored the city ecology of Ballarat and the possibilities and tensions raised through the city-wide event *White Night Ballarat* in 2017. This chapter focuses on one exhibition project at BMI, *Imprints: Storytelling the City* programmed as part of the 2017 Ballarat International Foto Biennale (BIFB) fringe program. In partnership with a "plurality of stakeholders" and an ecology that included festivals, curators, artists, descendants, and funders, the exhibition asked: "How do we imprint our visions and versions of ourselves and the city?"[2] It considered what was possible when new voices (Indigenous and female), were given space in a traditional organisation like the BMI. The themes of decolonisation and diversity, affect, curation, organisational capacity and the value that creatively activated heritage produces are addressed in the analysis.

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[1] Amy Tsilemanis, "Action Research Reflective Journal," (2019).

[2] Witcomb and Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies.'" 575.

The curatorial practice and rationale in this instance relates to the thesis argument that through the practice and energy of the curator, activations have the potential to open new points of entry to, and alternative perspectives upon, heritage places and collections. In this process, new and dynamic measures of value can be explored, that respond to the problems of greater connectivity and relevance to various publics, and also connect to organisational sustainability, through collaboration with the city ecology of artists, researchers, festivals, business and so on.

Figure 6.2: AVAT15 Imprints exhibition promotion 2017

Curated by the researcher in partnership with local artists and an historian/curator, the exhibition involved two parts. These were contemporary artists' responses to the historic

Ballarat photography collection by Ellen Sørensen and Barry Gilson in the BMI lending library; and the story and nineteenth-century photography of Ballarat inventor Henry Sutton, in the Heritage Reading Room, co-curated by Sutton descendant Lorayne Branch. The two spaces were connected by a walkway and area for visitors to contribute their own perspectives on Ballarat city. In this way the curator engaged in the role of facilitation as well as specific curatorial knowledge and created connection points between the collections, BMI spaces, visitors, participants and partners. A program of events over the month-long exhibition allowed various entrance points for engagement: A Saturday morning drop-in opportunity to meet with the curator and artists, two live interview events, and a storytelling walk with live performance (exhibition program pictured in Figure 6.2 and for film of the storytelling walk live event see Multimedia Link 11).[3]

As practice-led research, the case study allowed exploration of the thesis question of how creative connections can be made between organisations, their collections and publics. It involved consideration of: heritage and the uncomfortable colonial legacy of the BMI which it shares with museums; the HUL approach to cities as multi-layered; and Harrison's dialogic interconnected web of people and things and their relationships to each other and to the world—where heritage is less to do with the past but instead "emerg[es] out of the relationship between past and present as a reflection on the future".[4] This happened by inviting artists in to voice, animate, activate, or perform, thus *doing* things with heritage, and forming new creative connections with publics towards greater relevance and inclusivity. The curatorial invitation to reinterpret the photography collection was a means to Kidd's gap filling approach and "voicing those cultures and individual stories that have been absent from collections".[5] In the context of decolonisation practices in museology, arts, and research, this exhibition aimed to be part of what Tuhiwai Smith describes as Indigenous peoples telling alternative stories as "powerful forms of resistance"[6] in a space that has been dominated by Western knowledge-systems that have been used to limit and exclude Indigenous agency. Such projects broaden the capacity for organisations to explore more challenging heritage and connect with a broader national reckoning with Australia's colonial past. Value can be produced beyond the narrowly

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[3] Available at https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

[4] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 228.

[5] Kidd, "Filling the Gaps? Interpreting Museum Collections through Performance". 61.

[6] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 32.

economic, beyond what O'Connor calls the "inhospitable landscape of the market-driven creative industries"[7] through greater diversity, collaboration, and affective experiences.[8]

Data used in this chapter comes from curatorial practice at the BMI collected through: action research; reflective journaling; image and multimedia captures; interview events with collaborators (recorded and available online);[9] event planning and reporting documents; and an exhibition and event comment book (Figures 6.2 and 6.3 below). Before the *Imprints: Storytelling the City* case study is explored in detail, some context will be provided around Indigenous creative projects in Australia also working in this way to bring heritage and creativity, and past, present and future together in new dialogues.
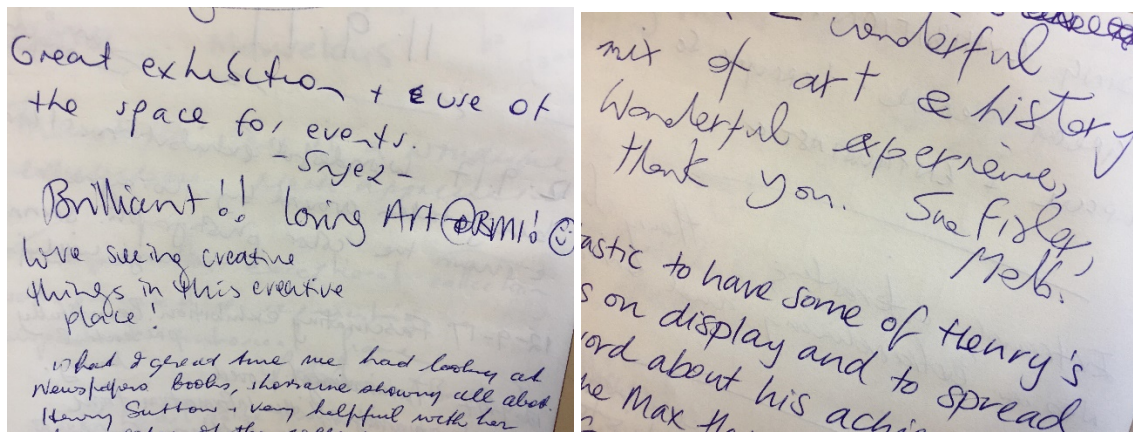
Figures 6.3 and 6.4*: Imprints: Storytelling the City* exhibition comment book, 2017

Decolonising approaches to creatively activated heritage

Contemporary decolonising practices in Australia can be contextualised in historian Anna Clark's 2018 article,[10] fifty years on from W.E Stanner's seminal 1968 Boyer Lecture, *After the Dreaming*, that introduced the concept of the great Australian silence.[11] Clark states that the "Whiggish history narrative of imperial progress" excluded Indigenous experience both pre and post contact. In her view "Stanner gave a voice to an emergent idea about silence that

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[7] O'Connor, *After the Creative Industries*.

[8] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums".

[9] Multimedia Link 7: AVAT749 Artist talk, Ellen Sørensen and Barry Gilson with Amy Tsilemanis, September 2017 audio. And Multimedia Link 8: AVAT748 Curator talk, Lorayne Branch discusses Henry Sutton with Amy Tsilemanis, September 2017, audio. Available at https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

[10] Clarke, "Friday Essay: The 'Great Australian Silence' 50 Years On," August 3rd 2018, accessed 25th May 2020, https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-great-australian-silence-50-years-on-100737.

[11] W.E.H Stanner, *After the Dreaming*, The Boyer Lectures (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1968).

understands history as a method that changes over time and place, rather than objective interpretation of the past".[12] Clark asks if Australia might be having another historical awakening, noting important recent interventions like Lyndall Ryan's massacre map and the Uluru Statement calling for "truth-telling about our history"; on the other hand, online commentary in response to projects like the massacre map revealed the "persistence of historical refusal in Australia".[13] Indigenous filmmaker, Rachel Perkins, in her 2019 Boyer Lecture titled *The End of Silence* stated: "The past has made us. We are its inheritors, for better or worse, and this is now our time. How we move forward from this moment will set the course of relationships between Indigenous people and their fellow Australians into the future".[14] The approach to heritage materials and stories from the past are key in this and some twenty-first-century development can be seen in Indigenous communities and curators working directly with collections and exhibitions, for example, at Melbourne Museum.[15]

The First Nations exhibition at their Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre opened in 2013 and Witcomb has written on the poetic approach providing a "rich, immersive, sensorial experience to support its main messages—the prioritising of First Peoples' voices, the privileging of Country and creation stories as the basis of Indigenous culture and the strength of 'community'". She notes how these are privileged above the more traditional objective curatorial voice with its overtones of rational, Western forms of knowledge production.[16] Kimberly Moulton, Indigenous curator at Melbourne Museum (and Assistant Curator for the First Peoples Gallery Redevelopment), has also commented on the relationship between Indigenous curators and collections, stating "there's photographs of my nan, my great-nan, and other relations in Museum Victoria's collections. And this is something I share with hundreds of Koorie people from Victoria, and thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from across the country. Our place within the institution goes beyond the physical presence".[17]

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[12] Clarke, "Friday Essay: The 'Great Australian Silence' 50 Years On".

[13] Ibid.

[14] Rachel Perkins, "Director Rachel Perkins calls for 'end of silence' on Indigenous recognition in ABC Boyer Lecture," ABC News, November 16th 2019, accessed 6th June 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-16/boyer-lecture-rachel-perkins-echoes-uluru-statement/11696504.

[15] Bunjilaka Melnourne Museum, "First Peoples," Accessed 25th May 2020, https://museumsvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/whats-on/first-peoples/.

[16] Andrea Witcomb, "Poetics and Politics: First Peoples Exhibition Bunjilaka Gallery, Museum Victoria," *Artlink* 34, no. 2 (2014). 93.

[17] Kimberly Moulton, "Being Present: Indigenous Contemporary Art and Cultural Practices in the Museum," April 6th, 2016, Museums Victoria, accessed 25th May 2020, https://museumsvictoria.com.au/audio/history-culture-collections-2016-lecture-series/being-present/.

In this PhD, GLAM organisations, heritage collections, artists, curators, communities and audiences all come to be involved in processes of activation and renegotiation, and the differing knowledge systems within. There is a contemporary interest in the use of creative and curatorial practice in forming new meanings and conversations around collections and archives as well as engaging people in new ways with stories of the past that continue to reverberate in the present and into the future. In the Indigenous context this can be particularly fraught as historically archives have been places of colonial power and injustice. As Sentance and others argue, archives are not neutral and the GLAM sector is entwined with the "colonial relations that underpinned the birth of the museum institution itself".[18] This can be seen in Goode's discussion of the modern museum of anthropology and its interest in "primitive and semicivilized peoples".[19] Changes in museums, in more recent times, can seek to address these past colonial practices, and the use of such language as civilised and noncivilised or primitive and savage—what Kociumbus has called "science as cultural ideology".[20] A more contemporary perspective can be observed in the proposed update to ICOM's museum definition in "critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures",[21] that includes museological approaches.

Informed by the Australian context and decolonised research,[22] this involves returning power to colonised people through research processes that move away from traditional methods "rooted in Western colonial cultural ways of knowing" and a tradition of recording their stories rather than them being active participants with agency.[23] Some example projects are foregrounded here that shift this power balance. Where Indigenous peoples and cultures have been abused, silenced, or forced to fit colonial systems and ideologies, Sentance asserts the right of reply that contemporary reinterpretation allows, along with First Nations "power that exists outside of colonial systems".[24] An example of this is South Australian based Narungga poet and researcher Natalie Harkin's archival-poetic approach.[25]

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[18] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 259.

[19] Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration*. 210.

[20] Kociumbas, "Science as Cultural Ideology: Museums and Mechanics' Institutes in Early Nsw and Van Diemen's Land".

[21] "International Council of Museums".

[22] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

[23] Helen Kara, *Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences : A Practical Guide* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015). 42.

[24] Sentance, "Disrupting the Colonial Archive".

[25] Natalie Harkin, *Archival-Poetics* (Vagabond Press, 2019).

Harkin's work has included poetry and weaving, and re-layering and reimagining pasts via projection on significant buildings such as *Harts Mill* in 2011, part of "revitalization of Port Adelaide's post-industrial waterfront".[26] Harkin's poetry was here a response to the work *PolesApart—Tracking, 2011*— a single-channel video at the mill site where layers and traces of history were poetically realized. An excerpt by Harkin, reproduced in its original form:

> Harts Mill   remnant 19th century flourmill   five stories strong on the banks   Port River   I am small at the wharf's edge   here   across the water   Kaurna   campsites   Glanville   birthplace   and   home   to Lartelare   *keeper of the black swans*   Lartelare   from this site with the sun firmly set I face west toward a big sky   in shadows I sit   watch   exhale over dark water   my eyes fixed on the *Newport Quays Consortium* $2 billion redevelopment   all   lit-up   in   neon   satisfaction   high-rise   high-density domesticity   waterside housing for the rich   a glittering neo-colonial backdrop reflecting on this black-night's river   *this river…*
>
> *…this river* flooded with story carries memory on undercurrents that pull and twist in surprising directions   captures moments   drags them down   settles with sediment   layers of residual voices   visions   objects   stirred and compacted   thick   mix   rich   silted   mud-like-blood   pulsing   with dreams   past-lives   pulsing   eroding   an   inevitable   ephemeral change   stories roar   whisper   respond to the force of time   they transform upon tides   rise and fall with the moon   consolidate and rupture to shift   then drift   currents circulate into new moments   seep into past-present-future memories   imprint   fine-silt your skin   a subtle translucent familiar   drops of essence   spills of blood   a trace   lingering on an infinity of restless souls…[27]

As Harkin has discussed, Indigenous engagement with archives and layered historic sites as captured in the *Harts Mill* piece above, can be a deeply painful process, yet allow a decolonising through taking back a level of control over personal stories,[28] and provide new perspectives and conversations via creative reassembly or research. Harkin has spoken of "remembering into the future" and the capacity of archives to both haunt and be haunted through time.[29] The gaps in archives and storytelling around colonisation and Australian Indigenous experience are beginning to be addressed in innovative ways. Harkin describes a reckoning with history,[30] something that is seen as essential in the field of critical heritage,

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[26] ArchitectureAU, "Writing History: Harts Mill Surrounds," accessed May 25th 2020, https://architectureau.com/articles/harts-mill-surrounds/.

[27] Natalie Harkin, *Archival Poetics 1: Haunting.* Sydney: Vagabond, 2019. 18-19.

[28] See also: Elfie Shiosaki, "Activism: Hand on Heart: On Human Rights in Noongar Letter Writing," *Overland*, no. 233 (2018).

[29] Harkin, "Archival Poetics: A Decolonial Offering".

[30] Ibid.

which, this thesis argues, can be done powerfully through creativity. These concepts and other creative work inspired the curatorial practice at the BMI.

Around Australia creativity is being used via theatre, dance, music, poetry, visual art, photography, film and technology, with projects like the 2016 Virtual Reality (VR) work *Collisions* at ACMI in Melbourne;[31] the major exhibition shaped around the mythology of the Seven Sisters at the National Museum in Canberra in 2017; (Figure 6.5), and the VR documentary *Carriberrie,* February 2018. Narrated by actor and dancer David Gulpilil, collaborating with the Bangara dance company: "*Carriberrie* guides audiences across a stunning array of iconic Australian locations and performances, from the traditional to contemporary".[32] Sydney's Australia Museum also hosted the Weave Festival[33] in 2018:

> By imparting of knowledge through storytelling and creative practices, the festival is designed to create an engaging and informative way for visitors to experience some of the world's oldest surviving cultures. AM Director and CEO Kim McKay explains that, 'The AM's inaugural Festival of Aboriginal and Pacific cultures will weave together historical and modern knowledge, art and experiences, to build a better shared future for all Australians.[34]

This weaving of past present and future through creativity can be done in multiple ways. *We Bury Our Own* was a significant project that used the photographic form specifically and involved collaboration between Aboriginal artist Christian Thompson and Pitt Rivers Museum in 2012 (Australian Research Council funded).[35] Here Thompson created large photographic self-portraits and a video installation, made in response to the museum's historic photograph collection from Australia. Thompson describes the works as performing "spiritual repatriation …[a] departure point from the archive".[36] He considers this as something art can do that maybe physical repatriation can't and explains how, in traditional culture, objects are only significant

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[31] Collision. "Collision: A virtual reality film experience like no other, exploring the collision of science and spirit." Nd. Accessed 6th June 2020, http://www.collisionsvr.com/.

[32] Scenestr, "*Carriberrie*: A 360 Degree Look at Indigenous Celebrations," February 28th 2018, accessed 25th May 2020, https://scenestr.com.au/movies/carriberrie-a-360-degree-look-at-indigenous-celebrations.

[33] Australian Museum, "Weave: The Festival of Aboriginal and Pacific Cultures," https://australianmuseum.net.au/about/organisation/media-centre/weave-the-festival-of-aboriginal-and-pacific-cultures/.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Pitt Rivers Museum, "Christian Thompson: We Bury Our Own," accessed May 25th 2020, https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/event/christian-thompson-we-bury-our-own.

[36] Ibid.

in their use in performance or ritual, not in their object value, as museum exhibitions for example.

Figure 6.5: *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters* was an Aboriginal-led exhibition that took visitors on a journey along the epic Seven Sisters Dreaming tracks, through art, Indigenous voices and innovative multimedia and other immersive displays. National Museum of Australia, 15 September 2017 to 28 February 2018

This small selection of projects demonstrates the use of contemporary creativity and technology in bringing new perspectives on collections, archives and narratives of the past that centre on Indigenous artists and living culture as central in the telling of their stories. This provides the contemporary framework for the work also happening in Ballarat, and in the case study of this chapter. Creative projects seeking to address lack of Indigenous voices and stories have begun in recent years in Ballarat GLAM organisations, including the digital stories created for, MADE (chapter three) and Sovereign Hill (*Hidden Histories*, an app exploring the Indigenous on the goldfields, and the latest *Aura*, working with local indigenous artists and storytelling). The Gilson family of artists and Wadawurrung traditional custodians, have been strong leaders in this work, creatively activating themes of their Indigenous heritage in the Ballarat area. Their work has been featured in *White Night Ballarat* (chapter five), *White Night Melbourne*, the Sydney Biennale, and various exhibition and collections, including those at MADE and the AGB. AGB artist information states that "[Marlene] Gilson is a descendant of

King Billy, an Indigenous tribal leader of the Ballarat region at the time of the Eureka Stockade, and his wife Queen Mary".[37]

Marlene and daughter Deanne Gilson work predominantly in visual arts whilst son Barry Gilson is a singer and storyteller. He says that "we cover different art mediums as a family…we have always shared stories with family. Now we are telling them to the world.[38] A featured exhibition of the 2017 BIFB's core program was *TELL* showcasing seventeen leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. This exhibition was curated by Indigenous curator Jessica Clark, and has toured nationally, placing Ballarat on a larger stage and presenting leadership in this area. *TELL* featured Deanne Gilson, who also participated in an artist talk that proceeded the BMI opening event for *Imprints: Storyelling the City,* both supported by the Ballarat Arts Foundation (Figure 6.6).

Figure 6.6: BIFB/Ballarat Arts Foundation/BMI collaboration promotional material, 2017

Addressing past gaps and abuses in GLAM settings is an initial step but there is still progress to be made beyond recognising or even collaborating on projects in order to fully address power imbalances seeded in colonisation. The case study exhibition for discussion here is part of these

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[37] Art Gallery of Ballarat, "Marlene Gilson," https://artgalleryofballarat.com.au/gallery_exhibitions/marlene-gilson/.

[38] Rochelle Kirkham, "The Gilson family are telling Wathaurung stories to thousands at White Night Melbourne," August 21st 2019, accessed May 25th 2020, https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/6337673/the-gilson-family-are-telling-wathaurung-stories-to-thousands-at-white-night-melbourne/.

initial steps that acknowledges Barrett's reminder to ask: who is invigorating whom, and at what cost?"[39] and highlights the need for a sensitive approach toward mutual benefit where respect is key and the aim is for shared benefits and outcomes.

Imprints: Storytelling the City: a fringe exhibition in the Ballarat International Foto Biennale. August 19th to September 17th 2017

The exhibition and storytelling walk will be discussed following a brief outline of the BIFB and the provision of some photographic context.

The Ballarat International Foto Biennale (BIFB)

The BIFB is a biannual photography festival that connects with artists, cultural organisations and business. It had grown from grass roots beginnings in 2009 to the 2019 Mayor's welcome and description of the festival in the 2019 program as "showcasing our city's growing reputation as a Creative City" and as providing a chance to "enjoy the buildings and laneways rich with art and Ballarat's diverse culture, food and history".[40] Festival funding includes different government levels, philanthropic contributions, and, as director Fiona Sweet notes in a 2019 Conversation Hour interview[41], many international artists are supported by their country's cultural organisations, including the Goethe Institute, placing the festival in an international context of funding, value, and themes.

The theme of the 2017 festival was Performance of Identity. In her first year of directorship Sweet stressed a mixture in the program ranging from "terrific fun and whimsy to thought-provoking social commentary". [42] In addition to content catering for a wide range of tastes, the programming was expanded from past years: "We are also engaging with the community at all levels with exhibitions and workshops as well as introducing entertainment into the program for the first time. For example, the Colour Ball at the Mining Exchange and Deborah Conway singing at the local synagogue. For the first time we are also exhibiting

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[39] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 114.

[40] Ballarat International Foto Biennale, "Festival Program," (2019).

[41] ABC Radio Melbourne, "The Conversation Hour: Bruce Esplin, Don Edgar and Fiona Sweet," July 1st 2019, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.abc.net.au/radio/melbourne/programs/theconversationhour/the-conversation-hour/11242804.

[42] Pro Counter Australia, "BIFB Takes (a New) Shape," accessed 25th May 2020, https://procounter.com.au/2017/05/16/bifb-takes-new-shape/.

astronomy photography at the Ballarat Observatory".[43] Here the unique historic spaces of Ballarat are used in new ways, something also addressed via the BMI curatorship and creative activation. In addition to LGBTIQ and Indigenous exhibitions, Sweet stated that the Performance of Identity theme extended to partnership with Pinarc Disability Services "for people with a disability to express their identity through photography and also with the local Rebels football team to explore how their team and community inform their identity. We even have a light-hearted 'selfie' exhibition where people can upload a selfie through our Foto Biennale app to be displayed during the festival".[44] Sweet stresses the nature of photography as an "accessible art" that can function on multiple levels, and that through a "breadth of exhibitions…appeal to a wide market".[45] The BMI exhibition was part of the BIFB fringe program along with over ninety exhibitions throughout the city,[46] complimenting the core program that featured exhibitions like *TELL* (Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: TELL curated by Jessica Clark for the Ballarat International Foto Biennale 2017
Ballarat Mining Exchange (Photo by Mark Avellino)

Photographic context

While contemporary photography is being used in exhibitions such as BIFB's *TELL* as a platform for Indigenous artists to "confront legacies of invasion and dispossession" and "reframe history on their own terms," *Imprints: Storytelling the City* was a collaboration

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ballarat International Foto Biennale, "Fringe 2017," accessed 25th May 2017, https://2017.ballaratfoto.org/event-category/fringe/.

between curator, artists, heritage material and BMI spaces, which used a collection of historic Ballarat imagery from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The Max Harris Photography Collection (collected by Harris from various sources over the past forty years) presented a particularly European view of the city, one that does not include the Indigenous. This absence is telling of the silencing or erasing from view of these people and their culture from our history. Earliest images in the collection depict the gold rush where the effects of colonisation had already erased much of the traditional landscape and way of life, with traditional inhabitants out of view. Nor was this accidental. Maryrose Casey's discussion of W.H Stanner reveals that the grand scale exclusion of Indigenous Australians was not simply inattention but "a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape".[47] In this way photography can function in the same way as heritage, as it both includes and excludes.

When Indigenous communities *were* included in the view of colonial development in Australia it was often in a demeaning manner. The way that collection of Indigenous photography and artefacts around this time was conducted meant either, as in Douglas T Kilburn's case (proprietor of Victoria's first professional photographic studio, in 1847, who took a series of daguerreotypes of Victorian Aborigines) a romanticised view "evoking a time before white contact profoundly altered their way of life",[48] or, as Sovereign Hill's *Hidden Histories* states, "collectors who bought, stole and traded Aboriginal artefacts trivialised and belittled their cultural significance and helped 19th century Europeans confirm their ideas about the 'primitive savage'; as an inferior human subspecies".[49] Isobel Crosbie also states that photographers like Kilburn worked from the belief that Aboriginal people were a dying race and should be recorded before their extinction. She points out that this was not seen as a humanitarian crisis but a consequence of evolution.[50] As can be seen through museological history, this attitude has left a lasting legacy. During this nineteenth-century period, in the world of MIs, innovations in photography were part of the Enlightenment project of scientific and technological progress,

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[47] Angela Campbell, "The Ethics of Writing Performance from the Archive: The Case of Georgiana Molloy," (2011). 63.

[48] Isobel Crombie, "Australia Felix: Douglas T. Kilburn's Daguerreotype of Victorian Aborigines, 1847," National Gallery of Victoria, 18th June 2014, accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/australia-felix-douglas-t-kilburns-daguerreotype-of-victorian-aborigines-1847/.

[49] See https://sovereignhillhiddenhistories.com.au/mechanics-institute/ and more https://sovereignhillhiddenhistories.com.au/red-hill-photography.

[50] Crombie, "Australia Felix: Douglas T. Kilburn's Daguerreotype of Victorian Aborigines, 1847".

and the belief in self-betterment through education. It is a complex issue, not helped by the fact that Indigenous peoples today must often piece together their histories through early accounts, documents and imagery which are largely determined by nineteenth-century colonial attitudes.[51] The Victoria, Australian context particularly, means a break with culture due to practices such as the Stolen Generation and the contemporary practice of recovering and reinterpreting the past, through text, images, and language. Creative reinterpretation, it is argued here, offers one avenue to address these complexities.

The Imprints: Storytelling the City **exhibition concept**

The concept of the frame, and projected imagery, permitted an historic layering, and so inspired reflection on different ways of seeing and knowing Ballarat city. What is being included and excluded, and the dialogue between, was central to the exhibition's curatorial logic and aesthetic.

Figure 6.8: The exhibition display in BMI lending library, 2017

These layers included the Enlightenment spirit of science and progress (with its positive and negative legacies), inherent in the MI history and library, and then experiential artistic responses. The project also allowed exploration of the various performative elements of the BMI space, its collections and their possible interactions through the interplay of library,

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[51] "Spencer's images evoke a sense of pride in the 'old ways,' and in the 'old people'…The images represent a window into a lifestyle that Spencer believed would disappear". Baldwin Sir Spencer, *The Photographs of Baldwin Spencer*, ed. Lindy Allen, et al (Carlton, Vic.: Miegunyah Press). 190.

imagery, sound, text, and live bodies.[52] In the exhibition, tangible and intangible, past and present were set up to merge, and so create a conceptual space[53] for visitors. As noted in HUL practice, heritage is more than visual, and in *Imprints: Storytelling the City*, visual representations of the city were taken into other realms of sound, and movement through space, or into interactive elements where visitors could play with a stereoscopic viewer, or leave their own comments on how they view and experience Ballarat. Dialogues between people, place, collections, and stories aimed to open up the HUL approach of "significance as fluid and contestable…[and] values embodied in people" not just physical fabric[54] (Figure 1.2). As pictured below tangible buildings and collections can be creatively activated through new forms of engagement, for example interactive elements or sound. The recorded audio from the exhibition will also be added to the Ballarat HUL online portal as part of the *SongWay*s Music Mapping initiative, capturing the multi-layered city through time.

Figure 6.9: AVAT18 BMI BIFB Imprints 2017, Stereoscopic viewer in Sutton part of exhibition (Samantha Kaspers)
Figure 6.10: AVAT19 BMI Imprints exhibition 2017, Speakers where Gilson and Sørensen's audio responses played in the lending library as part of installation

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[52] Another example of such interplay between collections, performance and audience is Sovereign Hill's *Victorian Silhouette* discussed in chapter three.

[53] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*. 74.

[54] Cooke, Buckley, and Fayad, "Using the Historic Urban Landscape to Reimagine Ballarat: The Local Context".

Imprints: Storytelling the City aimed at opening up storytelling around little known or difficult content in relation to Ballarat city. It did so in a way that was uniquely possible within the BMI, an historic cultural institute unaccustomed to and only minimally resourced for this kind of work. This involved using shared spaces for purposes not before entertained (like sounds amplified in the otherwise quiet library) and combining traditional curatorial elements in the Reading Room with the more experimental and challenging in the lending library. The curatorial role was central in identifying possibilities and opportunities: participation in an internationally renowned city festival; the creative possibilities of the library spaces; reviewing collections, and artists of diverse backgrounds, bringing in new voices and perspectives on the city; linking in to community research and archives; making familial connections; engaging programming to connect the BMI to the city; and using funding linked to the research through the Ballarat Arts Foundation (an expression of philanthropic support for experimental practice and rigorous research around arts and heritage). The placement of objects and stories worked within complex social dimensions that brought them to life. This was inspired by Kreps' argument that in museums a focus on objects or people does not need to be mutually exclusive. Similar to the HUL approach, Kreps states that "objects in museums only have value and meaning in relation to people. What we need is an approach to curatorial work that recognizes the interplay of objects, people, and societies, and expresses these relationships in social and cultural contexts".[55] This exhibition demonstrated the value of bringing museological theory and practice together to explore these possibilities.

The exhibition content

The first, and more traditional component of *Imprints: Storytelling the City,* was the opportunity to tell the story of local historical figure, Henry Sutton, through the story of his innovations in photography, and in exhibiting his 1890s photographs and associated items for the first time. This element of the exhibition was co-curated with Sutton's great-granddaughter and researcher, Lorayne Branch, and included an image that Branch believes to be one of the earliest colour photographs (Figure 6.11), which was also used on the promotional material. Henry Sutton, was born in 1854 in a goldfields tent, and with the encouragement of his parents (the founders of Ballarat's famous Sutton's Music Store) is said to have read all the books on

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[55] Kreps, "Curatorship as Social Practice".

science in the BMI library by the time he was fourteen.[56] He also studied at BMI's School of Design and taught at the School of Mines. Historian W.B Withers wrote of Sutton:

> In the realm of science Ballarat has become of world-wide fame through the inventions by Mr Henry Sutton, a native of the place. His skills and acquirements in electricity, telephony, photography and also in astronomical and microscopal studies have won him a high position as a practical scientist, and the credit is the greater that he is a self-taught student.[57]

The original ideal aspirations and aims of the MI movement can be seen captured here in the Sutton success story. The BMI's resources, their scientific nature, its provision of a place for study, and for self-motivated intellectual advancement all reflect the original values. Sutton's work was published in international journals and he engaged with and met contemporaries Nicola Tesla and Thomas Edison, and also Alexander Bell who visited Sutton in Ballarat in 1910.[58] When Sutton left Ballarat to work in England, in the late nineteenth century, he was recognized with an illuminated address from the city. However, throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, Sutton was largely forgotten. Branch states that "he remains shamefully unheralded", though interest in his example and inventions have been revived recently through various exhibitions and Branch's 2018 text *Henry Sutton: The Innovative Man.*

Figure 6.11: Entrance end of the Reading Room with Sutton's colour photographic image, displayed for the first time, reproduced from a digitised glass plate in the family's collection. AVAT20 BMI BIFB Sutton colour photograph (Samantha Kaspers)

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[56] Austin McCallum, "Sutton, Henry (1856-1912). Australian Dictionary of Biography. Volume 6, (MUP), 1976. Accessed 25th May, 2020, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sutton-henry-4675.

[57] Withers, *History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences*.

[58] Lorayne Branch, *Henry Sutton, The Innovative Man: Australian Inventor, Scientist & Engineer*. Self published (Ballarat, Vic: Lorayne Branch, 2018).

This part of the exhibition was housed in the BMI's Heritage Reading Room, where the themes of Ballarat stories, and different ways of seeing were established. In the historic book-lined Reading Room, black and white photographs of England, printed from recently discovered Sutton photographic plates, were presented in prints with old-fashioned curved black corners. They hung on the upper level of the library with an interpretive display below, on the old newspaper stands in the centre of the room, detailing Sutton's involvement in Ballarat photography and the development of his two-tone Sutton process. This interpretive material drew on Branch's research and was created in collaboration with local designer Peter Gaulke. A table with further items for visitors to engage with included a stereoscopic viewer and images.

Figure 6.12: AVAT21 Imprints Storytelling the City in Reading Room, 2017

On display in a cabinet was the BMI's first library catalogue from 1864; Sutton may have read some of the titles listed there and shelved in the room. The BMI space itself holds these layers of stories through time. Other items from the BMI collection can also be seen in the image Figure 6.13 below, such as the sign advising of much longer opening hours, which allowed time for greater use of the room, though with the clear message of "Members Only"; a conception that today the organisation is aiming to move beyond by being more open, welcoming and engaging by presenting exhibitions such as this.

Figure 6.13: Cabinet showing 1864 BMI library catalogue, and Sutton's Kromskop projector AVAT22 BMI BIFB 2017 (Samantha Kaspers)
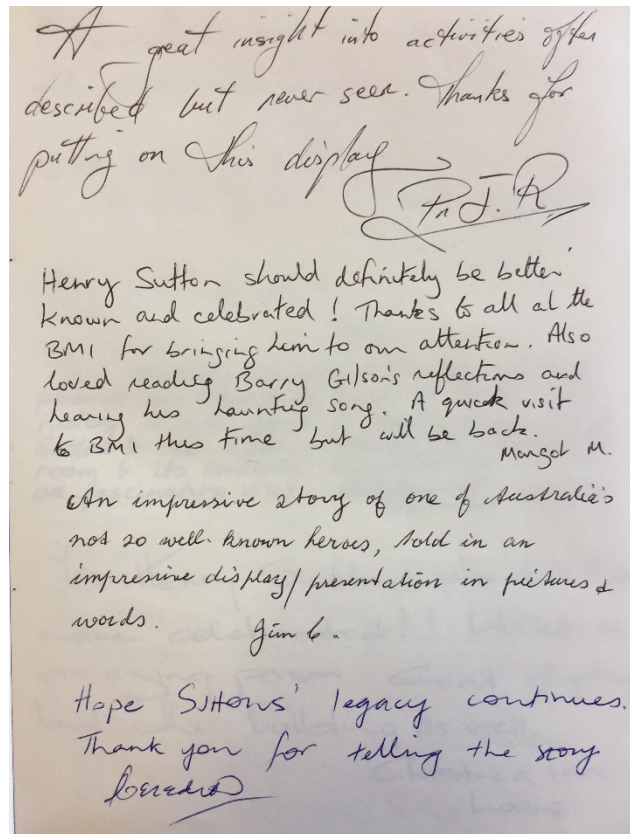
Figure 6.14: Visitor comment book

The second component of the exhibition was presented in the BMI's lending library (Figure 6.15). Historic black and white imagery from the Max Harris Collection, of Ballarat's tree-lined boulevard Sturt St, was projected through a timber frame hung with smaller frames and further images and texts relating to the city. These projected onto perspex panels reminiscent of glass photographic plates, complete with scratches. The illuminated images at times spilled onto the library wall behind, reflecting layers of stories and perspectives of the city through time. The city and the library space here acted as stages where "the poetic connections made possible through the changing configuration and juxtaposition of singular material"[59] opened up possibilities; these being further enhanced by artistic engagement.

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[59] Springer and Turpin, eds., *Fantasies of the Library*. 4.

Figure 6.15: The lending library installation with walkway to Reading Room behind, and BMI librarian Rosemary McInerney AVAT23 Rosemary McInerney with Imprints exhibition 2017

This engagement came about following the curatorial invitation sent to two Ballarat-based artists to respond to the Ballarat imagery in their chosen artforms: Ellen Sørensen, a New Zealand-born papercut artist and musician, and Barry Gilson, Wadawurrung custodian and singer. The curatorial approach here was inviting new voices (Indigenous and female) into a space that has been historically dominated by narrow membership and engagement, as discussed in chapter two. The aim was to situate two new voices in an old space, by European time, and to let those voices speak to the present. These creative works were then presented alongside the projected imagery and frame installation in the library space, within boxes referencing archival boxes, brought to life with new voices through music and visual art, speaking *out* of them. The creative responses in visual and aural forms activated the BMI and its collections in new ways, with the open boxes (next to speakers playing the two recorded songs in turn) voicing live connections and conversations, within a library space where quiet is the norm (see Figure 6.16) Rather than being closed away in the boxes, caught in colonial narratives, the intention was a freeing of voice, both literal and metaphorical. Harkin has engaged with this complex form of the archive box in her work and her poetry in response,

describes: "Infinite ways to imagine, infinite possibilities to transform beyond this colonial archive box".[60] Beyond the exhibition, the digital files of the songs created will also be available on the HUL Ballarat web portal under the project *SongWays*[61] that digitally maps Ballarat music and sounds over geography and time to highlight the rich layered nature of the city's musical heritage. This also means that the files don't simply get locked in another archive but continue as part of living access and connections.

Figure 6.16: AVAT24 Visitor viewing Imprints exhibition 2017

Ellen Sørensen, paper-cut artist and musician, brought the perspective of a recent Ballarat resident to the exhibition, in contrast to the deeper local links of Gilson, and also brought a female voice into what has been a male-dominated institution. Her participation built on the BMI's creative networks established earlier in the year at the *White Night at the BMI* event. Given a selection of image prompts and the theme of storytelling Ballarat city, Sørensen created an intricately-layered and back-lit paper cut work depicting various phases of transport through the city and through time (Figure 6.17).

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[60] Natalie Harkin, *Archival-Poetics. Colonial Archive* (Sydney: Vagabond Press, 2019). 33.

[61] Multimedia Link 9. AVAT747 Tread Lightly (Ellen Sørensen) 2017, audio. Access via http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/songways_stories.php and Multimedia Link 10. AVAT746 Creation Song (Barry Gilson) 2017, audio. Access via http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/songways_stories.php

Figure 6.17: Ellen Sørensen's work *Lightly Tread* featuring paper cut work pictured here and audio response of instrumental piano piece. AVAT25 BMI BIFB Lightly Tread by Ellen Sørensen, 2017 (Samantha Kaspers)

This piece included the train station, the tramlines, horses and carts, and, at the front, the local indigenous inhabitants, the Wadawurrung, on foot. This work was accompanied by a contemplative instrumental piano piece, with the combined works, titled *Lightly Tread*, inviting contemplation of human and environmental relationships through time, and dramatising Sorenson's own journey to understand a new city through creativity. In describing the work, she stated: "When I compose I often close my eyes and reimagine myself in other worlds or places in time; an alternative approach to 'travelling' you could say. Having come to Ballarat relatively recently, I am new to the customs and traditions of this city and its occupants, however what I do have to offer is my understanding of music to transport and reawaken memory". (Appendix 6.1 exhibition interpretive)

Working from a different perspective Gilson's response to the exhibition prompt was titled *Creation Song*, juxtaposing an iconic image of early twentieth-century Sturt Street (from the Max Harris collection) with photographs collected by his family. The two photographs in the box depict Gilson's great-great-grandmother, Queen Mary, and an unknown Kulin-nation woman.[62] This was accompanied by an audio recording of Gilson singing one of his

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[62] The unknown image was later identified as being from the NGV collection, and a work by Kilburn. This presents a Western knowledge system of collections and cataloguing that differed from Gilson's approach to collecting images any way possible to piece together his history.

compositions, *Creation Song*, in his own language, part of his ongoing project to learn and revive the local language. In the exhibition interpretive material, he described the song as being about "the creation of man and woman in our dreamtime mythology. It ties together the spiritual, genealogical and historical and tells a tale of beginning. With the singing of songs and construction of verses I am re-learning an old language, a language that was forgotten but laps against my psyche". (see Appendix 6.1 exhibition interpretive) Visual text of the lyrics also sat within the box, along with sheoak, a native plant Gilson picked locally to stress the nature of living culture. As a consequence, various entry points through which to engage with the content were provided and allowed reflection on the differing knowledge systems at play in the library space.

Figure 6.18: Barry Gilson's work *Creation Song* featuring collected imagery and song lyrics with audio response of song in local language AVAT26 BMI BIFB *Creation Song* by Barry Gilson 2017 (Samantha Kaspers)

The particular voices of the artist responses were significant in the BMI space, a site largely governed by white men through time, where the boxes attempted to re-voice the space with the Indigenous and feminine, creating a singing archive. Bringing this contemporary Wadawurrung perspective and creativity into the BMI was something that hadn't been done before, and Barry Gilson's singing in language contrasted strongly with another event hosted at BMI in 1879. Here the distance between then and now is stark. Recorded by the *Ballarat*

Courier, the 1879 event was a performance of hymn singing given by children of the Lake Condah mission.[63] The article states that the performance raised 25 pounds for the mission, and that the Rev. W Henderson took the opportunity to discuss "the importance of the work done in the mission, and the benefit it was to the aboriginal races of this country under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church".[64] Echoes of paternalism, of protectionism, of assimilation policies, and of Western spiritual ambitions for the presumed spiritually unenlightened are all too clearly heard. Twenty years later, a talk advertised at the BMI promoted photographer Baldwin Spencer sharing "very vivid pictures of our fast diminishing aboriginal race…[shown through] the latest modern inventions" of photography. The "Australian aborigine" depicted is described as that which "comes nearest to primitive man". (Figure 6.17)

Figure 6.19: Ballarat Star 1902 'Aboriginal Life in Central Australia'

Ballarat Star (Vic. : 1865 - 1924), Friday 19 December 1902, page 6

ABORIGINAL LIFE IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Such events at the BMI are a marker of their association with the ideologies of the time, now viewed as deeply racist. They also reflect changes in museology and heritage towards greater interrogation of the past, and the focus on inclusivity, diversity, and Indigenous agency. RMT shifts are from excusive to inclusive and from insular society to civic engagement. In the shift from focus on the past to adoption of relevant and forward-looking standpoints, this thesis argues that creative activation projects can bring past, present and future together in new ways. Barry Gilson's powerful singing in a local Indigenous language as part of the *Imprints:*

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[63] *Ballarat Courier,* February 7th, 1879.

[64] Ibid.

Storytelling the City exhibition and programming, allowed a re-voicing of the space, and deeply affective experience (see live performance of singing in Multimedia Link 11). It was a long overdue right of reply to the narrative of the dying and unenlightened original aboriginal Australian referenced above.

In the artists responses for *Imprints: Storytelling the City* intangible and tangible interrelate and were reimagined as a way of addressing the museum's task of "interpretation of the intangible—voicing those cultures and individual stories that have been absent from collections".[65] These creative interventions present examples of non-instrumental value. They also present the multiplicity of views on heritage and cities that move using the RMT's paradigms from the voice of authority to multiple viewpoints and from keeper of knowledge to exchange of knowledge. This diversity of voices connects both with the decolonising approach and the museological aims of openness and inclusiveness, including Barrett's view on mutual benefit and respect to avoid exploitation. Another consequence of allowing space for these voices is the capturing of the layers of the city, key to the HUL approach. This is expressed in Gilson's artist statement in response to the historic Ballarat photography depicting Sturt St. Here, as in the poetic work of Natalie Harkin, poetry creates imaginative yet concrete language to present the Indigenous perspective previously excluded, producing an affective response.

Ballarat, a peaceful resting place. What you see here is not what I see. I sit here in the middle of your street, close my eyes, and I can go back. I see golden wattle trees as far as the eyes can see. I see rivers and creeks and wildlife abundant. I see Bowden Nagarook where you see your Black Hill, I see in the distance Warrenheip which means feathered apron, and now 227 years forward I see the scars from a fire. Warrenheip has turned into emu feathers with all the dead trees. It's like the feathers are pointing upwards which means the bird is dead. Emu feathers are worn by women in ceremony and it is through the female that country is passed down the family. It's one of the strong contrasts of the town, overlooking Sturt Street and reminding us of the feminine aspect, and outlying history of the peaceful resting place.

Figure 6.20: Barry Gilson artist statement 2017

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[65] Kidd, "Filling the Gaps? Interpreting Museum Collections through Performance". 61.

The language evokes images of Ballarat not captured on European film, but which sit beside and comment upon it. It re-creates a Ballarat which sits outside the frame: "What you see here is not what I see". It demonstrates the historic depth and contemporary relevance of Indigenous experience and what it has to contribute to Ballarat's self-understanding. It demonstrates one of the ways in which Ballarat's heritage can be renewed even through an institution once so deeply walled off from that fuller heritage. And this is perhaps the most telling point: the creative activation which brought one of Ballarat's many pasts into the present was made all the more powerful by the fact that it took place within the BMI. The BMI can now take that into the future. What the BMI itself can now see is not what it once saw, uncomfortable as that may be. The storytelling walk that expanded Gilson's contribution and added different layers and views of the city will now be discussed.

A walk-through story

Figure 6.21: Gilson leading Storytelling Walk, opening event of *Imprints: Storytelling the City*, September 1st 2017 AVAT27 Storytelling the City walk 2017 (Peter Sparkman)

The storytelling walk, led by guest artist Barry Gilson, was the opening event of the *Imprints: Storytelling the City* exhibition (see promotional material in Figure 6.6 and Multimedia Link 11[66]). It guided the audience through the city and into the BMI, where both he and Sørensen performed their creative responses live. The walk began at the Ballarat Mining Exchange, also the BIFB festival hub, and was preceded by an artist talk there with Gilson's sister, artist

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[66] Available at https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

Deanne Gilson. This talk centered around her work in the *TELL* exhibition depicting an ancestor's grave, and the related intergenerational trauma. This set a tone of deep contemplation around the local Indigenous experience. The storytelling walk was a live performance event developed by Barry Gilson in collaboration with the researcher in her curatorial role, bringing the cross-fertilisation of different skills and knowledge. The walk began on a cool Spring evening with the audience meeting on the street outside the heritage building and contemporary event space of the Ballarat Mining Exchange.

The city streets and structures created the stage, with new stories layered upon it, as told through Gilson (performing as himself, and as the playful storyteller in top hat, adorned with sheoak, symbolising the complex mixture of Indigenous and colonial at the heart of the city). Walking the streets, Gilson provided the living link back to his ancestors and their experiences on this land and the city streetscape. Some of the stories told, that had been passed down to him, were about the goldfields; the first Indigenous circus performers; and of the Southern Cross in the sky and its meaning in Indigenous eyes. He read his own poetic work, in the middle of the grand boulevard of Sturt St, recalling golden wattle and birthing trees,[67] asking the audience members to close their eyes and imagine what the street used to look like. This poetic form created a through line from his ancestors, and their relationship to the land, captured in the poem's opening:

The city is built on my ancestors' bones, their blood is in the water, my temple all in nature's rhyme, handed down through my great grandmother's daughter. [68]

Gilson was the guide, showing the audience where to move, where to look and leading the narrative revealing different meanings of landscape, and tangible and intangible heritage. His poem declared *"I am connected, Unlike a statue in the street resurrected. They came along and cut them down, cut all the trees out of this sacred town, Can you even see a golden wattle here now?"* He asked for engagement from the audience, guiding them to think about ways of seeing—*"Only a marble statue with a moss-covered colonial crown,"* dramatising the clash of different understandings of heritage.

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[67] For audio recording of poem, see Multimedia Link 19 AVAT782 Wathaurung Poem recorded for Imprints Storytelling the City exhibition 2017. Access via BMI archive.
[68] Ibid.

Figure 6.22: Walk AVAT28 Barry Gilson reading poem on Storytelling Walk (Julie McLaren)

In telling these largely unknown stories of the city, Gilson was sharing narratives that were both personal, being handed down through the Gilson family, and part of the shared cultural knowledge of the Wadawurrung, filling in with vivid details and emotion, heretofore absent perspectives of Indigenous experience and history. Storytelling the city in this way, moving through space and "renegotiating the urban archive"[69] was the dramaturgical structure, the shifting of the view. Theatre maker and lecturer Angela Campbell likens the theatremaker's practice of dramaturgy to the historian's practice of historiography,[70] making decisions around which stories will be told and how. As such, the storytelling walk allowed a different experience of the city and a new entry to the BMI.

Outside the front of the BMI, additional audience joined, and the pace shifted with Gilson's removing his top hat (with its colonial connotations) and painted his face with traditional ochre (paapul). He then took up his sticks (porrongayn) and proudly led the combined audience into the front of the BMI and library with his *Creation Song*, in language never before heard in the space, in an institute built on Indigenous land (Figure: 6.23) An attendee recorded that "he strode into the institute and what could we do but follow? Sounds that I have never heard in

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[69] Hopkins, Orr, and Solga, eds., *Performance and the City*. 6.

[70] Campbell, "The Ethics of Writing Performance from the Archive: The Case of Georgiana Molloy".

the Institute's lending library drew us forward, the beautiful singing and music of Barry's Wadawurrung people".[71]

Figure 6.23: AVAT29 Barry Gilson leading storytelling walk 2017 (Julian Potter)

After leading the audience into the lending library, Gilson introduced them to his ancestor, Queen Mary, through her photograph on a screen (a photograph not held in the BMI collection), and set her experience within a frame of immense sadness, yet strength.

Figure 6.24: Barry speaks of his ancestor Queen Mary in the BMI lending library AVAT30 Imprints Storytelling the City 2017 with Barry Gilson (Peter Sparkman)

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[71] David McGinniss, "Imprints: Storytelling the City review," Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute newsletter, October, 2017.

He stood as the descendant of a woman, violated, and yet part of a family whose strength is fed by the courage and resilience of Queen Mary. The experience created prior to and following the walk allowed a reflective atmosphere, an opportunity to both learn and feel, using different lenses and frames set up around the space and its objects, and accessed through creative performance. This confirms the value of the insights in Witcomb's work on "challenging histories…[and] their shift from learning via historic narrative and facts" to providing "affective rather than cognitive knowledge".[72] This was deepened as the walk continued into the softly lit Reading Room, with Sørensen playing her musical response to the photographic collection *Tread Lightly*. "Here another door opens—[offering] a rare chance to experience the Heritage library. We stood together again, lit only by fairy lights. A single piano serenades us from the balcony, Ellen Sørensen's haunting concerto prompting us to stop, listen, and just be still".[73]

Figure 6.25 AVAT31 Storytelling the City event in Reading Room, with Ellen Sørensen (Julian Potter)

Figure 6.26: AVAT32 Ellen Sørensen at Storytelling the city event 2017 (Peter Sparkman)

The notion of haunting links back to Harkin's view of the archives, reaching both backwards and forwards, resulting in layers of history, echoing through time. Gilson and Sørensen made the library spaces live in another form, a dramatic reconfiguration for a live audience to experience the city and the BMI through creative activation. Here the concept of cities having implicit performative elements is given life through performance works which expose layer upon layer of new meaning. The reconfiguration of physical space—the city streets and the BMI spaces; the use of objects, stories, and live bodies; the relationship between audience, storyteller/guide and performances; combined with the spaces being crossed and re-crossed, allowed a reframing of the city, and of the BMI library/collections, thus creating new

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[72] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 260.

[73] McGinniss, "Imprints: Storytelling the City review."

connections between them. As Harrison accurately notes: "Heritage is not a passive process of simply preserving things from the past that remain, but an active process of assembling a series of objects, places and practices that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the present, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future".[74] Gilson's poem, read in the middle of Sturt St, may offer the audience this mirror:

The falling leaves. Sing lullabies, inside the trees our babies cry, Wadawurrung babies born in trees, the tree of life, time to be free.

Both Gilson and Sørensen's songs, performed in spaces not usually used for such things, allowed new voices and perspectives to sing, and set these against artefacts and ideas from the past, to create a multiplicity of meanings and fresh insights. LauraJane Smith writes of the processes of heritage negotiation and re-creation that sit in opposition to what she terms the "Authorised Heritage Discourse" and that create space to "examine, legitimize and/or contest a range of cultural and social identities, values and meanings".[75]

In this way, and in contrast to conventional heritage practice in which "Aboriginal heritage is often equated with pre-contact archaeological sites," this project draws on the HUL understanding that Aboriginal or settler communities associate their heritage with "landscapes comprised of diverse elements and periods of history, including contemporary associations".[76] In this complex nexus of place and knowledge, of past and future, the storytelling walk and the performance of songs allowed both the imagining of pre-contact Ballarat (Sturt St as it was before the establishment of the city) and the re-imagining of Ballarat's present and future with a language in the process of being relearnt, in ways which said emphatically: this is now, and it is to continue in contemporary forms. Indigenous curator, Michael Aird has stated that Christian Thompson's work in *We Bury Our Own* "moves the debate on from the politics of race and injustice, towards multiple, complex, and hybrid identities in the present, and into the future".[77] *Imprints: Storytelling the City* sits somewhere on the road between these two points,

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[74] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 4.

[75] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*. 71.

[76] Cooke, Buckley, and Fayad, "Using the Historic Urban Landscape to Reimagine Ballarat: The Local Context".

[77] Pitt Rivers Museum, "Christian Thompson: We Bury Our Own".

as part of this "exciting new phase of creative engagement [between Indigenous artists and their visual history]".[78]

This case study exhibition was informed by decolonising approaches but is also aware of the dangers and limitations of the curator's position as a non-Indigenous GLAM worker and researcher. Tuhiwai Smith notes that there are powerful groups of researchers that continue to exploit Indigenous peoples and their knowledge, as well as there being "some shifts in the way non-Indigenous researchers and academics have positioned themselves" by working in an "ongoing and mutually beneficial way".[79] She cites examples in New Zealand where work is being carried out in terms of bicultural research, partnership research and multi-disciplinary work. This is an area that requires ongoing reflection and development, where, she states, "the challenge always is to demystify, to decolonize".[80] This also involves the curatorial approach to working collaboratively and the question that Barrett stresses of who is invigorating whom, and at what cost?[81] In *Imprints: Storytelling the City,* issues of colonisation were tackled, with the aim of providing space for previously absent voices where, rather than simply an audience, there are active participants, "in a reciprocal relationship".[82] A sensitive approach toward mutual benefit and respect was key, and centered around the use of creativity, moving away from the "universalising exhibiting practices of previous centuries".[83]

Conclusions

Some final analysis of this case study and its impact at the BMI will cover: the role of affect and approaches to curation, and the value of creative activation and its capacity to enable cultural organisations like the BMI to creatively connect with various publics and be a meaningful part of the city's cultural ecology.

Affect and curation

Andrea Witcomb has looked at how difficult heritage can be approached through the power of poetic allusion, where curators draw on creative tools to use "immersion that works through a

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies : Research and Indigenous Peoples.* 53.

[80] Ibid., 53.

[81] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere.* 114.

[82] Ibid., 114.

[83] Ibid., 3.

series of shocks to the established ways of seeing the past and understanding heritage".[84] Witcomb's concept can be applied directly to the poetic nature of the creative responses in *Imprints: Storytelling the City*, particularly in the live events. The nature of the experience, moving through the city streets and of bodies filling the library and Reading Room in unconventional ways, allowed new connections between people, objects, place, and time, demonstrating that a "city's history never resides solely in its archival documents" but in "embodied practices to fill in some of the gaps the archival records inevitably expose".[85] This was achieved through engagement with storytelling, music, creativity, and the experiencing of old spaces in new ways. Witcomb cites Walter Benjamin and the auratic qualities of art: here "the significance of art is that it offers the potential to produce experience" engaging affective forms of response, different from that of a detailed historical narrative.[86]

A potential problem within the affective approach, which Witcomb highlights, is that recognition may only be possible for those already sympathetic to the issue and that it requires a "high level of cognitive work".[87] (Her example of an exhibition dealing with colonial displacement of the Indigenous is relevant to this case study). Data collected through the *Imprints* audience comment book[88] reveal that understanding was greater when the exhibition was experienced with a guide—either via the live event: "Loved every word spoken and every image seen" and "Love seeing creative things in this creative place"; or through the connections made with curators and artists whilst viewing the exhibition that established living links and a welcoming experience: "What an amazing exhibit. I felt like I was whisked away into another timezone. Thanks also for all the informative chats! Very welcoming (from a recent Ballarat resident)".[89] The role of *people* here is evidenced as key to the success of creative activation and engagement projects.

Branch's presence in the space as passionate Sutton descendant was also reflected in audience comments: "Thanks Lorayne for a most informative look at Henry's astonishing achievements…this story must be preserved"; "a credit to the Sutton family"; "I loved being taken around by Lorayne"; "Loved hearing all the information from a descendant of Henry"

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[84] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 259.

[85] Hopkins, Orr, and Solga, eds., *Performance and the City*. 6.

[86] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums".

[87] Ibid. 262.

[88] Various, "Imprints: Storytelling the City Visitor Comment Book".

[89] Ibid.

(as Sovereign Hill's branding goes, the story lives on"). In the same way, visitors appreciated meeting Gilson as a Wadawurrung custodian and formed new connections through the exhibition. Branch and Gilson are pictured in Figure 6.27 in the exhibition space speaking with visitors.

Figure 6.27: Imprints Storytelling the City exhibition with Barry Gilson, Lorayne Branch and visitor

Data showed that audiences generally had an easier time understanding the Sutton material in the Reading Room as it was a more standard display format as well as containing less challenging content. Use of the terms "presentation" and "display" were regular in the exhibition comment book[90] and also statements like "collated beautifully". There was also clear appreciation for the tangible heritage: "This represents thoughtful and tireless work to preserve an important part of Ballarat's history. It was great to learn about Henry Sutton and see how carefully the reading room and its contents have been set up for a fascinating visit". Comments on the space itself and the experience it created also included: "Unexpected treasure"; "Like walking through history"; "a hidden gem"; "wonderful building and collection". The uniqueness of the exhibition as part of the BIFB was also noted: "What a wonderful exhibition…definitely a highlight of the Foto festival in Ballarat".[91]

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

The installation with artist's creative responses, in the lending library, required Witcomb's concept of a higher level of cognitive work as here both the unfamiliar format as well as the content made the exhibit less easily readable. Not being in a standard gallery space and within the busyness of the library setting, this was an implication of more experimental creative activation work. Some comments did acknowledge both parts of the exhibition: "Henry Sutton should definitely be better known and celebrated! Thanks to all at BMI for bringing him to our attention. Also loved reading Barry Gilson's reflections and hearing his haunting song".[92] The live storytelling event was an example of guiding the implied cognitive work whilst also leaving conceptual space and room for affective response through the poetic and auratic experience. Following in this spirit, the live storytelling event was also captured in a creative film response by local filmmaker Erin McCuskey.[93] What was captured included the contemplative approach and environment, the contrasting and reframing of Indigenous language and culture in the grand BMI building with its formal nineteenth -century architecture and colonial associations, and a sense of people sharing in this affective experience and exploration of a new way forward.

The various curatorial elements of *Imprints: Storytelling the City* were connected through the thread of Ballarat photography. From this, different perspectives on the city and its stories were presented in differing formats; the Sutton story of an honored Ballarat inventor and artistic responses that dealt with local Indigenous experience, both past and present. Placing these in the BMI setting, with its own complex heritage as a place of scientific learning that has also been shown to play a role in colonial structures, meant multiple layers were overlaid and in dialogue. Some outcomes were unplanned, even for the curator. For example, both parts of the exhibitions involved imagery of family members, but with very different implications: the idyllic image of Sutton's son in England (see Figure 5.9, top right), for example was set against the experience of abuse and displacement experienced by the Gilson family. Similarly, the Sutton family archives, whilst needing to be drawn together by Branch, came to exist in collated spaces; while the Indigenous family struggled to take what are the first steps in a difficult process to locate, acquire and understand any images they could get from local and national collections to rebuild their story.

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[92] Ibid.

[93] Multimedia Link 11: AVAT745 Opening event 'Imprints Storytelling the City' September 1st 2017. Available via figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

The various outcomes of this exhibition reveal possibilities for cultural organisations like the BMI to connect with and provide space for more diverse engagement, and exploration of new stories and voices. Through the facilitating role of the curator, BMI (albeit momentarily) shifted notions of exclusivity and the appearance of underutilised resources to something more embracing and connected into the city, in all its dynamism. It opened up the possibility through curatorial practice that Barrett argues for "based on an ethos of participation, respect, a recognition of diversity and a belief in healthy intellectual debate".[94] In this way, the BMI as part of the GLAM sector has potential to be part of Barrett's "cultural public sphere" though it is open to the same issue that she raises between "the claims of modern museums to be democratic, and the desire of new museums to actually be democratic".[95] Here, just as relevance must be more than a door swinging momentarily open (Simon) and heritage not merely a 'thing', Barret asserts that "democracy is a process, not a thing in itself".[96] Laurajane Smith and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett have concluded similarly in relation to heritage and culture as always evolving and where reflexivity is key. Some final comments will now be made about organisational outcomes of the exhibition.

Figure 6.28: AVAT34 Volunteer preparing for Storytelling the city event 2017

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[94] Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere*. 162.

[95] Ibid., 167.

[96] Ibid., 173.

Cultural organisations and value

Analysis of this BMI case study data has considered the question of how heritage collections, and the organisations that house them, can creatively connect with the publics they serve. This involves the ecology of participants, visitors, funders and so on and dealing with content that is both more traditional and more challenging. Here the value created along with organisational development and challenges will be discussed through the data.

Planning for the *Imprints: Storytelling the City* event used the trial template created after *White Night at the BMI* to capture the aims from which to evaluate it. Here it was possible to state that this was a programming event not specifically a fundraising one, though various aims were noted in the section of the planning document, reproduced in Figure 6.29 below:

AIMS OF PROPOSED EVENT AGAINST BMI STRATEGY

Cultural offering √

Community use

Educational √

Showcases BMI collections and stories √

Showcases the building √

Draws in revenue √

Collaborates with partners √

Figure 6.29: Aims from Imprints: Storytelling the City event planning document template

Below is a summary of outcomes provided to the BMI board in the curator's report, September 2017:

Amazing response to our Foto Biennale exhibition *Imprints: Storytelling the City*

-Visitor numbers: 960

-11 new members over the month

-Countless conversations and enthusiasm (and many comments captured in visitor book)

-Online content created to extend reach with recorded talk series, film and imagery

-Connections made for future opportunities

-Raised awareness of our offerings (many hadn't been in the library before, both visitors and locals)

-New Max Harris postcard product a success with approximately $60.00 income so far and the opportunity to sell these to other retail outlets

-Donation box to be counted (Does this get counted and documented monthly?)

-Opening event bar income $210 so covered any associated costs for the event

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Figure 6.30: Summary of event outcomes Curators monthly report to BMI board, September 2017

It can be observed here, following discussion in the previous chapter, that the attempt is made to communicate both quantitative value (visitor numbers, new members, dollars) as well as the less easily measurable outcomes (that cross Holden's triangle of value—intrinsic, instrumental and institutional), through connections made, enthusiasm built, raised awareness, and generative effects. It still, however, represents the ongoing tension with the board around understandings and prioritisation of value, where much cannot be measured in metric/accounting terms.

Some of the value of this case study, however, can be addressed through Buckley and Witcomb's parallel ideals of museology and critical heritage.[97] Regarding their point of "social value of place and social interactions", this exhibition and programming meant curators and artists were available in the space, either through drop-in or talk events, and through the live performance event where people met and engaged in the material together. Here the social value of place and interactions that take place within, go beyond the tangible and relate to places where people ascribe their own meaning and value. This comes from the meeting of people and ideas. Their "plurality of stakeholders" was achieved through the new artist engagements, and project funding from the Ballarat Arts Foundation. In terms of "new methods for documentation and knowledge production" the *Imprints: Storytelling the City* film, created by Erin McCuskey, capturing the opening event and the spirit of the project, will accompany the two artist recordings, and the recorded live interview events, to be passed into the future, added to the BMI collection, and available online.[98] The exhibition project was also presented at a Deakin University conference, Future Glam, in June 2018 where the curator/researcher and Barry Gilson together presented *Storytelling Ballaarat City*, reflecting the collaborative spirit of the project and appreciation of different knowledge systems.[99]

As with discussion in previous chapters, creative activation work in GLAMs and MIs is also closely linked to their organisational structure and capacity. Consequently, there are two areas covered in this case study: curatorial and artistic work with difficult heritage; and

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[97] Witcomb and Buckley, "Engaging with the Future of 'Critical Heritage Studies': Looking Back in Order to Look Forward". 575.

[98] Multimedia Links 11, 7, 8 available via figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3 and Multimedia Links 9 and 10 via http://www.hulballarat.org.au/cb_pages/songways_stories.php

[99] "This presentation will explore the possible reframings and revoicings of heritage collections and places through creative practice, and the value of cross-cultural learning and collaboration. There might also be singing" https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/heritage/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2018/06/Future-GLAM-2018-program-1.pdf.

organisational capacity. The second involves both Barrett's call for realistic expectations of what museums can achieve in the space, as well as the organisational ability to reflect, learn, and adapt. Kidd's research, done as part of the project Challenging Histories (with mainly educational staffing) revealed institutional inertia and feelings of disempowerment.[100] There is a divide, she states, "between the nature of academic debate and the reality of day-to-day operations within heritage institutions. This is a divide that could grow in coming years as heritage institutions are forced to make savings and re-prioritise".[101]

When dealing with difficult, or what is considered by some as overly political, content or issues, Kidd's research observed museum staff's "fear of the public…[where] fear is rooted in questions of authority, legitimacy and perhaps even guilt, amplified through a perception of isolation from the 'core' practice and function of the institution".[102] At the BMI, as part of the MI historical legacy, this also relates to who is welcome in the space where, despite egalitarian ideals, many MIs evolved into something more like gentlemen's clubs—a perception that can persist today. Events like *Imprints: Storytelling the City*, and the feedback of welcome, provide a possible solution to this as more diverse content and opportunities to engage are offered. Kidd's research also exposed that educational programs (the particular focus of her research) remain more comfortable working within groups that can be known and in situations that can be in some way contained.[103] Part of this is also the notion Kidd observed of it all being too hard. She reports "this is not surprising given the institutional inertia identified by participants" and is a common problem for many institutions where "curating contentious topics (if undertaken at all) results in an attempt to adhere to acceptable norms and tolerated limits". And as Kidd concludes: "Justification of resources and personnel [is] becoming intensely problematic across the cultural landscape",[104] which effects the ability to take on more complex projects.

Imprints Storytelling the City allowed the telling of varied stories and perspectives on Ballarat through the frame concept of inclusion and exclusion, and of the multilayered city. Its various elements, including live events, allowed engagement with broader museological and heritage

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[100] Jenny Kidd, "Challenging History: Reviewing Debate within the Heritage Sector on the 'Challenge' of History," *Museum & Society* 9, no. 3 (2011). 245.

[101] Ibid. 245.

[102] Ibid. 245.

[103] Ibid. 246.

[104] Ibid. 246.

issues of curation, gap filling, affect, decolonisation, diversity, and connection with diverse publics. The resulting findings and the value created were broad, yet to achieve success beyond individual events, it is argued that commitment from an organisation's leadership, rooted in strong vision, is required. As Nina Simon asked of her board at Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History when at crisis point: "What are we willing to change to welcome new people?" and "What are we willing to change about how we work to help new people feel like they belong?"[105] Key to this approach was having clear aims and values with which to evaluate success and engage in forward planning. This process also involves "courage and open-heartedness," [106] a challenge that is yet to be met fully at the BMI. These issues of BMI organisational strategy and its role in the city, its sense of welcome, and the role of the curator are the focus of the next chapter, utilising action research from the three-year curatorship.

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[105] "The Art of Relevance Tedxpaloalto".

[106] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 157.

Chapter Seven: Action research at the BMI 2016–2019

> Action research builds on the past and takes place in the present with a view to
> shaping the future.
>
> - Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*

This chapter utilises data from action research (in this case with the researcher as curator/practitioner) and examines the BMI's organisational structure and its ability to creatively connect with its heritage and publics leading toward greater connectivity and relevance. This chapter is a deep dive into the action research experience and the insights this approach reveals for the BMI. The methodological approach is guided by the three key tenets of action research from Coghlan and Branick. First is the notion that organisations may be understood experientially through processes of deliberate change. Secondly, organisations are social constructions that do not exist independently of human minds and actions. Finally, that action research builds on the past, and takes place in the present with a view to shaping the future.[1]

Using an action-research term, data has been 'generated' in this research project through observation and journaling, trialling projects and ideas, and also through inclusion of audience feedback, surveys, reports, and media. From knowledge elicited from these, certain tools and policies have been formulated, and recommendations made for future implementation. The tools employed include: event planning and review documents; a curatorial resource list; an updated collections policy; and a curatorial report for the BMI board with recommendations that include potential models for creative fellowship/artist in residence programs. These were all provided to the BMI at the conclusion of the curatorship in May 2019.

The action research reflective journal was categorised via the NVivo data program, mapping phases of establishment, delivery, transition and handover, to mark key points within the three-year action-research period. This included the personnel involved in each stage—staff, volunteers, members, the public, funders and, in HUL terms, the role of "early adopters"[2] and leaders, both formal and informal. Photographic images are also used to represent the research and developments and are gathered in the archive and photo book (part four of methodology-Figure 0.9). These images strongly capture the importance of all kinds of *people*, in successful

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Pereira Roders, Bandarin, and SpringerLink, *Reshaping Urban Conservation the Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Action*.

organisational projects and development (this is also echoed in BMI board member comment in Figure 7.8 highlighting the importance of partnerships, and of including new voices). The images below, for example, capture some of the participants in the BMI's 2016 International Women's Day event, and primary-school students presenting their creative history project at BMI in 2019. Such imagery records intergenerational links and the creative use of heritage spaces and stories. This is part of the project of opening up the BMI and creating new dialogues, leading to the greater connectivity and relevance, as this thesis investigates (Figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3). Other creative projects are captured via social media posts in Figures 7.4 and 7.5 below. These were projects BMI was involved in for the CoB event Heritage Weekend 2017—performances partnering with Federation University Arts Academy, and *Beers Through the Years* partnering with the CoB and Good Beer Week.

Figure 7.1 AVAT35 Geraldine Roberts, Jenny Haymes, Amy Tsilemanis, Wendy Graham International Womens Day at the BMI 2016

Figure 7.2: AVAT37 Students speaking at Talking Shop 2019

Figure 7.3: AVAT36 Volunteer Geraldine Roberts decorating building for Gardens in Print 2016

Figures 7.4 and 7.5: Social media screenshots presenting some of the creative activation events with varied themes and collaborators 2017

To highlight my role as discussed in this chapter, I was working across both the practice-based environment of the BMI and as a PhD candidate. Consequently the project involved stakeholders across the university, BMI, CoB, and financial contributors (Ballarat Arts Foundation, Sovereign Hill, and the Haymes family). In September 2017, I made a presentation to update stakeholders on the progress of the project. I took a photo from the front of the room before I began of all the people gathered around the project to capture the collaborative nature and possibilities it presented (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6: AVAT38 Stakeholder presentation Sep 2017 presenting research progress

One of the slides in the presentation, linked to the thesis problems and stated that "Starting from a place of low public visibility and limited diversity in audience and partners, what has been achieved?" Some of the listed outcomes of the project presented included:

-Activated building and collection and the connections that result between people, stories and places

-Development of Collection management and access (for example cataloguing on Victorian Collections)

-Inter-generational sharing and learning

-Investment of funds and in-kind contribution

-Development of links with university, council, tourism, media, cultural organisations, local business and

arts

-Greater public profile and connectivity in city network

-Raised community awareness and appreciation of Ballarat's diverse heritage

-Connecting past, present and future

-Inspiring future possibilities and opportunities

Figure 7.7: Outcomes on presentation slide, 2017

The response below from one board member shows a supportive understanding (and perhaps silence from other board members throughout the project is also telling):

A couple of key points that really resonated with me were;

-       The collection being an integral thread that runs through everything the BMI does

-       The need to have and to nurture relationships with others and the value of strong collaborations and connections in creating new possibilities (tertiary institutions, council, media, cultural, industry. arts etc.)

-       Through projects like Beers through the Years, Imprints – storytelling the city, and many others we are bringing new voices into the BMI story – female, cultural and societal

Figure 7.8: Board member communications following presentation

The discussion in this chapter will now look in detail at three examples at the BMI that allow analysis of how progress was made using creative activation as well as organisational sticking points, and the connection between. This will include assessment of both supporting factors (with reference back to those supporters found in responses like the Board member above, and in Board member leadership on planning and evaluation templates discussed in chapters five and six) as well as blockage points (such as Board members focused on financial or transactional matters, or evidence of locked up leadership through poor communication).

As in analysis of how creative curatorial practice can address the issues of this thesis covered in the last chapters, here the important links to organisation structure and capacity are highlighted further, building new connections between the five interlinked areas of heritage, curation, organisations, cities, and value. As a result, the creative activation of this practice-led research project looks at innovative creative and curatorial practice, as well as creativity and adaptability in organisational thinking and how heritage can relate not only to the past but to our role in creating the future. As the research evolved creative practice and organisational structure became ever more entwined, as it became obvious that the creative practice would not be sustainable if not matched with more open and adaptable leadership and clear strategy. Here action research tenets and methods are used for analysis, aiming at collaborative change (including where these were not successful).

The close study of the BMI can be viewed both on a local level, as well as applied more broadly as many cultural organisations struggle with similar questions of relevance, diversity, and openness to change towards these more inclusive ends. As noted in chapter two, the study of BMI draws connections between historical legacies of stable management but of limited diversity and ambition, that have ultimately led to challenges today around succession planning, public profile, and an ability to adapt and enable new leadership and ideas that engage with the contemporary city and broader museological shifts. Connections can be made back to the complex historical legacy of the organisation that continue to resonate today that include: the role of women- beyond respectability or fundraising; exclusive membership, narrow leadership, and conservative management; ideals of equality and access to knowledge; the BMI's role in Ballarat's cultural life; funding and various understandings of value and the question of BMI's being deserving of both private and public funds.

Within the framework established, this chapter will now investigate the PhD's action research through study of three elements: 1. BMI strategic planning process 2017; 2. BMI basement 2018, and 3. BMI doors, physical and metaphorical.

1. BMI Strategic Planning process 2017

The BMI's strategic plan 2017–2020 states that "the BMI needs to balance its community service goals with the necessity to remain financially strong, solvent and viable and that, for the BMI to thrive—for the next 157 years—it needs to change and adapt".[3] In this sense, the document reflects an understanding of the need to balance financial and cultural sustainability, along with the need to connect with the past and future as part of strategy. It states:

> the BMI will take on roles and perform activities that will ensure it remains relevant to the needs of contemporary society. In addition it will continue its role in celebrating and preserving Ballarat's heritage, remain loyal to its origins, its core reason for being and its values, as espoused by its founders.…The plan will ensure the preservation of a building that is widely acknowledged as a Ballarat heritage treasure and a symbol of the vision and leadership of Ballarat's pioneers.[4]

The Strategic Plan is also a document that reveals tensions that threaten the BMI's existence as a coherent and focused contributor to Ballarat's broader cultural life; its "core reason for being and its values" remaining largely unclear.

This researcher quickly came to see what difficulties lay ahead in the enactment of change within a long-established institution unused to self-scrutiny, despite various strategic planning processes over the years. The first element of this involved the various personnel and areas of operation and their connections to the organisation. The systems dynamics involved in action research incorporate "the systematic relationship between individual and team, the team with other teams, the organisation with its environment and each with each other...and can enable or hinder successful management of the change process".[5] At the BMI the "interlevel dynamics involved in process for designing the vision of the future"[6] is made up of staff: the librarian, venue manager, cleaner, web and social media officer, a curator (a new position in 2016), and (later) an executive manager (2018). Volunteers working in the various areas, such as the

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[3] Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, "Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute Stragetic Plan 2017-2020," (2017).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. 99.

[6] Ibid.

lending library, heritage collections, events and marketing, along with the Friends group are also included. Then there is the volunteer board itself.

An early diagram I created grew out of the need for clarity in these areas. It was premised upon the need for defining a conceptual core that holds the various parts of the organisation together. A digital version of this diagram was later included by a board member in the 2017–2010 Strategic Plan. But its place there was unexplained, and no further work was done upon its suggestions.
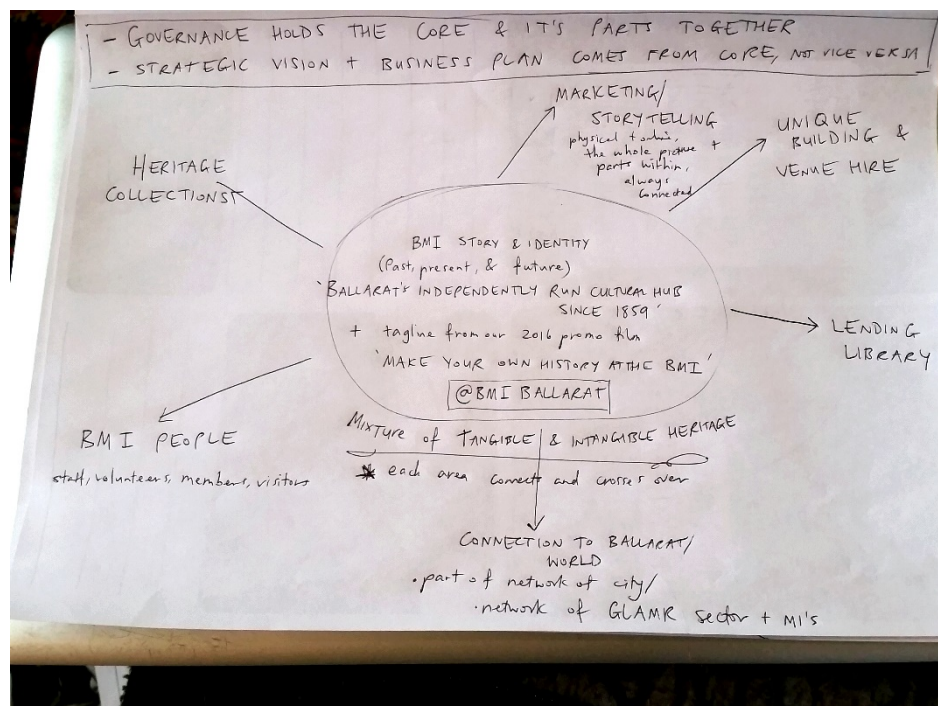
Figure 7.9: Curator's sketch of organisational structure, with need for strong core in the centre

The interrelations (where they existed) of the various domains mapped out in Figure 7.9 were complex, partly because they had evolved over years of varied phases of the institute's existence, through hard times and good, and through various strategic planning efforts. Despite general agreement that evolution and certain changes were required, cohesive action was a constant challenge. The potential for confusion between the roles of curator, researcher and agent for change also became evident, and would remain a tension for some.

Conference

Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st Century

About the conference

Reinvention is the fourth in a series of international conferences for independent and subscription Libraries, Mechanics' Institutes, Athenaeums, Societies, Literary Institutes, Lyceums, Mercantile Libraries, Schools of Arts and Working Men's Institutes. We will bring together representatives from around the world to exchange ideas, explore histories, and discuss our present situation and aims for the future.

Why you should attend

Each participant will have the opportunity to connect with like-minded people, share experiences, and gain useful knowledge applicable to the thriving and management of their institutions.

- Discover the insights, strategies, and practices that are making the Mechanics' Institutes and independent libraries thrive in their communities and their plans for the 21st century
- Bring the Membership Libraries and Mechanics Institutes together
- Meet and hear from leading personalities and colleagues in the library and information world
- Network with your peers worldwide

Figure 7.10: Conference information on the San Francisco Institute's website 2016

In 2016, during the first year of my curatorship, I travelled to San Francisco for an International Conference of Independent Libraries and Mechanics' Institutes at the San Francisco Mechanics' with a BMI board member (my trip self-funded; BMI funded her registration). The result provided some new and exciting perspectives on BMI's potential in designing its vision of the future. The conference was entitled 'Reinvention: Thriving in the 21st century,' and its theme obviously coincided with the interests of establishing the curator role and my research at the time.

I presented as BMI curator on activation work centring around our recent *Spring Celebrations* programming, in a paper titled "Innovating Traditions", dealing with the inter-relation between past and present, tradition and innovation, an inter-relation always at play in MIs. As researcher, I also had the opportunity to interview Nina Simon, who was a keynote speaker at the conference and an ardent advocate of change activism. I was able to interview the strategic partnerships officer at San Francisco MI, a recently-created role seen as a key to the future viability of that organisation (see chapter four). I was also able to meet and interview independent curator/researcher/historians from the Prelinger Library, and from Shaping

San Francisco and Western Neighbourhood Projects. The conference was a great source of creativity and inspiration, and one that also introduced the BMI to this evolving field of activating MIs and related GLAM organisations that were working to connect people to collections and engage them with history in ways that also speak to the present and future. This conference highlighted the live element of the research and presented me with the opportunity to compare Ballarat's cultural environment vis a vis international MIs.

Returns

On our return to Ballarat following the conference, the board member and I made a formal presentation to the board that included an invitation to board members to contribute their ideas (see Appendix 7.3 for related 'Reinvention ideas' document shared with the board). Our key, and mutually agreed upon, recommendations included the need for a clear strategic vision, for a strong leadership role in the implementation of this goal, and for some changes to the governance structure, with the particular need for an Executive Officer or the like, in line with the direction taken by other MIs (see chapter four). Reference was also made to the possibilities of greater collaboration with programs, events and partnerships; and to the value of international networks, learning and sharing. The report also stressed the need for regular planning meetings and information-sharing sessions within the organisation, as well as the pursuit of connections with other local cultural organisations. These themes emerged both from papers related to the conference and from key-presenter Simon's text *The Art of Relevance.* This text was received with enthusiasm by some board members who could be seen as early adopters, and whose early contributions are essential to any eventual change.

As a consequence of this report, and of other related events, a BMI Planning Day was scheduled for February 2017. By this time, the beginning of the second year of my curatorial appointment and associated research, I was acutely aware of the breadth of the scope of the multiple challenges I faced. My work with the BMI collections, which included incorporating and promoting the Max Harris Photography Collection, would need to be coupled with organisational development if this work were to be possible at all. This would involve shared strategy and planning decisions; a review of internal structural cohesion as this related to staff duties and lines of communication; and introduction of capacity building as this related to staff and volunteer skills, networking with other organisations, policy reviews and updates, and the establishment of collaborative partnerships. This is where the action research component of the research methodology provided guidance.

In preparation for the planning day, and as part of an effort to bridge some communication gaps, I sought to bring together staff and volunteers in the lending library, archives, and heritage collection areas for a session to identify the Library Committee's position on a range of issues to be taken to the planning day. The Chair of the Committee was invited but did not respond or attend. The document was created collaboratively (key aims outlined below in Figure 7.11) and was forwarded to the Chair to inform the planning day.

-Coordinated sharing of what we have- physically and digitally (via online catalogue)

-Well curated resource for region

-Make decisions going forward based on best practice (such as advice from SLV)

-Keep growing awareness that we're here and our unique cultural and historical offering

-Useful to the community

-Communication and collaboration between areas within BMI, valuing all staff and volunteers in roles matched to skills. Central list of what we have and who is the right person to help with which area

-Connections to other cultural organisations and Mechanics Institutes

Figure 7.11: Library Committee aims

Prior to the planning day, I included the following information as part of a report to the board-

Key areas for development in relation to the curator role include:
-Access (in person and online)- databases, processes and human resources for assisting with inquiries, research
-Collection management
-Grants/funding for collection work- roles, projects
-Activation work- exhibitions, events, projects
-Storage and security
-Managing volunteers working with collection and associated projects
-Sales and development of products
-Marketing/sharing BMI story
-Planning and processes linking into BMI strategic plan, including allocation of budgets and resources including succession planning and professional development

Figure 7.12: Curator's board report, 2017

Again, I hoped here that this would provide clarity, and fit into (what I saw as) the emerging new role of the BMI in the cultural life of Ballarat and challenges that needed addressing that crossed over with the Library Committee's work.

Planning Day

When the planning day came around, the library committee chair did not refer to any of the group's collated information. The agenda stated that: "All Subcommittee Chairs have been asked to consult with and summarise the collective views of their sub-committees" (Appendix 7.1). The leaders of the day also forgot to introduce me in my dual role of curator/staff member and action researcher. This lack of engagement with me and my research project, whether deliberate or not, set an unfortunate precedent to mutual understanding of the action research role and its relationship with the curatorial work where "action research builds on the past, and takes place in the present with a view to shaping the future".[7] As is common in research methodologies that involve working from inside organisations, Helen Kara notes the reflexivity and the extra layers of complexity required, a practice that "can be an uncomfortable, anxiety-provoking experience, requiring a high level of tolerance for uncertainty".[8] Inexperience with the methodology from both sides added further complexity. In my reflective journal I noted of this observation: "I have held, as steadfastly as uncertain conditions allow, to Coghlan and Brannick's assertion that researchers need to look at emergent processes not as distractions but as central to the research process".[9] I took the challenges of communication and understanding as one such emergent process, whilst the organisation's readiness for change also arose as an issue.

The planning day was organised and run by two board members and followed a schedule grouped in the sessions 'Where are we now?' and 'Where do we want to be?' followed by 'How do we get there?' (Appendix 7.1). In the session looking at what others have done and following on from connections made in San Francisco, Melbourne Athenaeum business manager, Sue Westwood, shared some of its experiences and advice via Skype (Figure 7.13).

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Kara, *Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide*. 73.

[9] Coghlan and Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. xv.

Figure 7.13: AVAT39 BMI Planning Day with Sue Westwood on skype 2017

In the brainstorming of where the organisation would like to be in twenty years, the "Where do we want to be?", the following list of possible outcomes, representing a variety of views, was recorded in my notes:

Figure 7.14: Action research notes from planning day

As some of the above shows there was much positive response to the possibility of moving the theory and practice of the BMI towards a more inclusive and proactive model. There was a sense of optimism, and desire to learn from others. Clear links can be seen with the RMT's shifts of moving towards being relevant and forward looking, and changing from an internal focus to an expansive perspective, as well as becoming connected with local creativity and culture. Despite this the outcomes of the session revealed the recurring gap between ideals and practice and the institutional inertia Kidd has observed that has proved difficult to overcome at BMI. One reason for this was differing views around the strong core of shared values and vision. One key development, however which was discussed and in fact later brought about was the need for an Executive Officer.

The Aftermath

A result of the planning day was a small group of board members would continue to work on the updated strategic plan. The executive summary of the completed document stated: "The plan will result in a financially sustainable BMI with growing financial capacity, ongoing community participation and the ability to reinvest in its buildings and activities into the future". However, the sense of moving from mission as document to mission driven, as RMT has it, remained lacking. The eventual strategic planning document was not formally shared with staff and volunteers. Instead it remained an inert and largely financially-oriented (though lacking a business plan) statement of the BMI's position. Later policy work done in the library committee aimed to work from and tie into this plan. Its vagueness however, on key matters of value and public engagement, on open governance and inclusive polices, made any progress difficult, notwithstanding the good intentions which flowed around the participants on that planning day. Action research journaling, as outlined below, captured the disappointment:

> *I was hoping following the discussions and positivity of last year that in doing the Planning Day and updated strategy there would be a collaborative development of something really clear and inspiring for all to move forward with. As Nina Simon spoke of at the Mechanics' Institute conference- something that everyone can have on their desks (hers at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History being around creating a thriving hub with a focus on social bridging), something used and living, that can be applied when decisions are being made and also important in being able to justify the grants and contributions an organisation might be receiving.*
>
> *Instead it hasn't even been shared with staff, an expression that would seem at odds with any kind of usable, living document and vision.*

Figure 7.15: Action research reflective journaling, Dec 2017

The appointment of the organisation's first executive manager took place in 2018, approximately a year after the board approved the idea. Prior to this appointment, it is interesting to note, the closest the organisation came to having anyone play such a role goes back to the secretary/librarian position of earlier days (and that the two Batten's held for 90+ years, see chapter two). The new manager, Tony Godfrey, (from a background in both finance and community service) brought a greater understanding of my position within the organisation as an action researcher, as well as of my curatorial aims for the BMI. He was able to continue support of creative activation projects such as *Talking Shop*, discussed in the third section of this chapter, and was cognizant of the need to move, as recommended by the RMT from compartmentalised goals to holistic, shared goals, from an hierarchical structure to a learning organisation, and from the conservative status quo to informed risk taking. This included a change of name for the Library Committee: it became the Collections Committee with updated terms of reference. This name shift recognised the broader and museological value of the BMI, not just its lending library.

The introduction of the Executive Manager role was a result of the board securing a strategic funding partnership with the City of Ballarat ($100,000 over three years, matched by the BMI). An article in the *Ballarat Courier* of December 2017 stated that "the strategic partnership aims to help the institute restructure its management and administration for greater community value".[10] What this value involved remained vague however. One CoB councillor was quoted as saying: "[BMI] is one of the most beautiful heritage buildings, so congratulations to the members of that organisation for the way they keep up one of our historic Ballarat buildings".[11] This comment demonstrates one understanding of what that community value might be: the preservation of a building. The move to appoint a CEO, and to maintain financial support, highlights the belief shared by most participants. There was a need identified to professionalise the organization for the sake of its ongoing viability. But the values the new structures sought to implement are still those which rest upon the fact of a tangible heritage building, with only a vague sense of community and cultural value. What to do within its spaces to bring that heritage alive was the real issue, and was yet to be satisfactorily addressed.

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[10] Jeremy Venosta, "Council Funds $100,000 Partnership with Ballaarat Mechanics Institute," *Ballarat Courier*, December 18th, 2017.

[11] Ibid.

The founders' core beliefs of provision of educational resources and lectures were reiterated in the strategic plan, but the aims expressed within the twenty-first century context are focused on the unquestionable historic value and "sustainable financial footing". [12] The document mission includes "enhancing the cultural, intellectual, social; economic and recreational life of its members and the community" but is light on how these aims will be realised. The organisational values noted are also extremely generic so do not provide specific guidance in this area, to be applied in the contemporary moment, and do not aid in building institutional value in Holden's terms. It should be noted that the Executive Manager also quickly became aware of these challenges on the ground. He moved to address ongoing communication gaps between the staff and volunteers on the ground and the Board through regular staff meetings and emailed reports summarising board meetings and conversely the opportunity to have issues raised at them. In one such email he records passing on Nina Simon's work on relevance in museums to the Board again and her key questions of what organisations are willing to change in order to make new people welcome, stating "I felt like it was an interesting perspective as we continue Board planning." Despite these openings, following my years of providing reports, doing presentations, and stressing the need for connecting strategy between BMI collections and activation and overarching visions and values, the struggle for deep engagement beyond surfaces and immediate concerns continued.

One problem was a perceived disregard from some board members. After an email exchange where I had again stressed the need for clear strategy and shared goals I recorded the below in my journaling in March 2018.

> *This tone of disregard has continued. We have done our best to work together but when it comes to anything complex or challenging he is not interested in having those conversations with me. He also often does not respond to my emails which makes it difficult to further things/know what is going on. The other thing is the lack of personal interest in the content of collection, exhibitions etc beyond the functional. Doesn't seem very engaged with what we're doing which is also hard… it does hearten me to have so much support so that I don't feel like I'm going mad. And people like volunteer X who stand up for me, it really means a lot, and shows that deep progress/the possibility of change is actually being made.*

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[12] The Plan cites the Institute's Articles of Association object to be pursued through the "delivery of lectures, a library of reference and circulation, a Reading Room, a museum of machines, models, minerals, natural history, and the formation of classes".

As can be seen here it was at times hard to ascertain board positions due to lack of response or engagement, though these silences or unclear blockages were in themselves a kind of statement around locked up leadership, albeit mixed with inertia. The Executive Manager's observations on institutional inertia are captured in the journaling below, along with my action-research reflections to his questions.

"What are the internal capabilities/capacities required for an organization to pursue strategic thinking? This is where the BMI is struggling. Why?"

John Holden discusses the need for leaders to "embody the values they promote…the main task of leaders is to articulate and reiterate organizational values and link them in one direction to the individual and in the other to the world.[701] If values aren't lived in everyday practice and relationships, cynicism and low morale result, something that seems to be a feature at the BMI, along with the plan's generic values listed, not anything that might point towards the organisation's unique identity and meaningful shared values, something Holden talks about in terms of finding shared language too. This approach connects with museological concepts around fluidity and flexibility as features of future thinking/readiness, linking into moves from the traditional to reinvented imaginary between values as ancillary to core tenets, to shared mission driven leadership as opposed to mission as document.

Figure 7.16: Action research reflective journaling 2018

Leadership on this higher level is just as important as it is on the curatorial level if objectives are to be realised. On this issue of leadership, and attempts to stimulate it into action as curator and action researcher at the BMI, the executive manager noted that:

Likely your prompting and approach has gotten the organisation/Board to a starting point, which may not have otherwise been the case. The car is on the grid when it would have otherwise still been in the garage. How will the race go?
Endurance requires: fuel ($)
Direction (steering)- vision
Skill (capacity)
Anticipation (adapt)

Figure 7.17: Action research reflective journaling 2018

The language here was motivational in two senses. Firstly, I found the sentiments to be encouraging on a personal level at that particular time; and secondly, it demonstrated his understanding of the complexity of the task, and ability to communicate its details in striking terms. The elements listed here—endurance, direction, skill, anticipation—are similar to parts of the dynamics of staff interactions (library, events, volunteers, board) and all contribute to an organisation's ability and capacity for self-reflection and transformation. It is also important to return to the action research tenet that "organisations are social constructions that do not exist independently of human minds and actions," and the reality of different approaches and personalities that challenged change processes.

Conclusion

How, in practice, can the BMI become part of conversations and transformations as part of the city's development? On the evidence presented here, changes to governance and leadership are one path. Impediments on this path include contradictory or ambiguous notions of value, from implied tangible heritage, to the role that activated collections and collaborations can play in intangible multifaceted experiences and meaning-making. Strategies based on risk aversion, business as usual and the accepted realities of the traditional museum are not likely to be productive. A more flexible leadership approach would prioritise the RMT's reflective practice and a culture of inquiry, and would encourage an appreciation that "creating relevant experience will often involve risk-taking as well as embracing challenges".[13] A board drawn from a wider demographic; a board prepared to review and broaden its core values to include intangible and institutional value; a board that will bring its professional staff, both managerial and curatorial, into that discussion of value; a board that will place the BMI and its core values within the bigger city and state-wide programs as a leader; and a board that will encourage its staff to explore the potential of creative activation as a way forward: these sorts of changes relate to issues of governance, and change must start at that fundamental level.

While the various kinds of value appear to be recognised at the current BMI board level to some degree, its common response to suggestions for change is "We can't afford that" rather than identifying something as aligning with core vision and values and asking "How could we afford that?" The executive manager would often remind me (in my role that included elements of a change agent) about the need to think of the long game, not just to engage in short-term

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[13] Jane K. Nielsen, "Transformations in the Postmodern Museum," *Museological Review*, no. 18 (2014). 365.

thinking and planning. This thesis argues for the value of the BMI positioning itself in such museological developments and movements in the GLAM sector with the opportunity/responsibility for organisations to be linked out to broader contemporary issues, and so initiating the move from the traditional museum of insular society to civic engagements[14] of the present.

The following example from the action research explores these issues from another perspective.

2. BMI Basement

The BMI basement has been a source of intrigue since a media story in 2012 claimed that there were traces of underground shops, from a period when Sturt St, the main street of Ballarat in which the BMI is situated, was in fact on a lower level than at present. Ghost tour operator and history buff, Nathaniel Buchanan, said he was organising an underground tour of Ballarat in time for Heritage Weekend that year stating that "Lydiard Street's level has risen by three metres in some sections and parts of Sturt Street have risen too".[15] Actually, and as explained by architect Wendy Jacobs, there were businesses at lower levels, but these were accessed via a stairwell from the street, and grates on street level that would have let in light to the windows below.[16] Intriguingly, too, the basement itself contains evidence of these businesses and presents traces of the BMI's history, including old play bills and advertising material (see Figure 7.18), as well as mysterious graffiti, possibly done using candle soot.

Figure 7.18: AVAT516 Historic Advertising in BMI basement 2017

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[14] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum,* 3.

[15] Jordan Oliver, "Discovering Ballarat's Forgotten Underground History," *Ballarat Courier* September 2nd, 2012.

[16] Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, "Why are the windows in the basement?" Accessed 25th May 2020, https://ballaratmi.org.au/library/tours.

The basement also holds the BMI's collection of the *Courier* newspapers that researchers may order up for use. Flooding and poor air-quality has led the basement to be subject to limited access by members and the public for some time. But myths and intrigues die hard. In 2016-17, some tourists were sent over to the BMI with information that they could view the new Max Harris Photography Collection in the basement. This presented an example of poor communication between the BMI and the tourist body Visit Ballarat, and led to two developments. The whole Visit Ballarat team was invited to tour the BMI building and its current offerings; and, following this was brought into discussions around a proposed Underground Ballarat tourism experience, in which venture the safety of access to the basement eventually became part of a longer-term plan, further connecting the BMI in this novel way to the city.

This process also raised further questions about the basement in terms of BMI collections. Decisions about these matters were difficult to make, given the lack of a clear vision of the BMI's mission, and of detailed strategies to achieve it. Such a vision would need to include some consideration of the role and priorities of the BMI within the broader ecology of the city and of its research collections offering: What is BMI's purpose and mission with collections? Which should be kept, which deployed elsewhere? How were we to decide? What space-priority should those collections receive? Frustration and tension inevitably grew as the library committee was repeatedly asked to make decisions about these matters in the absence of any guiding principles. The question always came back to: Who are we? What do we offer? What do we stand for? This experience led to curatorial advocacy for updating the BMI Collections Policy which was completed in 2019, though it still lacked a deep connection to the overarching BMI strategy documents (including an action plan or business plan that were still works in progress in 2020).

Whilst these discussions were continuing, the opportunity arose for the BMI to be included in the first Open House Ballarat program,[17] expanded from the popular Melbourne event, and allowing visitation to various architectural spaces, both old and new. I pursued this as an obvious way to showcase elements of the BMI building, its collections and its contemporary activities. I spoke with local media (also an example of the expanded role of curators to engage with the public), and was quoted as saying: "I love the Open House ethos, that it is open to

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[17] Open House Melbourne, "Open House Ballarat weekend," accessed 6th June 2020, https://www.openhousemelbourne.org/ballarat/.

everyone to come and enjoy, learn about history, contemporary architecture and how we want the city to be going into the future as well".[18] One way to do this was to make the most of the interest in and curiosity around the basement by arranging to have limited tours —giving us a chance to trial possible future uses of the basement and to raise awareness of the need for funds to develop these possibilities further. Through engaging with the media we worked to share this messaging:

> After renovation works, which required planning and money, Ms Tsilemanis said there would be even more opportunities to open up the space and maximise its use. Ms Tsilemanis said the BMI was keen to be involved in Open House Ballarat after having already been a part of successful programs such as White Night, Ballarat Heritage Month, and the Ballarat International Foto Biennale. But she also hoped it would raise awareness of the ongoing work that still needed to be done.[19]

Such a move would expand moves towards BMI's own capacity to create and manage their own offerings. Part of this capacity-building was the opportunity to be part of a professionally-run event like Open House, whose members were familiar with working in such spaces and able to provide expert advice on safety and risk-management.

In planning, the BMI's risk-aversion attitude was in evidence immediately. I was to be told later that had the proposal gone to a full board meeting for approval, then the basement tours would not have gone ahead. Instead, a number of enthusiastic board members, including the chairman of the Building Committee worked closely with me and the Open House team to run the tours safely and successfully. The increased media interest included the creation of a short ABC film, and also the involvement of Federation University historian David Waldron, whose interest lay in the mythology around the basement graffiti stories. This event opportunity was

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[18] Siobhan Calafiore, "Underground Exporation Reveals Stories from Ballarat's Past," *Ballarat Courier,* October 28th, 2017.

[19] Ibid.

also the first major event with the advocated-for role of volunteer coordinator (Figure 7.20), another capacity building development for the BMI as an organisation.

Figure 7.19: AVAT40 ABC journalists visiting to promote Open House Ballarat 2017.

Figure 7.20: AVAT41 BMI volunteer coordinator Marilyn Furness with Open House organiser 2017

The story of the BMI basement provides a good example of what alert and entrepreneurial curatorial practice can achieve. The curator needs to be free to work flexibly and swiftly to exploit opportunities as they present themselves. He or she needs to be situated within a firm system of core beliefs, and have the support of board members. Trialling ideas and events provides confidence and data when developing relationships with partners and funders. A shift in mindset could be observed among some board members, who could see the value of developing the basement space to be linked into city tourism, and the storytelling possibilities, thus bringing together both tangible and intangible elements, with both economic and cultural value for the institute to pursue. Work done for and connections made for Open House were also furthered by Heritage Weekend 2018 where the basement was part of a virtual underground tour, in partnership with Digital Heritage Australia and David Waldron, further connecting into the city and raising BMI's profile.

Figure 7.21: BMI's Andrew Miller giving basement tour for Ballarat Open House 2017

Figure 7.22: David Waldron with basement research for visitors that couldn't go on limited tours AVAT42

Historian David Waldron at Open House Ballarat BMI 2017

A funding application to Heritage Victoria was made in 2018 for 'Repair and Conservation' works to the basement, where "the objective of this project [was] to work towards having the space open for visitation and for future use for interpretation of the history and heritage of the Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute and wider Ballarat".[20] This would include lift access to provide access for all.[21] The application was not successful and work still continues to raise funds for the development of this space. I was not invited to contribute to the application in my role as curator. This was perhaps not a good strategic decision, since curatorial input into that application may have been helpful. Input such as providing a clearer vision of the possible outcomes, the linking of these into a clear organisational mission, and using evidence of the value of creative activation from the Open House example, or linking the application to the City of Ballarat Heritage and Creative City strategies, thus having the potential to provide both economic return as well as cultural value—may have played a positive role in positioning the BMI as operating from within the cultural life of Ballarat city. The addition of the phrase "and wider Ballarat" might not then have looked like an afterthought: the BMI would have become the vehicle for cultural activation, not just the final recipient of funds for renovation. The story of the basement permits serious reflection on: the dangers of risk-aversion approaches to opportunities that arise; the need to prioritise value in ways other than the financial; and the need for cohesive, focused and agreed action in line with clear mission goals. The experience

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[20] Ballaarat Mechanics Institute, "Repair and Conservation Work to Basement Funding Application to Heritage Victoria," (2018).

[21] Ibid.

also showed the way for a more outward-looking approach to the BMI's offerings as part of the cultural ecology of the city.

3. BMI doors

> One core many doors...It takes courage and focus to maintain one core. It takes open-heartedness and humility to open many doors. It takes trust to hold it all together.[22]

On these measures, and on the basis of the evidence so far presented here, the BMI would fall some way short of Nina Simon's persuasive argument in the epigraph above. Here a discussion beginning with some of the BMI's physical doors or entrance points will lead us on to the more metaphorical doors which must also be opened. Simon argues that with regard to outsiders and insiders, if you want new people to come inside, you need to open new doors—doors that speak to outsiders and welcome them in.[23] That the BMI is not perceived as having an open-door policy is summed up by one response from BMI event data collated in 2018: "As it is (when events aren't on) it feels like we the public are not allowed or welcome to be there".[24]

As a way to open multiple metaphorical doors, the challenges of BMI's physical doors pose some initial problems. The grand BMI building sits on the main street of Ballarat, with Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom, looking down from directly above its doors, which face the university's Arts Academy; and all is within a short walk of Ballarat Art Gallery and Her Majesty's Theatre. Unlike the basement, a hidden curiosity, the building itself would seem to be highly visible and present in the streetscape, and at the city's cultural centre. But despite its prominence as a building—and this is the key point of this section—many still say they have rarely been inside, or that they know little of the BMI's story. Simon noted this of her own organisation, that despite banners and press and good positioning "some doors are invisible", and she talks about finding the keys that allow people to unlock their connection. "The front door is only the introduction to the experience within…the more you start to matter to people, the more they will desire opportunities to go deeper into the room of what you offer".[25] How do the doors of the BMI—both literally and symbolically—lead people inside?

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[22] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 157.

[23] Ibid. 49.

[24] Jenn Mann, "BMI Events Survey Report March 2018," (Ballarat: Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, 2018)

[25] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 55.
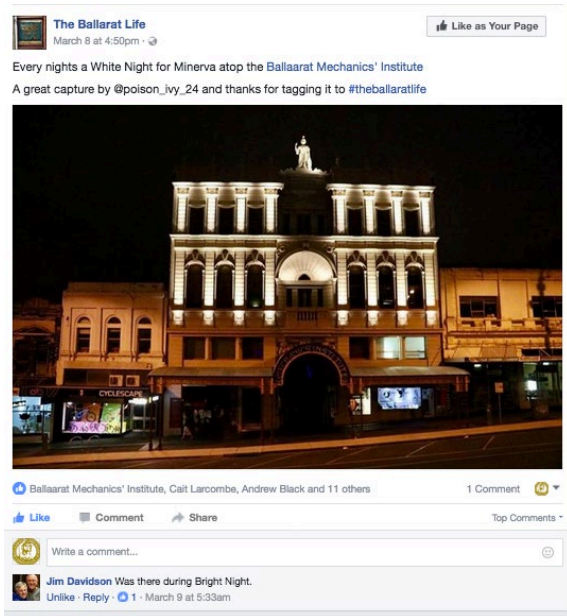
Figure 7.23 The Ballarat Life social media account shares images tagged #theballaratlife

Figure 7.24 AVAT45 Ellen Sørensen playing at White Night BMI 2017 (Dave Byrne)

Towards the end of 2016, the City of Ballarat supported the BMI to create evening lighting on the building, showcasing its beauty and grandness and heightening its visibility at night (see Figure 7.23). This lighting did, to an extent, address the dark entranceway and the imposing nature of the architecture, but it also speaks to the ongoing tension between built heritage and intangible connections. In this move away from simply seeing heritage, Smith reminds us that heritage is not in the thing but in its negotiation and recreation, which is always contested.[26] In the case of the BMI, its own history (as explored in chapter two) gives it the reputation of having uncontested space with uncontested values (implied rather than earnt value in RMT terms): a perception which its entranceway works to reinforce.

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[26] Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd, eds., *Performing Heritage : Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). 71.
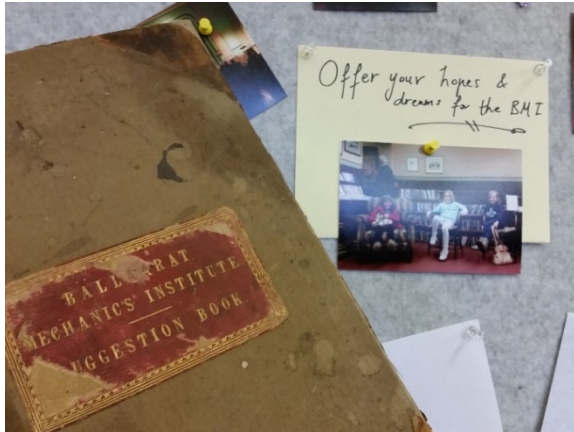
Figure 7.25 AVAT46 BMI suggestions board at AGM 2016
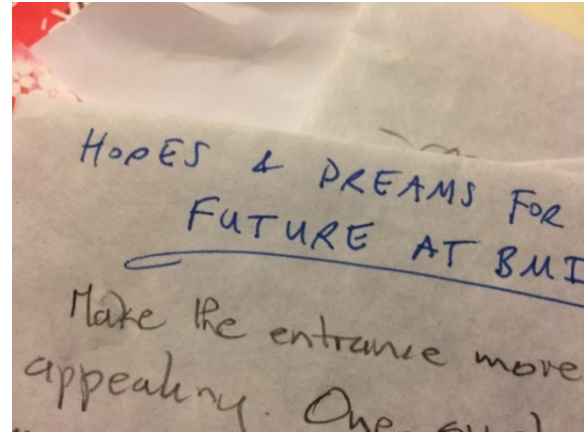
Figure 7.26: AVAT47 suggestions from BMI AGM 2016

But there are ways to open those doors to contemporary concerns. Some examples at BMI noted during the curatorship have included: a rainbow welcome poster during the controversial and divisive marriage equality plebiscite in 2017 (Figure 7.28); Barry Gilson's indigenous song leading audience into the building during the *Storytelling the City* walk (discussed in chapter six); paper flower decorations by the BMI Friends group for the BMI *Gardens in Spring* event linking into the 1938 floral festival; local artists using the top balcony for an arts project *Minerva Speaks*; contemporary local photographs displayed in the foyer, a result of collaboration with the social media account The Ballarat Life presenting "a visual love letter to the city"; Verandah Virtuosos—drag-queens performing on the balcony in 2018 (Figure 7.29). Finally, actor Marg Dobson (Figure 7.27)—who had been engaged to perform at BMI's first International Women's Day event in 2016—performing as Minerva at the closing day of *Talking Shop*, welcoming visitors to the front of the BMI building, which encouraged the entrance of the public into the linked artist-in-residence installation in foyer space, and to other creative activities. All of these activations were small but effective ways to open the doors to a more inclusive organisation and the expression of its relevance to the community.

Figure 7.27: AVAT49 Marg Dobson as Minerva with David Haymes, Talking Shop 2019

Figure 7.28: AVAT50 BMI Entranceway with Welcome poster

Figure 7.29: Verandah Virtuosos performing on the BMI balcony as part of White Night's main program 2018

(Lloyd Harvey)

Two other such activities are of note. The BMI marketing committee paid for a promotional film to be created at the end of 2016 that used the tagline Make Your Own History at the BMI. This celebrated the contributions of a long line of people who were invited inside to make their mark, contributing to its daily life and its varied cultural meanings. A related press release, building on the relationship created between BMI and filmmaker Erin McCuskey over a period of years, stated: "It has been a joy and revelation to use visual storytelling to shine a light on the BMI". It continues, to describe the place as a "rare hub of culture, story, ideas and learning that has always been core to the heritage of Ballarat. It's important to reach out so that people will engage in the spaces and realise its potential".[27] Comments like these reveal the need for BMI to build its institutional value, in positive connections with various publics.

Figures 7.30 and 7.31: Stills from the promotional film 'Make Your own History at the BMI' 2016
(Yum Studio)

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[27] Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, "Spectacular New Film About the BMI Launched Online," December 15th, 2016, accessed 25th May 2020, https://ballaratmi.org.au/2016/12/15/spectacular-new-film-bmi-launched-online.

Secondly, a 2018 state government grant allowed the creation of interpretive panels and signage, collaboratively planned with the Library Committee, the board, and member feedback. Installed in the once dark and unwelcoming entrance foyer, they tell some of BMI's history through addressing common queries such as: "Why the 'aa' in Ballaarat? Who is Minerva? and Why the name Mechanics'?" They also promote the photography collection and the possibility of venue hire, along with details of how to get involved with the BMI. Previously, only one static panel (with a list of names recognising the funders of the building restoration) was available for scrutiny.

Figure 7.32: AVAT51 Welcome panels in BMI foyer
Figure 7.33: AVAT52 Category signage in Reading Room

Various examples of creative activation through film, performance, installation, design and signage lead to multiple outcomes, including building networks and relationships; raising the BMI's profile and institutional value; using storytelling and creativity to connect people, places, collections and stories in dialogical relationships; and attempting to bring together the tangible and intangible experience of buildings through memory, connection, and creating space for audiences to be "active agents in the mediation of the meanings of heritage".[28] Many of these outcomes were made possible through the curatorial facilitation this thesis argues for. However, the challenge of ongoing openness will continue if it is not part of a strong strategic core of vision and values.

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[28] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*. 74.

This process of opening the doors cannot be a one-off endeavour, a momentary door flying open, as Simon has it, but an ongoing process[29] which reflects the (changing) values of the BMI and one which comes out of values that are embedded in strategy and planning and lived by its leaders and personnel. This research has found that the opening of doors became part of the curatorial role and that the continuing, pro-active and creative role of the curator (or similar) was and will continue to be, essential.

Talking Shop exhibition

A final story, in relation to BMI doors, physical and symbolic, needs to be told here. Between January and April 2019, the final months of the curator role and the research project, an exhibition, called *Talking Shop: Ballarat in business and city life*, was presented in the BMI's lending library and Reading Room spaces. This exhibition project, while not ensuring the acceptance of the need for change within the BMI, still marked a number of impacts that can be seen as being part of an organisational process for change led by action research and curatorial practice.

For this *Talking Shop* exhibition, the hallway between the foyer and the library door acted as the beginning of the exhibition experience, with contemporary colour photographs of shops by local photographers selected from the online account, The Ballarat Life. This was the continuation of a fruitful collaboration started in the first year of curatorship for the *Spring Celebrations*, where contemporary imagery hung in the front foyer and hallway, showcasing local photography but also providing an interest point and flash of colour, drawing people in from the street and through down towards the library, a space that visitors can be unsure about entering.

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[29] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 55.

Figure 7.34: AVAT53 Talking Shop Logo 2019

Figure 7.35: AVAT54 Talking Shop, The Ballarat Life photography 2019

The *Talking Shop* exhibition was not about challenging content, in Kidd or Witcomb's terms, but provided an opportunity to bring together various threads of the curatorial project. These included the trial of an artist-in-residence and a series of events and ways for the community to contribute their own images, memories, and stories via Community Days, where oral histories were recorded, and imagery scanned for the BMI's new AV collection (see Figure 6.36). Designed and described as a generative exhibition, it challenged traditional, didactic approaches, allowing various inputs and outcomes, including the partnering with the City of Ballarat as part of an urban planning consultation around a central shopping precinct. A story capturing the exhibition, and some of the new contributions, has been published on Victorian Collections allowing ongoing engagement with the material collected.[30]

Figures 7.36: AVAT55 Shirley and Vic Shelley at Talking Shop Community Day 2019
Figure 7.37: AV17 Amy Tsilemanis (curator), Pauline O'Shannessy-Dowling (artist in residence) and guests in the Reading Room at Talking Shop Community Day 2/2/19

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[30] Victorian Collections, "Talking Shop: Ballarat in Business and City Life at Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute." Accessed 25th May 2020, https://victoriancollections.net.au/stories/talking-shop-ballarat-in-business-and-city-life-at-ballaarat.

The artist-in-residence, Pauline O'Shannessy Dowling, also utilised the building entranceway for a colourful community installation. Addressing ongoing issues around the sense of welcome or invitation it was "used to change the way people view the BMI—lots of colour & fun in the work. We also used some of our installation ideas at the Bridge Mall Community Consultation site. In this way, extending our message and reach beyond the BMI itself in a small but significant example of collaboration".[31] An artist book was also created during the residency, made up of community contributions.[32]

Figure 7.38 AVAT56 Artist in residence Pauline O'Shannessy-Dowling with installation pieces 2019
Figure 7.39: AVAT57 Board member Andrew Miller with Talking Shop signage 2019

In addition, the exhibition provided a structure to drive organisational work on the updating of the Collections Policy and the launch of the photography collection cataloguing work being available online at Victorian Collections. As with other activation projects, the exhibition and linked programs and collaborations provided an entrance point for visitors and participants who might not otherwise feel able to enter. Feedback from the event report (Appendix 7.4) states "It was so wonderful being able to visit during your artist in residence at the BMI, pod. Thursdays gained an extra attraction having the incentive to spend time in this fascinating

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[31] Pauline O'Shannessy-Dowling, "Artist in Residence at BMI Final Report," (2019).

[32] Multimedia Link 18: AVAT783 BMI Artist Book (Pauline O'Shannessy-Dowling). Digital copy available via figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3.

building and enjoy the conversations and contents of the exhibitions. Thanks for the opportunity!"—testimonial from a visual artist[33]

The artist-in-residence model that was trialled with *Talking Shop*, was included in my final report to the board as an example of a successful development to pursue with appropriate resources (Appendix 7.5). This included the artist's project report and testimonials, an example of data that can be used when articulating BMI aims and values in funding applications or partnership developments. Testimonials that capture various kinds of value, and possibilities for greater city and community connection and relevance can be viewed below in Figure 7.40:

"Artist in residence programs in museums and collection spaces support cultural and artistic exchange, nurture experimentation and new ideas, and support research and the development of new work. New perspectives, talent, and experimentation can only make our sites of history and memory even more awesome. Thank you POD for this experience that opened my eyes to what the BMI has to offer Ballarat." - Public Art Co-ordinator[721]

"It was fabulous to see the developing installation of colourful work in the foyer of the institute and to see the way that this program enabled an artist to work with the community. Artist-in-residence programs provide benefits to the whole community and to the artist due to the way that they enable the artistic process and work to be made visible to others, and they provide the opportunity for community members from all walks of life to become active in the construction of the artworks. This collaborative sharing of the arts through construction and public viewing helps develop a sense of community, ownership and wellbeing, and highlights the importance of the arts to community life". –University lecturer[722]

Figure 7.40: public feedback in the Talking Shop Event report

Another artist project that was part of the *Talking Shop* exhibition around Kline's Confectioners (Figure 7.42) allowed collaboration with artists Margie Balazic, local primary school students and the Ballarat Technical School, planting more seeds of change and development.

"Today's tour of Mr Kline went fabulous at Town Hall. Council allowed the students to have a history adventure tour. They were so inspired, and a new generation of historians have emerged. The building [a 3D created model of an historic Ballarat shop] is now located at Tech School to inspire students. Its next adventures are unknown..."

Figure 7.41: Message from collaborating artist Margie Balazic 21/06/19

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[33] O'Shannessy-Dowling, "Artist in Residence at BMI Final Report".

Figures 7.42: AVAT59 Win News in Reading Room promoting the Talking Shop exhibition 2019

Figure 7.43: AVAT58 Eloise and Margie Balazic with Talking Shop artwork

The *Talking Shop* exhibition and related events allowed new collaborations and a mixture of Holden's three-legged stool of value: intrinsic, instrumental and particularly institutional, in its building of links with various publics of artists, collectors, students, other Ballarat GLAM organisations, and more. It was positively received by the BMI staff, board and volunteers and seen as a fitting final project of the curatorship.

Conclusion

Initial objectives of this project were to investigate through practice how the role of curator could facilitate creative connections between heritage collections, organisations, their city contexts and expanded notions of value beyond the economic. Creative activation was considered in terms of the three areas of creative practice, organisational thinking, and heritage as a connector of the past present and future. It argued that this process can produce cultural and institutional value and lead to greater diversity and relevance. The research also found a deep connection between organisational capacity to evolve and sustainably develop through support of the proposed creative activation.

A reductive focus on functional and financial matters as well as a reluctance to share strategic discussions, evidenced in some board members was found to be in tension with other board members and stakeholders who were excited for the possibilities brought by new creative skill sets and energy. In this way historic instances of differing views on the role, management, and future direction of the institute continue to play out.

By trialling models, possibilities for future developments are laid and link back to the long game and how the economic imperative and financial thinking can come to limit the practice and identity of organisations. Creative projects often present the difference between immediate visibility and translation to dollars, like the sale of raffle tickets, and benefits that take time to unfold, but have the potential for more depth and meaning—and perhaps to a sense of celebration, rather than just survival. These are ongoing challenges across many cultural organisations, particularly those that are largely volunteer-run.

Progress towards opening up the BMI organisation can be seen throughout the three-year project, aided by my work as curator. Metrics outside those of attendance numbers and revenue raising can be measured in the following ways: feedback like that captured in surveys, reports and comment books, as well as through increased media interest and profile. This can extend to early projects building interest and confidence for later investment, whether through financial support (for instance using past projects to advocate for funding) or in-kind, like the artist in residence unpaid trial with all the benefits discussed above. In the case of *Talking Shop*, Wordsworth Communicating were inspired to go beyond their standard brief of managing the BMI's website and newsletter, to using new technology to create a digital tour of the *Talking Shop* exhibition.[34] Curatorial work connecting artists with collections also inspired collaborations at other organisations. Examples are: the Ballarat Gold Museum working with a musician as part of the exhibition *Wonderful Things*—citing Storytelling the City as inspiration; and being part of a new Ballarat-based panel event about the meeting point of arts and heritage with "Curious Collaborations and Wonderful Things" in March 2019 presented by the Professional Historians Association (Victoria and Tasmania), pictured in Figure 7.44.

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[34] Multimedia Link 15. Available here- https://invictoria.com.au/talking-shop-exhibition/.

Figure 7.44: AVAT60 Curious Collaborations panel at Gold Museum (Lucy Bracey)

The facilitating and enabling role of the curator was also able to assist members' ideas, with examples of the monthly poetry event, *Word Banquet*, that was held at BMI in 2017[35] (Figure 7.45) and the *Winter Salon* during the first Ballarat Winter Festival, in order to trial small scale events showcasing local artists with the BMI bar open as a revenue stream (Figure 7.46).
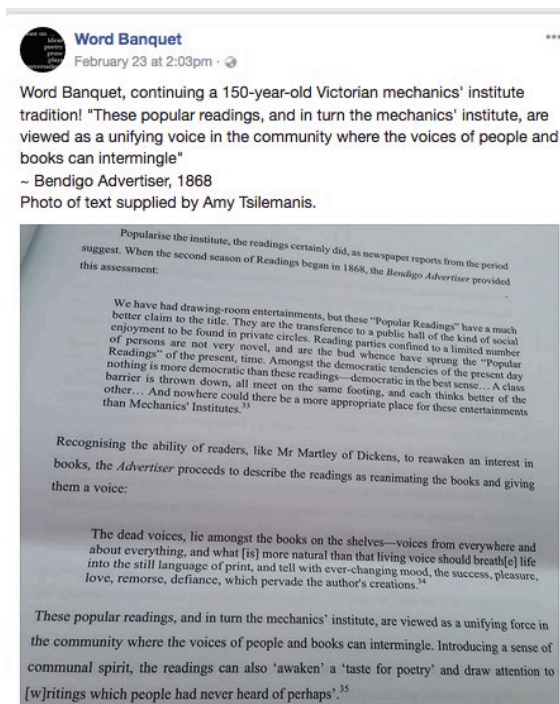

Figure 7.45: Word Banquet monthly event social media, 2018

Figure 7.46: AVAT61 Winter Salon at the BMI 2018

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[35] Inspired by 1860s events discussed in Comyn, "Literary Sociability on the Goldfields: The Mechanics' Institute in the Colony of Victoria, 1854–1870".

Other outcomes include the increased ability to engage new board members with different skills and passion (and growing diversity), and the development of volunteers through advocating for the Volunteer Coordinator role and building their capacity to assist in the staging of events and so on. Extending the reach of the BMI and providing various entrance points to engage with it has been explored here in response to the thesis questions of building greater connectivity, relevance and diversity. Whilst deep sustainable change is hard to measure, and its embedding in strategy and policy not always possible, these examples provide points of tension and shift, and practical tools the organisation, and others facing similar challenges, can continue to develop.

Simon notes this challenge of measuring relevance beyond the standard kinds of metrics of visitor numbers or demographic data but notes that depth of meaning might be tracked through participants affiliation to the institution: "When participants identify as insiders, they do so because they feel a sense of ownership and deep connection with the room". [36] She states this is best measured by *behaviours*, such as: becoming volunteers or donors, invitations from partners, collaborators who spread the word about the institution. She has also observed that in engaging with outsiders and asking what matters to them, the organisation can refine what matters to *them*. This is another way she says that relevance can be measured. By "measuring your own institutional tolerance for relevant activities that challenge traditional ways of working…[she asks:] "Are you willing to rebuild your room to be relevant to outsiders of interest?"[37] This is what she calls transformative relevance, a road that perhaps the BMI can travel if willing to look at the question: What are you willing to change? This was put to the board by the executive manager in 2018 via one of Simon's blogposts on audiences and organisational change. The response remains to be seen, though small things are beginning to emerge, such as the appointment of new board members, and the various seeds above that can be grown and nurtured.

As Nielsen states: "In a museum context, it may be argued that relevance can be understood as the creation of meaningful practices".[38]An example of this meaningful practice can also be via doors opened through support and investment of benefactors, such as in this case the Haymes family, who funded the part-time curatorial role. At the 2019 BMI AGM the Haymes were

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[36] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 169.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Jane K. Nielsen, "The Relevant Museum: Defining Relevance in Museological Practices," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 30, no. 5 (2015). 366.

thanked for their contribution over many years with life membership. While this is a fine gesture, it might also be seen to represent a performance, an acting out of recognition (part of the institutional history perhaps and the notion of esteemed benefactors). Again, the organisation is driven by good will but what is expressed can be seen as an interest in public show rather than deep questioning and change. Jenny Haymes' response to this gift and recognition was: "The best way to thank David and I is to continue driving the momentum that [the curator role] has built up over the last three years".[39] The call is for action, not thanks, and to build on the inter-generational sharing and opening up, that such investment has fostered.

Figure 7.47 and Figure 7.48: My Twilight Talk presentation at BMI with live music and imagery from the BMI collection. Jenny Haymes pictured on left, on right BMI EO Tony Godfrey, myself and Max Harris AVAT63 Tony Godfrey, Amy Tsilemanis & Max Harris at Twilight Talk 2019 AVAT62 Jenny Haymes and Andrew Miller at Amy Tsilemanis' Twilight Talk with Winter Berries performing 2019

As this thesis explores, heritage, cities and organisations themselves are dynamic constructs and their own sense of identity and culture is made up of people, perspectives, and the interrelations between the parts within an organisation and outwards to its external environment. Events, artist engagements, planning processes, and marketing all contribute to an organisation's identity and ability to evolve and engage. As practicing curator and action researcher in these examples I was able to advocate for, and work on, trials to open up thinking and possibilities for the organisation to build on going into the future. As I worked with the organisation in all its systematic relationships, it became a "juggling act of building capacity and resources whilst adjusting public persona and offerings,"[40] and was both a challenge and a privilege.

Strategic planning and different entrance points and doors have been discussed, working from the ideal of a single core, something that has shown to be an ongoing issue for the BMI. What the BMI leadership possibilities are, and the expression of its identity and value, come

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[39] Lucy Bracey, *Email correspondence.* (June 2019)

[40] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum,* 5.

into question. Institutional value, as John Holden designates (as part of his stable three-legged-stool model of values to validate culture—intrinsic, instrumental and institutional) "should be counted as part of the contribution of culture to produce a democratic and well-functioning society".[41] But how can this take place when the organisation itself is not democratic or well-functioning? Creative activation projects, combined with organisational development, draw on Simon's reminder that relevance is a process, not a momentary flying open of a door, providing both a challenge and a call to action in the evolution of cities, heritage, curation, and museums, and requires dynamism and reflexivity: "The more museums start to think transformative approaches intro their theory and practice, the better prepared they are going to be for future challenges and possibilities".[42]

This research project has used elements of action research in order to address problems and trial solutions, plus a key basis of the HUL approach of testing the status quo and the resulting value of not knowing until you try. These moments have been charted across the three-year curatorship, and tensions between Anderson's traditional museum model and a reinvented one have played out through the RMT examples discussed, including the RMT shifts from: insular society to civic engagement ; the voice of authority to multiple viewpoints; mission as document to mission driven; assumed value to earned value; and business as usual to reflective practice.[43] Also reflective of broader sector change, the curator's role expanding from collection specific expertise to "becoming broader and much more socially inclusive"[44] drove the need to explore the practices and structures of the BMI itself.

While some answers have been presented here, there are also questions that must continue to be asked. What level of sustainable change can occur in an organisation struggling to articulate its own mission, values and value? (or which is able to articulate but not *live*?) The curator role, deeply engaged in both action and reflection, in itself created an intervention of sorts, an agent of change. Here a shift was argued for, from the MI founding ethos of ennobling minds and the early museum's one-way transmission of knowledge to a contemporary enabling of new leadership, new voices, and new ways of working. It is hoped that these practical learnings, framed in and reflected on in relation to museology and critical heritage, are useful and

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[41] John Holden, "How We Value Arts and Culture," *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management* 6, no. 2 (2009). 455.

[42] Nielsen, "Transformations in the Postmodern Museum". 28.

[43] Ibid., 3–4.

[44] Ibid.

inspiring in addressing the role of unique (and problematic) cultural organisations like the BMI in the twenty-first century. In addition to this dissertation being made available to organisations, including Creative Victoria, the photo book that captures the three-year project has been gifted to all stakeholders as well as the organisation Mechanics' Institutes Victoria (MIV) and Federation University Library for ongoing reference and inspiration. This is a uniquely creative and overtly visual contribution to the field. One that is only possible as a result of practice-led and action research. There will also be a public presentation of research findings in 2021 and a workshop held with Ballarat Arts Foundation where I will share my practical skills and learnings around creative activation of the past.

CONCLUSION

This research contributes to knowledge in multiple ways that include both the dissertation *and* its accompanying imagery and multimedia. Just as the Max Harris Photography collection captured a period of Ballarat history visually and provided the launching pad for creative activations and critique, the new photo archive that captures the BMI in this contemporary phase of renewal and creative connection, provides a reference point both of celebration, and as a reminder to keep asking what and who the BMI (and similar historic cultural organisations) is for. The thesis charts the contemporary landscape of Ballarat GLAM, cultural heritage, Australian and international MIs, and their connection to one another through the cross-disciplinary framework of museology, critical heritage, cities and value. It places these organisations in their historical contexts whilst offering contemporary solutions through creative programming and partnerships that shed new light on heritage collections and places. Through deep practice it offers ways of building cultural value, and in using creative activation as a path towards organisational renewal, inclusivity and relevance to diverse publics. A summary of how this has been achieved, documented, and critiqued follows. This directly connects back to the problems and questions that the thesis has addressed, through the mixed-methodology approach and focus on real-world outcomes.

This thesis has explored the creative connections between five interlinked areas: heritage, curatorial practice, organisations, cities, and the question of value. The central argument of this thesis is that these interconnections find powerful possibilities in creative activation for the BMI and other kindred institutions. This is in terms of organisational relevance and viability, as well as the formation of meaningful connections with the publics they serve. These connections, facilitated by the curator, move beyond tangible objects and buildings, by the means of the creation of multi-layered and affective experiences that open dialogue between people, places, and ideas.

The approach has used historical, contemporary, and cross-disciplinary contexts and applied an ecological framework for understanding the dynamic links between past, present and future. Through close study of the regional city of Ballarat, with a focus on the BMI, the contemporary role and challenges of historic GLAM cultural organisations have been investigated. These were examined through the broader contextual lens of MIs and their role as part of the GLAM sector. By positioning MIs in this way, their relevance is linked to issues of curation,

creative practice, diversity, change, and leadership. The mixed-methodology approach of this thesis contributes new knowledge about the way in which curator-facilitated creative activation projects are structured and what they can contribute. The thesis has also highlighted the contemporary role of MIs, in particular the BMI, and other GLAM organisations in the Ballarat region in providing greater connectivity, relevance and diversity to key cultural heritage stakeholders in the present.

Outlining and evaluating aims of the reinvented museum towards greater inclusion and social responsiveness in GLAM and MIs provided part of the theoretical premise for this thesis. This process was applied through the RMT model and its four areas of management strategies, communication ideology, institutional values, and governance. The framework of critical heritage was used to emphasise the importance of combining theory and practice.

This thesis has argued that curator-led creative activation enables greater connectivity and relevance for cultural organisations. When enabled, these activations have the potential to provide new forms of engagement and alternative perspectives about heritage places and collections. Creative activation work was applied at the BMI and studied at other organisations in three ways. These approaches were: arts practice bringing new voices to organisations and cities (ranging across film, music, performance, photography, multimedia, installation); organisational development emphasising greater openness and diversity; and a re-conceptualisation of the potential of heritage. Here Harrison's call for dialogical heritage has been central, with the hope that heritage might become more "open, diverse, inclusive, representative and creative".[1] For a functioning cultural heritage ecology in Ballarat this would entail further shifts towards the reinvented museum mode of multiple viewpoints, civic engagement, broad representation, and operating with values of shared leadership and inclusiveness.[2]

From this research, two thesis sub-questions have been addressed: the forms of value that are produced by creative activation where thinking of cultural value goes beyond utility and functions as a live organism; and whether sustainable change is possible in contemporary contexts.

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[1] Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches*. 230.

[2] Anderson, *Reinventing the Museum : The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*. 3.

This thesis has argued that curatorship is most effective when traditional collection knowledge and facilitation skills are combined. This approach enables multiple voices and greater participation. The dissertation also emphasises the unique skills of artists to engage with cultural heritage. At the BMI the Max Harris Photography Collection was used as means of enabling new creative works and perspectives. This approach built on Witcomb's discussion of poetic allusion, immersion, and affect that focuses more on experience rather than delivery of historical narrative. That is to say that the emphasis was on "affective rather than cognitive knowledge".[3] This doctoral study has also revealed, that success of any curatorial project remains dependent on organisational capacity and an ability to articulate shared values and strategic aims.

Each chapter has utilised appropriate methods and data. How each supports the central argument and key themes of the thesis is summarised below. In the literature review, the parallel history of museums and Mechanics' Institutes was presented. This was explored through issues of access, curation, and the role of the public, as well as the educative and social relevance over time. This shared history revealed the contemporary positioning of MIs as a part of the GLAM sector. It also found the historic legacy of MIs that includes issues of class and exclusivity, and the fraught relationship between MIs and state and local government in terms of the disbursement of public monies. These were found to be ongoing issues that persist into the present. The second half of the literature review covered contemporary critical heritage and GLAM debates around curation, use of collections, decolonisation, museum activism, and organisational management. It also outlined the field of cultural value and the creative industries and creative city concepts. This substantial literature review incorporated the various disciplines as well as historical and contemporary timeframes, that provided the PhD framework.

Chapter two applied archival research in conjunction with critical analysis of contemporary strategy documents to interrogate Ballarat city over time. In doing so it established the BMI's position within the city ecology. The impact of the gold rushes of the second half of the nineteenth century and the subsequent philanthropic establishment of many Ballarat cultural organisations was acknowledged. The BMI's early history revealed initial aims and interest in self-improvement, public morality and also respectable sociability. Thus the BMI played an important role in the development of nascent local goldfields culture by providing education

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[3] Witcomb, "Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums". 260

and entertainment. Tellingly during this period, it largely held a monopoly on such cultural pursuits. This chapter explored how the BMI's activities fed into the establishment of later institutions including the Ballarat Art Gallery and the School of Mines.

Key elements of the BMI's historical legacy that come to bear on the present day were explored. These include the role of women, who were involved in activities such as fundraising but only became involved in leadership roles from the latter part of the twentieth century; the management style and limited changes in leadership and approach; and a sense of stability that resulted in the institute existing continuously for 160 years, though with ongoing issues of sustainability. This situation can also be aligned with the RMT framework and partly explains later charges of exclusivity despite its founding egalitarian origins. The chapter concluded that the BMI is still largely working at the traditional end of the RMT model. Research revealed that it still largely maintains its internal focus as opposed to a more expansive perspective. This means that it is exclusive rather than inclusive; pursues obligatory oversight rather than inspired investment, and emphasises stability rather than sustainability. This chapter argued that the move towards greater sustainability for the future requires diversified leadership and outward engagement. This involves a paradigm shift from RMT's risk aversion position to one of informed risk taking. This cultural change also would involve a shift from being stern custodians to a more welcoming stance and being open to opportunities that are mutually beneficial and relevant.

These suggested moves towards greater diversity and openness, coming from a core of clear, shared leadership, coincide with broader developments in heritage, GLAM and cultural leadership. In Ballarat city they also meet with approaches to city management and identity and the ways in which heritage and creativity are fostered. The chapter examined three city approaches currently at play in Ballarat's cultural heritage, arts and city planning: HUL, creative city (and creative industries), and cultural heritage tourism. The chapter argued that all approaches appear to value collaboration and the breaking down of silos. However, it remains to be seen what will be achieved in practice. The chapter concluded that that there are parallels to be observed between the city and its cultural organisations as a result of competing strategies for identity and management.

Chapter three drew upon qualitative interviews with five Ballarat GLAM organisations to investigate the question of creative activation in arts and heritage projects as well as organisational thinking. It argued that all the organisations studied contribute to and provide

opportunities for creative ways of connecting people not only to the past, but also to the present and future as part of the cultural life of the city. Here various approaches to change around public engagement and sense of value provided a picture of Ballarat's dynamic cultural heritage ecology. Activations of the past ranged across critical engagements to more commercial ventures, and covered forms including theatre, digital media, music, photography, visuals arts, installation, film, and fashion. In organisational creativity—the capacity to reflect, experiment, collaborate and adapt was also shown to be of significance (the RMT move from accepted realities to a culture of inquiry). Aligned with this was an emphasis on the centrality of the curator in connecting people with objects, ideas, and stories in ways that allow new perspectives and collaborations.

The different organisations and select projects in this chapter presented various ways of combining heritage and creativity and the move towards greater connectivity and inclusion. These were discussed in terms of the RMT model as shifts between being inwardly driven to becoming responsive to stakeholders and from being collection driven to audience driven (and the important mix of these two). It analysed five further shifts from: limited representation to broad representation; internal perspective to community participant; focus on the past to relevant and forward looking; assumed value to earned value as well as from stability to sustainability. The organisations all spoke favourably of collaboration and presented examples of how this is working positively throughout the city. They also emphasised the challenges of funding and public perception shared by the BMI. However, a concluding argument of this thesis is that that the fragmented approach to the issue of Ballarat's identity remains an ongoing challenge.

As a baseline comparative research approach chapter four used qualitative interviews to assess the operating structures and assets of five urban MIs, and their respective discourses for change and engagement. In this way their creative activation work could be placed within the study of the possibilities of GLAM, and MIs for contemporary reinvention. Interviews were used to investigate the thesis research question of creative connections between organisations, collections and publics as well as the sub-themes of value and change. The themes within included historical legacies, change processes, resourcing and leadership, value, sustainability and the ways of linking of past, present and future through creative activation. Various projects were discussed, for example artist in residence programs, partnering with writers' festivals, outreach grants for community art projects as well as events that utilise collections.

It was argued that observing similarities to the GLAM sector is useful. Meanwhile, there are also unique challenges for MIs largely around their limited public profile and a public perception that they are private institutes. This revealed a need for a common language of renewal and regeneration in the twenty-first century. These MI interviews presented a deeper examination into what is happening in this under-studied space, with a particular focus on the contemporary lives of these urban MIs and their creative links with communities in the context of historical structures, aims and assets. This chapter located the BMI in the context of MIs nationally and internationally and also as part of the local Ballarat GLAM ecology.

Chapter five explored *White Night Ballarat* the city-wide event as a case study to investigate approaches to value and the relationships between interconnected elements of the city ecology. Through analysis of the event as a whole and the curated BMI event within it, this chapter argued that cultural and financial viability are intimately interconnected. This is despite ongoing tensions between tangible and intangible elements in the debate over the meaning of value and the measurability of outcomes.

This chapter argued that holistic approaches that take complex eco-systems into account are essential. This included an emphasis on different kinds of value, different city players, city strategies and planning, explored throughout this thesis. While HUL and Creative City policies and strategies might aim for cohesion, the future challenge is how these are implemented in practice. This doctoral study has advocated for the various kinds of value that projects bringing together arts and heritage can create, as one contribution to this challenge.

Chapter six concentrated its analysis on one practice-led curatorial case-study exhibition at the BMI. This exhibition was part of the *Ballarat International Foto Biennale* another Ballarat city-wide event. It considered what was possible when new artistic voices (Indigenous and female), were given space in a traditional organisation like the BMI, and when the BMI's new photography collection was used and understood in new ways. The themes of decolonisation and diversity, affect, curation, and organisational capacity were addressed in the analysis, and were framed in discussion of similar work happening around Australia.

Through the BMI exhibition *Imprints: Storytelling the City,* and its collaboration between curator and artists, a sensitive approach toward mutual benefit and respect was found to be key. This centered around the use of creativity and multiple entry points for engagement and included exploration of affective experience over direct factual narration. It involved the shared

creation of new multimedia documents capturing the various programmed events and the creative activation of the BMI collections and building. Through this case study, using a HUL approach to cities as multi-layered, multiple historical layers and creative forms meant various stories of, and views on, the city through time were overlaid. This chapter presented various outcomes and value, and considered both curatorial and artistic approaches to dealing with difficult heritage as well as organisational capacity. Organisational ability to reflect, learn, and adapt was considered. It was concluded that commitment from an organisation's leadership, rooted in strong vision, is necessary for future sustainability and that the BMI has a way to go in reaching Nina Simon's call for courage and open-heartedness in the work of present-day cultural organisations.[4]

Chapter seven utilised data from action research (researcher as curator/practitioner) and examined the BMI's organisational structure and its ability to creatively connect with its heritage and publics. Organisational capacity and change processes were studied via the three areas of strategic planning, the BMI basement, and the concept of BMI doors both real and metaphorical. Markers from the RMT were used in assessing the potential of becoming: mission driven as opposed to mission as document; use of inspired investment rather than obligatory oversight; preferring sustainability over stability, *status quo* to informed risk taking, and excusiveness to inclusiveness. A number of tools were created during the three-year action research period including event planning and review documents, curatorial resources and recommendations, and policy updates. These were created collaboratively to help ensure greater strategic clarity and the enabling of creative-action work towards the reinvented end of the RMT measurement scale. The intended outcome was to build greater connectivity and relevance for the organisation, and within the city. These tools, as well as photos and multimedia generated during the curatorship, form the archive that was given to the BMI at the conclusion of this study (Part 4 of the project methodology, see Figure 0.9).

The chapter argued that various outcomes were achieved through the creative-activation work facilitated by the curator over the three-year period, producing various forms of value—some more easily measured than others. The use of imagery collected during the curatorship was also important in recording intergenerational links and the creative use of heritage spaces and stories as part of the project of opening up the BMI and creating new dialogues that this thesis

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[4] Simon, *The Art of Relevance*. 157.

investigated. The photo book capturing this process is available in digital form[5] and was also gifted to stakeholders at the conclusion of the project to celebrate and inspire ongoing creative-activation work.

It was found that in terms of sustainable change, a number of the issues discovered through the exploration of the organisation's historical legacy, in chapter two, persisted through to the curatorship. These were in terms of resistance to change and the question of for whom and what the BMI is ultimately for. It concluded that sustainable change in the BMI will be difficult to achieve in an organisation struggling to redefine, articulate and implement its own mission and values. This thesis, through the above chapters and the methodology and approaches applied, has discovered issues that relate very specifically to one organisation and one regional city yet are also more broadly applicable to other GLAM organisations and city contexts around the world.

With specific regard to the BMI two key issues remain. Firstly, the entrenched nature of the narrow leadership and membership (despite initial aims otherwise) must be acknowledged and meaningfully addressed. Findings and recommendations offered throughout this thesis include the valuing and support of emerging leadership and of meaningful community relationships (particularly those formed with artists, cultural practitioners and stakeholders such as universities, and other kindred organisations). This thesis has emphasised the need for ongoing projects and programs such as artist-in-residency (taking inspiration and guidance from other GLAM organisations such as State Library of Victoria and their creative fellowship model). The final curator's report to the board in May 2019 emphasised this recommendation (see Appendix 7.4).

Secondly best practice models must be embraced to address the need for greater accountability and relevance. This is in terms of the use of private and public funds, moving from RMT's model of implied value to one of earned value. A key outcome of this practice-led research was a greater connection with Victorian Collections (part of Culture Victoria within Creative Victoria). This included the final exhibition of the curatorship *Talking Shop* existing as a digital story on their website.[6] Through such relationship building, a new role with Victorian

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[5] AVAT784 Amy photo book 2020. Available via figshare- https://figshare.com/s/7001f385d5771e003ec3

[6] Victorian Collections, "Talking Shop: Ballarat in Business and City Life at Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute," accessed 25th May 2020,
https://victoriancollections.net.au/stories/talking-shop-ballarat-in-business-and-city-life-at-ballaarat

Collections working regionally with digitising collections is also now based at the BMI. It is stated in GLAM Peak's report 'The Value and Impact of Digital Access to Collections' that "culture can be a catalyst for social and economic change. But that's only possible if it's readily useable and easily accessible for people to build with, build on, and share".[7] As this thesis has revealed, this requires both back-end systems and support and creativity in new uses of collections and inspiring further use. This situation results in both institutional and cultural value that extends beyond purely economic outcomes.

How the GLAM sector manages born digital material remains an evolving issue.[8] At the BMI the audio-visual collection was established as an arm of the heritage collections during the curatorship.[9] The process for cataloguing and managing these items was connected to the updated collections policy. However, without resourcing and personnel to further such projects, along with a strategic commitment to best practice training, future success is uncertain. Questions of resourcing and clear strategic values and direction is an issue for many smaller organisations, particularly volunteer run ones. Linking with Victorian Collections was the beginning of a necessary process to access professional development, approaches and opportunities.

The following issues of the organisation thus require examination, commitment and prioritisation from BMI leadership: the entrenched nature of narrow leadership and membership; the need for best practice and accountability; the need for understanding the dangers of over-emphasising financial loss or return and a move towards shared values, and an organisational strategy premised upon meaningful action. The BMI can and should learn from others in the GLAM sector and MI network, and be a leader itself in such work. This requires a centralised approach that creatively connects the organisation with various publics as part of the local Ballarat cultural ecology and beyond. This will only be sustainable if this is committed to in both theory and practice.

This doctoral study has also revealed three key parallels between BMI and Ballarat city. Firstly, the tensions within a market-driven creative industries model and the impacts of neoliberal approaches to culture and value. This is a situation that often leads to a focus on financial

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[7] GLAM Peak, "The Value and Impact of Digital Access to Collections."

[8] Gareth Kay, "A Look at the Challenges of Born-Digital Content in Our Collection," accessed 25th May 2020, https://www.nla.gov.au/blogs/preservation/2016/08/09/accessing-born-digital-content.

[9] Ballaarat Mechanics' Institute, "Audio Visual Collection," https://ballaratmi.org.au/research/audiovisual.

matters or economic outcomes that limit broader thinking. Secondly, that complex historical legacies of European colonisation, entrenched leadership and exclusivity affect current and future possibilities for the BMI and other cultural organisations. Finally, and as a result of both these findings, there are different and at times competing visions for identity and actions in Ballarat city as well as its GLAM organisations.

Finally, this thesis has presented various forms and models of creative activation and collaboration that combine arts and heritage. It has argued that this combination has made a positive contribution to cultural heritage and the arts in Ballarat. It has also argued for the significance of greater connectivity and relevance for cultural organisations, and their collections, with diverse publics. This thesis has argued that the role of the curator has the ability to broaden thinking and facilitate new connections between the five areas of study: heritage, organisations, curatorial practice, cities and value. This study has been deeply practice-based. It has ultimately found that the curator, working collaboratively, has real power to build connections and develop institutional value and legitimacy in the present and future, through creative activation of the past.

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