

ASA Conference – Archives Amplified 2021

(Conference reflections – James Bosanquet, recipient of Sharman Award)

Location - Online

Themes – Indigenous Voices, Activism, Evidence, Criminal Activity, Truth and Misinformation.

About the Online Experience

The software gave participants a viewable and playable event, with the entrance, lobby and exhibitions. Users could walk around the virtual conference and interact with sessions.

The Software

OnAir Virtual Event Portal is professional -worked well with Firefox, poorly with IE/Edge. Even worked at a pinch with Safari on a phone using Larix - but really not recommended. Peripheral software like Airtouch platform for papers and discussion worked well, but locks down on Edge - couldn't use other screens. Overall very good.

Wish list

What about an avatar? If we are going to have a playable conference, why not customise yourself? Engagement with others – this is difficult to replicate with an online conference. I feel this could be improved with

The Exhibitions

Voices guided tour; NAA were well set up and lovely to have the opportunity to live chat with hosts. Particularly David Fricker of the NAA giving up his time to chat on developments including the Tandanya Declaration.

My Personal Experience

Like everyone else, I was in lockdown during the event. And co -home-schooling a 15 year old and an 8 year old. Given this implausible scenario and the fact that the Archives had been classed as an essential service, I made my way into the city each morning and hooked up with the conference from there. This meant I was in a quiet space and could focus on the conference. Most of the time I streamed it and made notes and it became a background for my week.

As a recipient of the Sharman Award I would like to thank the organisers for making attendance possible. On behalf of everyone who attended I would like to thank the speakers for making this a though-provoking and interesting conference.

Highlights (I have selected just a few conference talks to reflect on)

Wednesday 15th September

Acknowledgement of Country – by the Wakka wakka people of Brisbane, performed a traditional song that proved a great start and welcome for the opening of the conference. Having an acknowledgement of country is deeply significant and relevant for archivists and the need for representative indigenous voices in the profession.

David Fricker's opening and speaking later off the cuff in the exhibition hall. It was sad news when David announced that he is leaving the NAA at the end of the year. David spoke briefly of the public attention to archives (in particular the NAA's collection). The public outpouring and how it reflects archives 'amplified' in the public sphere.



(David Fricker Pictured)

Keynote Address - Matthew Condon (Crime and Corruption in Queensland)



Mathew's keynote address spoke to his true crime writing and efforts to access material from the Queensland Fitzgerald Enquiry. Matthew's own story and possible family connection to Betty Shank's murder was riveting. Matthew's perspective was of the public right to information and the nature of public interest in archives. Matthew was an interesting choice and a though provoking opener for the conference. The questions Matthew posed and the nature of (non-publication) policy and public access are of course central to the role of the archivist. The only downside to Matthew's speech was perhaps his lack of interest in understanding access directions and who sets the policy. His questions raise the possibly of public interest weighed with who may get hurt if evidence is turned over to the public. Matthew's motivation is to turn this content into art (books that he can sell) This is a topic that other speakers including Katherine Biber addressed.

Session 4 – Amplifying Indigenous Voice in the Archive – Rose Barrowcliffe



Rose's talk was focused on Indigenous users' perspectives of archives and de-colonization. Rose provided a great analogy for describing the way First Nations are hidden in archives and how they can be made discoverable. How meta-data becomes a gatekeeper of archives. Rose recommends The Tandanya Declaration as the first point of reference for collaboration with Indigenous users and voices.

4b Stepping forward with care - The application of the Tandanya Declaration at AIATSIS and 4c Reimagining our colonial archive: seeking help from First Nations peoples **Robyn Garcia and Josephine Marsh**

The first talk discussed the AIATSIS Collection, the content of the collection, programs and organisation. Process of developing an organisational approach to the Tandanya Declaration, starting with a series of workshops. Implementing the concept of Yarning Circles.

Included outcomes -

- Cultural Competency Training
- Implement AIATSIS thesaurus and codes/keywords
- Recognising the collection as living

The second talk focused on Steps to implementing the Tandanya Declaration at the Queensland State Archives.

Dynamics of spirituality, ecology and indigenous knowledge to the archives. Also importantly allows for healing.

First Nations First Program at Qld State Archives. Steps and pathway ahead – Josephine

Cherburg Pilot – identifying language and creating a collaborative framework. Appropriateness of opening up some records

From the Q&A Robyn & Josephine agreed to share the program on the Qld Archives website. Which would be a very useful resource for other archives.



Josephine Marsh
Director Government Records and Discovery
Queensland State Archives

15c The Cultural Afterlife of Criminal Evidence by Katherine Biber

University of Technology Sydney, Law (photo)



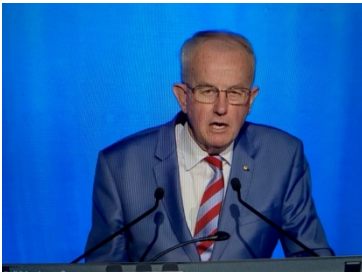
Katherine spoke about criminal evidence and evidentiary nature and her talk spoke indirectly to Mathew Condon's keynote address.

Biber's Book - In Crime's Archive

- The power of these materials and when does the evidence become art or voyeurism?
- Crime nutshells - scenes replicated in miniature - kept in the Baltimore Criminal Pathologist's Office
- Justice and Police Museum in Sydney and their well known and loved photo archive. Including the work of Peter Doyle (City of Shadows, etc.).

Keynote 4 & Closing

Bob Atkison - the royal commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse



Bob's careful and well rehearsed speech looked at the information gathering and evidence from witnesses at the Royal Commission, particularly -

- trauma-informed approach to the public hearings
- enormous amount of content and records
- community engagement

Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce that emerged from the Royal Commission. Volume 8 of the report focused on record keeping and information. The retention of the records and minimum guidelines. Records destroyed accidentally or intentionally. Outcome was the Child Safety Principles adopted by all states & territories

Bob gave a great talk that as a bookend to Matthew Condon's keynote showed a great sympathy for privacy and the protection of evidence. Bob was a sympathetic figure and although by his own words, not an archivist, had an appreciation for their importance.