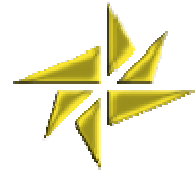




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Australian Library and  
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## **Refereed Paper**

### **Mr Rod Stroud**

Library Director, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Library

### **Contact details**

Postal: AIATSIS Library, GPO Box553, CANBERRA ACT 2601

Phone: 61 02 6246 119

Fax: 61 2 6261 4287

Email: [rod.stroud@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:rod.stroud@aiatsis.gov.au)

### **Biography**

Rod Stroud is the Library Director at the AIATSIS Library and has worked there since 2001 mainly in client services. He has had extensive experience in providing reference and Information services to the public since 1976 in ACT public libraries, the National Library and the Australian Parliamentary Library. His principal interests are in Indigenous family history and the creative use of technology to provide greater and simpler access to the AIATSIS Library's resources, especially to remote users.

## **Title: AIATSIS Library: Innovations in Indigenous Library Services**

### **Abstract**

The AIATSIS Library holds one of the most comprehensive collections of print materials on Australian Indigenous studies in the world (reference?). The Library provides reference services to communities, researchers and the general public, including native title and family history services. The Institute's catalogue, Mura®, is an important gateway and discovery tool for Indigenous studies. It includes journal articles and individual book chapters and the Institute's Audiovisual Archives' collections. Many entries have valuable annotations.

The AIATSIS Library is implementing innovative strategies in assisting remote clients and providing support to other libraries and their researchers. These include the availability of the AIATSIS Thesaurus as a cataloguing tool to assist libraries to more appropriately describe their collections. As place is such an important concept within Indigenous knowledge the development of geospatial browsing of the catalogue is planned. With new funding for a three year digitisation program materials such as Stolen Generations legislation, government protectors' reports and mission magazines will be made available online.

The AIATSIS Library has also assisted in the reinvigoration of ATSILIRN (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Research Network) and the promotion of their protocols guiding libraries, archives and information services in the provision of services to Indigenous and wider communities. Through the development of a strong network of libraries, archives and other record-holding agencies and through working with CASL and ATSILIRN the AIATSIS library looks forward to providing better Indigenous collections and services in libraries throughout Australia.

## **Introduction**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the first Commonwealth statutory authority to focus on Australian Indigenous cultures, was established in 1964 as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. AIATSIS is a world leading research, collecting and publishing organisation in Australian Indigenous studies. It is a network of Council and committees, members, staff, and other stakeholders working in partnership with the wider community of Indigenous Australians to carry out activities that add knowledge and support awareness of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories, in all their richness and diversity. The Library of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and its Audiovisual Archives holds one of the world's premier collections of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and as a research collection, the Library contains both current and historical resources.

In 2001 AIATSIS relocated to its new premises on the Acton Peninsula in Canberra, adjacent to the National Museum of Australia. This new position of national focus gives us the opportunity to showcase Indigenous cultures and the richness of our collections in a manner never before possible. A fundamental aim on the new site is to ensure that all Australians have the best possible access to the rich and diverse materials that comprise the library collection. This article will further outline the AIATSIS Library's

services and the issues raised in providing them.

## **Who Uses the AIATSIS Library?**

The AIATSIS Library is open to all who wish to use its collections and services. This includes family history and native title clients, academics, community and educational groups and individuals. Over time the focus of use of the Library has changed. Initially the Library served a small academic community with specific interests and concerns for Aboriginal society from an anthropological, linguistic and archaeological perspective. Today we see a more intensely personal use of the collection by from communities and individuals researching family history, native title and information about language, culture and country.

The AIATSIS Library being located in Canberra can only assist so many clients in person. Access for remote clients is the major strategy driving change in the Library's planning, and is underpinned by the Corporate Plan:

*To develop, maintain and preserve well-documented archives and collections and to maximise access to these, particularly by Indigenous peoples, in keeping with appropriate cultural and ethical practices' (AIATSIS, Corporate Plan 2005X)*

## **A Gateway for Indigenous Knowledge and Studies**

The collections of both the Library and Audiovisual Archive can be searched on Mura®, the AIATSIS

catalogue (<http://mura.aiatsis.gov.au>). Mura® is unique in that it:

- contains more accurate and appropriate subject indexing from customised thesauri,
- indexes individual journal articles and book chapters, not contained in other catalogues,
- has annotations giving enhanced descriptions of many items,
- electronic resources which can be searched separately - valuable for remote clients who want only to see what they can access online.

For any researcher in Indigenous studies, it is recommended that Mura® be used as a primary research tool, as a search may find items that are in fact held in other libraries that they have not been able to catalogue in depth. This is reinforced by the fact that many of the Library's records from 1992 onwards on Mura® are used to form the Indigenous Studies Bibliography contained in the ATSIROM compilation available from Informit.

### **The ATSI LIRN Protocols**

The AIATSIS Library has adopted the ATSI LIRN Protocols as these relate closely to every aspect of our collections and services. These protocols are intended to guide libraries, archives and information services in appropriate ways

- to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the communities which the organisations serve, and
- to handle materials with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content.

They are a guide to good practice which will need to be interpreted and applied in the context of each organisation's mission, collections and client community.

The protocols address:

- a. the recognition of the moral rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the owners of their knowledge;
- b. other important issues arising from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives in documentary materials, media and traditional cultural property;
- c. issues in access to libraries, archives and information resources by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- d. encouragement for both the involvement and the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the governance and operation of libraries, archives and information services; and
- e. appropriate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures in libraries, archives and information services.

The AIATSIS Library has assisted in the reinvigoration of ATSI LIRN (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Research Network) and the promotion of their protocols guiding libraries, archives and information services in the provision of services to Indigenous and wider communities. We encourage other libraries to investigate where they can implement the ATSI LIRN Protocols.

### **Our Collections**

As might be expected from the Institute's aims the AIATSIS Library holds an extensive collection of print materials on Australian Indigenous studies. These include manuscript materials, serials, language materials, books, rare books, the records of organisations, art catalogues, newspapers and newspaper clippings, maps, posters and kits, microforms and CD ROMS. The Library's Collection Development Policy, which is on our website together with many manuscript finding aids, outlines our aim to collect to research level across most subject areas and formats.

AIATSIS also has an Audiovisual Archive, containing the world's premier collection of moving image, recorded sound and photographic materials relating to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. Its vaults contain approximately 45,000 hours of recorded sound, 650,000 photographic images, 6000 video titles, 1000 artefacts and approximately 6 1/2 million feet of motion picture film.

Although access is generally open to the public it must be noted that the collections of both the Library and Audiovisual Archive contain material that was restricted access for cultural reasons. If applicable the item entry in the catalogue will contain a note outlining the restriction. Further information on the access procedures can be obtained from staff from either Program.

### **The AIATSIS Thesauri**

Indigenous knowledge and languages need to be appropriately described in library catalogues and indexes. It is not fair to expect that the Library of Congress subject headings can take on this task. To assist with this difficult process the AIATSIS Library has now made both its language and place name thesauri available on the web.

The language thesaurus has been in use for many years, principally as an in-house document progressively developed by many AIATSIS staff. The thesaurus displays the more than two hundred and fifty distinct Indigenous languages in Australia, many of which are no longer in use. In preparation for computerisation, AIATSIS Library staff worked for a year checking on the variable spellings for these languages and their groupings. Although there is still further work to be carried out on broader terms and higher order language groupings, its value to researchers is undeniable.

The place name thesaurus was created by importing the authority files used on the Mura® (Sirsi) catalogue into the Multites thesaurus software. This thesaurus uses both the Indigenous place name and its non-Indigenous alternative wherever possible. Both thesauri include the 250,000 map series grid reference, thus giving AIATSIS the future opportunity to enable clients to browse the collections via a map interface. Work is also now underway on a subject thesaurus which will become available shortly. The language and place thesauri can

be downloaded as pdf files for non-commercial use and IT is updated every three months. The AIATSIS Library invites other libraries to use them as resources to assist in more accurately describing their collections.

The use of the Multites web deployment server allows the thesaurus to be fully interactive with our catalogue (Sirsi) such that once a term is selected in the thesaurus, the user can then select an item type (books, manuscripts, pictorial etc), and a search of the catalogue is automatically made. The Library knows there is a real need and desire among other libraries and archives to use more appropriate terms to catalogue / index their collections and hope that these thesauri will assist. The Thesauri also works toward the aims of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*, specifically:

4.1 Develop, implement and use a national thesaurus for describing documentation relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and issues.' (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Research Network (ATSILIRN), 2000)

### **Family History Unit**

Indigenous people must be informed about the records, the services available and their rights of access:

*People who live in remote areas are often more disadvantaged by their geographical location. ... It is important to understand that for reasons of history and culture Indigenous Australians have a relationship with records that is significantly different to the majority of other Australians. It is equally important to understand the barriers Indigenous people face in locating and accessing records that relate directly to themselves, their kin and community. Generally Indigenous people are unaware of what records have been created about them, their families and communities, and the reasons behind their creation (Katon, 2002, para. 2-3)*

In response to an upsurge of interest by Indigenous clients in family history a Family History Unit was formed in the early 1990's and it has proved critical to the services of the AIATSIS Library in providing services to Indigenous communities. The Unit is jointly funded by the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) and AIATSIS, as part of the recommendations from the *Bringing Them Home Report*. The Unit specifically assists Link-Up caseworkers in the family tracing and the reunion for Indigenous people who were removed. There are Link-Up offices all over Australia and their caseworkers, who have challenging and confronting jobs in trying to find the family of their stolen generations, regularly attend family history research skills workshops run by the Unit. The Unit can also assist anyone of Indigenous heritage with

their family history research. As many of the Unit's clients are from rural and remote areas, our freecall 1800 phone line (1800 730 129) is still the major point of client access in communities where there are few PCs.

As the core records of value to Indigenous family history are invariably held in the official archives of each state, the Unit is part of a strong network of libraries and archives as referral is an important aspect of our service. To further assist in this process the Unit maintains a comprehensive web site containing fact sheets and links to all the guides to Indigenous family history research. The web site also includes several key resources digitised by the Library and is as such is an essential resource for libraries, family history societies etc who have clients with an Indigenous family history enquiry.

#### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index (ABI)**

The ABI, maintained by staff of the Family History Unit, aims to provide a brief biographical entry of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people referred to, or depicted in published material held in the Institute's collections. The index is primarily used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people searching for information on their families. The ABI also complements contemporary Indigenous biography in mainstream journals and newspapers which the National Library of Australia's *Ozlife* indexes. The ABI can be searched as part of the Mura® catalogue or through the

accessible from the Family History Unit home page.

#### **Native Title Research and Access Service**

Native title, like family history, is another area where the AIATSIS Library provides specialist services. AIATSIS has a Native Title Research Unit with a Native Title Research Officer based in the Library providing research for native title claimants and other respondents. The Library's collections are extensively used for native title research and have proved invaluable for providing information in support of clients' requests. In particular, the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) Library has close working relations with AIATSIS in supporting the Tribunal's work.

Native title has resulted in the building of collections that are "outside the square" of libraries and archives. Although the connection material generated by native title claims is of potentially great value, not only to claimants, but to the wider community through its contribution to Australian history, anthropology, sociology, land management and other disciplines its compilation outside the resources of the NNTT is limited. With this in mind, a plan needs to be created for both present and future collection and care of the material.

In 2005 the Native Title Research and Access Officer, Grace Koch, surveyed Native Title Representative Bodies (NTRBs) with the aim of determining the current storage practices and plans for the future of documents of material either

collected or generated by the native title process. The second part of the survey asked for ideas as to how AIATSIS could assist NTRBs with these matters. In response the NTRBs confirmed that they are interested in developing a coordinated approach to the care, handling and future security storage of the documents. Additionally access, copyright and other ownership issues will also need to be resolved.

### **Reference Services**

Access for remote clients may be by telephone, web forms, mail, fax or email and they may also be assisted by the services of specialist reference staff. Individuals can request photocopies directly from the Library as many of our remote clients are a long way from a major library.

Tours and reader education are customised for visiting groups especially those based around interests such as family history, language and culture. Indigenous Study Centres from tertiary institutions often make use of tours to acquaint students with the range of sources available and are a specific target group for the Library. The Library's reference staff also produce a large number of language bibliographies which are available from our web site.

### **Digitisation and Online Exhibitions**

Many institutions within Australia and internationally are building digital collections to both enable greater access to their collections and as a part of preservation strategies. In line

with this trend a fundamental aim of AIATSIS is to ensure that all Australians have the best possible access to the rich and diverse materials that comprise our Collections via our website. Recognising the need to create a digital collection the AIATSIS Library undertook a two-year digitisation pilot program. Originally funded by ATSIC, the program has now been extended to 2008 with additional funding from in full (DEST).

Its aim is to provide the creation, management and delivery of electronic information resources and services to clients via the AIATSIS web site and the Mura® catalogue. Expectations and the associated technological challenges have grown in recent years. Nnetworks can link the Library's traditional clientele directly to its resources and allow access by new types of user. With the recent advances in electronic access, collections can be used remotely, in some cases eliminating the need to visit a physical location and therefore increasing the utility of the collection.

Of particular note was the digitisation of the Dawn magazines. *Dawn* and *New Dawn* were magazines published between 1952-1975 by the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board, with the aim of providing interesting information and an exchange of news and views. The two publications also served as a way for people to keep in contact. Today the magazines are a valuable source of family history information as they include details of births, deaths, marriages and baptisms, as

well as hundreds of photographs. As part of our digitisation program they were made available on the AIATSIS web site in 2004 and have also been distributed to Indigenous organisations, public libraries and high schools in New South Wales.

The following digitisation projects are underway:

- **Wordlists and vocabularies.** These valuable language resources have been digitised from a range of nineteenth century books and are some of the first published lists of many Aboriginal languages.
- **Protectors' reports.** The Protectors reports are of value for Indigenous history and family history purposes. They contain valuable statistics and are also essential for documenting the involvement of governments in Indigenous people's lives.
- **Stolen Generations legislation.** The full text of all State Government laws passed to authorise the removal of Aboriginal children from their families is being digitised.
- **Mission Magazines.** Often these contain news and information (and sometimes photographs) of specific communities and individuals. Most of these journals are not indexed and it may be necessary for a researcher to spend a considerable amount of time searching. A search option will be available for the digitized magazines.

The AIATSIS Library is a formal partner in PANDORA, Australia's

web archive, and will be increasing its commitment to preserving sites of importance to Indigenous Australians over the next several years as part of our digitisation program. The web sites and publications preserved will also be catalogued on our Mura® catalogue.

### **Digital Archive**

As part of the major digitisation program funded by the Department of Education Science and Technology (DEST, the AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive has embarked on a large scale digitisation of its collections, much of which is, due to the volatile and fragile nature of the media, under immediate risk of irretrievable loss. As detailed above, the Library is digitising primarily for public access.

To assist in the management of these processes AIATSIS has set up a digital asset management system (DAMS) using ExLibris' Digitool software to store, retrieve and provide access to digitised collections in accordance with any cultural protocols. The DAMS will interact with the Mura® catalogue to provide access and is one of the first large scale digital archive projects in Australian libraries. The DAMS will initially store 20 petabytes of information and will grow into a major digital archive that will preserve for the foreseeable future the priceless Indigenous cultural heritage that AIATSIS holds.

### **Cooperation with other Organisations**

The AIATSIS Library actively seeks to be involved and cooperate with

other organisations that can serve to both raise awareness of our collections and services and to contribute to the national cooperative records of Australia's documentary resources. As such the Library contributes to Libraries Australia, PANDORA and the Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts (RAAM). A further instance is the National Library of Australia's partnership in the digitisation program through their generous lending of materials critical to the AIATSIS Library's project. As noted above, the Family History Unit also has a strong network with record holding organisations, in particular the National Archives of Australia and the state archives.

#### **Future Plans: Geospatial browsing the AIATSIS Catalogue**

Building upon our development of the AIATSIS Thesauri, the AIATSIS Library is committed to enabling a map- browsing capability of its Mura® catalogue. This will be of great benefit to native title and family

history in particular, as well as providing an interface based on place which is very much in accord with an Indigenous perspective. This process will be based on our language and place thesauri terms that contains references to the 250,000 map series grid co-ordinates. This coding will allow our catalogue metadata to interact with geospatial software and as well as providing browse by map functionality, we look forward to linking it to other web-accessible maps to assist clients. It is a prospect to which we are looking forward and we will shortly be investigating options for achieving this goal.

#### **Postscript**

This article largely covers the web-based services and resources the AIATSIS Library provides, but it must be noted that they are all underpinned by the day to day physical collection building work done by many of the Library's staff.

## **References**

### **AIATSIS Web Resources**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/family\\_history\\_tracing/aboriginal\\_and\\_torres\\_strait\\_islander\\_biographical\\_index](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/family_history_tracing/aboriginal_and_torres_strait_islander_biographical_index)

Aboriginal Australia Map:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal\\_studies\\_press/aboriginal\\_wall\\_map/map\\_page](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/aboriginal_studies_press/aboriginal_wall_map/map_page)

Audiovisual Archive: [www.aiatsis.gov.au/audiovisual\\_archives](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/audiovisual_archives)

Catalogue (Mura®): <http://Mura@.aiatsis.gov.au>

Collection Development Policy:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/2977/collection\\_policy.pdf](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/2977/collection_policy.pdf)

Family History: [www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/family\\_history\\_tracing](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/family_history_tracing)

Indexes and databases: [www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/links/databases](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/links/databases)

Indigenous Studies – Major Web sites: [www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/links](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/links)

Language Bibliographies:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject\\_guides\\_bibliographies/language\\_bibliographies](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject_guides_bibliographies/language_bibliographies)

Language Thesaurus:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject\\_guides\\_bibliographies/thesaurus\\_help](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/subject_guides_bibliographies/thesaurus_help)

Manuscript Finding Aids:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/accessing\\_the\\_collections/manuscripts#manuscript](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/accessing_the_collections/manuscripts#manuscript)

Native Title Research and Access Service:

[http://ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/research\\_and\\_access.html](http://ntru.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/research_and_access.html)

Online Exhibitions: [www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/online\\_exhibitions](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/online_exhibitions)

Place Thesauri: <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/placenames/>

Serials Collection:

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/accessing\\_the\\_collections/serials\\_collection](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/accessing_the_collections/serials_collection)

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Research Network (ATSILIRN). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* – Retrieved 1 May 2006 from

[www.cdu.edu.au/library/protocol.html](http://www.cdu.edu.au/library/protocol.html)

AIATSIS (2005). *Corporate Plan 2005-2007*. Acton, A.C.T.: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2005

Katon, K. (October 2002) *Understanding the Barriers – Indigenous people and records*. Retrieved May 1 2006 from

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/family\\_history\\_tracing/family\\_history\\_links/understanding\\_the\\_barriers](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/family_history_tracing/family_history_links/understanding_the_barriers)