ICAM print 04
international confederation of architectural museums
an organisation of architectural museums, centres and collections

contents
in transition
case studies
interview
membership
about icam
icam has spread its influence to Australasia following the formation of the regional network, icamAustralasia, which brings together institutions and organisations in Australia and New Zealand holding architectural and design collections. Members involved in the network include representatives of collections held in universities, state libraries and state archives and associated with the professional body, the Australian Institute of Architects. This article provides a brief introduction to the network’s establishment, its membership, meetings and exhibitions.

**Adelaide 2010: establishing an icam regional network in Australasia**

Although architecture museums and archives like those established in the northern hemisphere are rare in Australia and New Zealand, for different periods of time a number of Australasian institutions have been building up collections of architectural, design and allied records. Until October 2010 representatives associated with these collections had not gathered formally. To redress that situation and to introduce the idea of forming a regional network of icam, in October 2010 the Architecture Museum in the School of Art, Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia (UniSA), Adelaide, South Australia, organised and hosted the Australian architectural records seminar. Representatives of nine institutions and organizations attended; others expressed interest but were unable to attend on the day. Attendees exchanged information about their collections, policies, activities and other matters of concern. They gave short presentations addressing topics that included:

- their setting (state library, government or professional organization, university)
- key client groups and how clients use the collection
- annual enquiry and visitor numbers
- source(s) of funding
For an overview of the situation regarding collections in Australasia, see Christine Garnaut: Responding to Circumstance: challenges, opportunities and directions in architectural archives collection policy in (South) Australia (2010). Available online at:

2 For reports, see University of Newcastle Archives: http://uoncc.wordpress.com/2011/11/04/icam-australia-meeting-melbourne-2011-report/; Architecture Museum, UniSA:

Melbourne 2011: icamAustralasia reconvenes
icamAustralasia reconvened in Melbourne in October 2011 at a seminar co-hosted by RMIT University, the State Library of Victoria and the University of Melbourne Archives. Representatives of six of the institutions and organizations represented at the Adelaide meeting attended, along with an additional four from other institutions. The one-day program was split into two parts and venues – RMIT University and State Library Victoria – giving participants the opportunity to view items from the collections at both locations. The discussions at the 2011 meeting focused on topics related to the question: What do we want to achieve and what are we able to achieve as a group, bearing in mind the icam charter? The following objectives from the icam charter were used as conversation starters:

- Preserve the architectural record
- Raise the quality and protection of the built environment
- Foster the study of architectural history in the interest of future practice
- Stimulate the public appreciation of architecture
- Promote the exchange of information and professional expertise.
Two invited presentations focused on specific ways in which icamAustralasia could support the first and last of these goals—preserving the architectural record, and promoting information exchange and professional expertise. One presentation, by Professor Miles Lewis, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, University of Melbourne, outlined a ‘Proposal for a short course for curators: collecting and interpreting architectural drawings’. The other, by Mr Peter Johnson, architect and heritage consultant, and a member of the Australian Institute of Architects National Heritage Taskforce, suggested a ‘Proposal to establish a process for Institute [Australian Institute of Architects] State and Territory Chapters to more effectively assist cultural institutions to collect and archive documents of notable Australian architects’. Both presentations provoked considerable discussion, with the short course for curators considered suitable in conjunction with a future icamAustralasia meeting.³

Architectural and Design Exhibitions
Exhibitions have been discussed at both meetings of icamAustralasia. Members of the network recognise that they are an important medium for promoting the appreciation of architecture and design and for interpretation, including of styles, trends, themes and the works of individuals and practices. Additionally, they are a means of publicising the scope and focus of collections and of engaging audiences of various ages through different media. The physical and financial resources of icamAustralasia members are such that most have neither a dedicated gallery to present exhibitions nor funding directed specifically towards a regular exhibition program.⁴ Despite these constraints, one point of discussion at the 2011 meeting was the fact that the formation of icamAustralasia creates opportunities for the
future for members to develop exhibitions that could draw on each other’s
collections, as well as collaborative exhibitions that could be presented either in
traditional formats or designed for the online environment.
To date, members of icam Australasia have organised and contributed to exhibitions
in different ways. Some partner with galleries, and either curate exhibitions
themselves in those spaces or engage independent curators. In 2011 the Architecture
Museum at UniSA joined with the South Australian practice Russell & Yelland
Architects and the Kerry Packer Civic Gallery at UniSA to present Designing for
Communities: the Civic Architecture of Russell & Yelland Architects. Curated by
professional historian and Architecture Museum affiliate Alison McDougall, the
exhibition drew on the Museum’s extensive Russell & Yelland collection. It explored,
in part, the ways in which the practice worked with local people in metropolitan
and regional South Australia, as well as interstate, to design buildings that met
community needs and budgets during and after World War 2. A monograph on
Russell & Yelland authored by McDougall and produced by the Museum was
published earlier in the year.
In 2011–2012 the Public Record Office Victoria presented Missing the Mark: The
Melbourne Landmark Ideas Competition 1978 in a dedicated exhibition space in the
Old Treasury Building, Melbourne. The competition solicited designs for the Jellinck
railway yards on the banks of Melbourne’s Yarra River where Federation square now
stands, and the exhibition drew on the diverse range of international competition
entries received for this state government sponsored project.
Harriet Edquist, Director, RMIT Design Archives at RMIT University, and Taney Curtin,
Senior Curator, Bendigo Art Gallery, Bendigo in regional Victoria, co-curated
The Lost Modernist: Michael O’Connell at the Bendigo Art Gallery in 2011–12.
A book on McConnell by Edquist was published concurrently. The exhibition drew
on several collections, including the RMIT Design Archives, in examining the work of
British/Australian textile artist Michael O’Connell. Born in Cumbria, England in 1898,
after seventeen years in Australia (1920–37), O’Connell returned to the UK where
he was a key figure in contemporary textile design and worked with renowned
textile manufacturer Heals. He was commissioned in 1951 to produce the celebrated
Festival of Britain wall hangings. A previous RMIT Design Archives collaboration was
with the Melbourne Museum for the Zmood: Designing Holdens exhibition
(July–August 2010). Curated by Ian Wong of the RMIT Industrial Design program,
the exhibition displayed the works of GM Holdens’s first Australian Head of Design,
Phillip Zmood; items were selected from his collection held by the Design Archives.
Some icam Australasia members contribute collection items to permanent or
semi-permanent displays within their institutions. For example, the State Library of
Victoria (SLV) has architectural and landscape architecture drawings in the
and photographs of the renowned 19th century Block Arcade are featured as well as
an architectural drawing of the proposed façade of the State Library of Victoria
(Joseph Reed, 1854), and various designs by prominent Australian garden designer
Edna Walling (1895–1973). The State Library of South Australia includes architectural
material on its SA Memory website and in its Treasures Wall exhibition highlighting
historical and contemporary ‘treasures’ across the collections. Amongst its special
architectural items are drawings by local practices Woods Bagot (now Woodhead)
for the locally admired St Peter’s Anglican cathedral, and by Jackman Gooden (now
JPE) for a range of buildings in and around Adelaide.
The Fryer Library, University of Queensland, features online exhibitions showcasing
its holdings. One, Brisbane between the Wars: History by Design, tells the city’s
history through architectural drawings of houses of the interwar period. The Coal
River Working Party associated with the University of Newcastle Archives actively
digitizes and exhibits via its website maps, photographs and other items related to
historical aspects of the Newcastle and Hunter Valley regions of New South Wales. Several icamAustralasia network members loan items from their collections for exhibitions. Sometimes these are curated for the institution’s own gallery or for other city, regional or interstate galleries; sometimes they are travelling exhibitions. They may be associated with events like the launch of a book. The photographic exhibition As Modern as Tomorrow (2011–12) at the SLV included photographs by Wolfgang Sievers and Mark Strizic of buildings by Victorian modernist architectural firm Grounds Romberg & Boyd. The Library’s 2009–10 exhibition, ‘til you drop: shopping — a Melbourne history, displayed a ‘Design proposal for the Royal Arcade’ (Charles Webb, 1869) and architectural drawings of shops in several Melbourne suburbs. Australian Modern: The architecture of Stephenson & Turner (2004) featured drawings of the modernist firm Stephenson & Turner and was held in conjunction with the launch of a book by the same title. The Architecture Archive, Architecture & Planning Library, University of Auckland (UoA), provided the majority of items for the exhibition Long live the modern: New Zealand’s New Architecture, 1904–1984 curated by School of Architecture & Planning academics Julia Gatley and Bill MacKay and first shown in 2008 at the Gus Fisher Gallery, UoA. The exhibition coincided with the launch of a book edited by Gatley; it toured to four other galleries in New Zealand. Drawings in the exhibition Group Architects: towards a New Zealand Architecture (October–November 2010), curated by Gatley who published a book by the same title, were sourced predominantly from the Architecture Archive’s holdings. Similarly, University of Canterbury (NZ) academic Ian Lochhead drew on items from the Archive for his 2009 exhibition New Zealand Architecture in Perspective. Both exhibitions showed at the Gus Fisher Gallery, UoA.
Several exhibitions are in preparation by icamAustralasia members. They include one by the SLV for 2013 to celebrate the centenary of its internationally acclaimed Domed Reading Room. The exhibition, curated by RMIT Design Archives Director Harriet Edquist, will focus on the architectural development of the library from its foundation in 1854 to the completion of the reading room in 1913. The Architecture Archive, UoA, has several drawings earmarked for the forthcoming Cutting Edge – Kiwi Prefab exhibition at Puke Ariki Museum, New Plymouth, in association with Victoria University, Wellington. With the assistance of state government funding, the Architecture Museum at UniSA has commissioned seven local and interstate contemporary artists to use the Museum’s collections as inspiration for new works to be shown in the build me a city 2012 exhibition at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide during ‘A Season of Architecture’ to be hosted by the Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter).

Future Prospects
Although in its infancy, icamAustralasia is proving to be an important network. Members have identified, met and established modes of communication with others involved in conserving and promoting collections of architectural and design records, and have access to colleagues who share their professional, academic and community-based interests. Like their endeavours associated with the collections for which they are responsible, they are engaged in building a network for the future, one that is positioning itself to support and advocate for an area that is underrepresented in the cultural collections sector in Australasia.

Christine Garnaut, director, Architecture Museum, UniSA, Adelaide