

Australian Society of Archivists 2025 Conference

Sharman Bursary Recipient: Michaela Hart

Like any great opening keynote, Gailyn Lehuanani Bopp truly set the tone for the conference and brought the theme *“Telling our Stories: Community, Connection, Resilience”* to life. As the first female and first Indigenous University Archivist at Brigham Young University in Hawai’i, Gailyn shared how her identity has shaped her practice and her understanding of moving within the communities she comes from.

Beginning with the question, *“Who will make the bones live?”* Gailyn described the Brigham archives collection as a “mass of story” and emphasised the importance of building trust with communities. She highlighted that acknowledging, introducing, and announcing your intention are the first critical steps in forming relationships. I don’t think there was a dry eye in the room.

One particularly compelling story involved an audio recording. Gailyn explained how, from a preservation perspective, the recording was perfectly sound—but it missed the deeper truth of cultural relationship. This story was a powerful reminder to reflect on the *why* behind what we do and to ask who our work truly serves.

I am deeply grateful to First Nations colleagues who continue to lead conversations around Indigenous priorities including data sovereignty and governance, reparative description, and methodologies. Every session leaves me thinking more critically about the colonial legacy of archives and our individual and collective responsibilities.

As a profession, many of us are grappling with the rise of AI and what it means for the future of archives and recordkeeping. This was evident in the packed sessions on AI and the lively conversations in between. One key takeaway for me was the importance of distinguishing between commercial generative AI tools and critically examining the broad “grab bag” of technologies often grouped under the AI banner.

A happy accident led me to a session where Jessie Webb presented on *Sugihara Survivors: Archival Connections to Jewish Refugees* and the work of the NAA to research records about this community and compile a list of Australian arrivals. A brief encounter with a fellow attendee during the Q&A sparked a moment of connection over shared Lithuanian Jewish family ties—another example of how the conference theme extended beyond the sessions themselves.

Finally, my most sincere thanks to the ASA for awarding me the Sharman Bursary and congratulations on a tremendous conference.