

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023-2024

Old Court House Law Museum. Photograph by Bo Wong.

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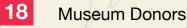
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Pages from the Burt Family Diaries. Photograph by Bo Wong.

Cultural Acknowledgement

The Old Court House Law Museum, located on Noongar Boodja, respectfully acknowledges the traditional owners, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Artist: Marlia Miyalan Fatnowna



Committee Foreword

The Old Court House Law Museum (the Museum) Foundation Committee is pleased to present the 2023/2024 Year in Review.

Perth's oldest building and first purpose built court house, the Old Court House, is one of Western Australia's most significant cultural heritage sites. Housed within the building is the Museum, which facilitates an astonishing annual net benefit to the State of \$2.01 million, and a ten-year net present value of \$18.30 million¹.

During 2023/24 that economic value to the State increased further thanks to the Museum's expanded opening hours and increased visitation by 62%.

The Foundation Committee Members act in a private capacity and make recommendations to the Trustee; the Law Society of Western Australia. In addition, we advocate for, and champion, the building and the Museum as both are of State, National and International significance².

The building is owned by the State Government and is managed by the Department of Justice. We look forward to continuing the Museum's partnership with the State Government to conserve and maintain the building to the highest standards. The Museum collects, conserves, and interprets Western Australia's legal and social history, our sharded histories, from the past to the present.

In 2023/24, the Museum had an overwhelmingly successful year and achieved curatorial and strategic outcomes in collection management, digitisation and conservation. A landmark achievement was trialling weekend opening from January 2025 which resulted in visitation increasing 62%.

The Foundation Committee is grateful to the 2023/24 donors to the Museum and the Law Society as Trustee. The support from the Law Society and donors has been key to the Museum's recent success to improve resourcing to meet visitation and curatorial demands

With continued support the Museum has a bright future and we invite you to consider supporting this must see Western Australian cultural heritage institution.

The Foundation Committee

Sandy Anghie Dr Toni Church Catherine Fletcher Ante Golem The Hon Lindy Jenkins The Hon Dr Andrew Lu AM

1. Law Society of WA: Education and Community Services, Cost Benefit Analysis, Far Lane Consulting, 2023.

2. Statement of Significance of the Old Court House Law Museum, Perth, Dr Joanna Sassoon, March 2019

Curator Introduction

2023/2024 has been a year of great progress for the Museum. It has achieved record-breaking visitation and new investment from independent sources. This has enabled the Museum to move closer to achieving long term ambitious outcomes of expanded operating hours, additional staffing resources and a revitalised collection focus.

Weekend operation has been a huge success and enabled a whole new demographic of visitors to access the Museum outside of weekday business hours. Since January 2024, 3,598 visitors came through the Museum on Saturday and Sunday. Two new Museum Officers and eleven additional volunteers have been integral to the expanded operation hours and refining our processes and strategies for weekend work.

Additional resourcing has allowed progression in our digitisation journey. Monies donated by the Wright Burt Foundation allowed the Museum to focus on the conservation and digitisation of Burt Family items in the Museum Collection (the Collection). Most of the Burt items have now been photographed which is close to 10% of the entire Collection. These items will be the first to be publicly accessible when published online after the Museum transitions to its new collections database, eHive.

In public programming the Museum has celebrated 50 years since its conception and held a new special exhibition launch for *A Just Legacy* an exhibition which provides insight to the behind the scenes work of the Museum on its conservation and digitisation journey.

The Museum is grateful to the Foundation Committee and museum donors who are acknowledged in this report; to volunteers and staff who are committed to the success of the Museum; and to the Museum's increasing number of visitors, growing impressively during the period to 12,129!

This small Museum has big Western Australian histories to share. We invite you to help us bring these stories to the world.

Megan Shaw Curator, Old Court House Law Museum

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Megan Shaw with guests at the 2023 Night at the Museum event. Photograph by The Scene Team

2023/24 Visitation



12,129 Total Visitors 62%

Visitor Type

10,840 Walk-in

687 Virtual Tours

602 Public Programme

Visitor Age

22% 60+	20% 51-60	13% 41-50
21% 19-30	15% 31-40	9% Under 18

Visitor Origin

40% Local

38% International

22% Interstate

Visitor Comments

"I enjoyed the short stroll through the building and reading about the past. So glad the building has been preserved and now houses other stories from the same era. While we can always read about history, retaining buildings is so important to visualising history in addition to reading or hearing about it."

"A great testament to the evolution of a societies response to the needs for change to life and living from those earlier days where there was (and still is) a clash of cultural values."

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"A jewel of a museum experience. Interesting information presented in a way that allowed most of it to be fully absorbed in a short while. Enjoyable as well as educational!"

"It shows in a very touchable way a very important part of the history. This shows the importance of justice in the society."

"This building and its history is unique and so important to retain and preserve. Long may it continue."

Public Programmes

To engage with broader audiences, attract new visitors and contribute positively to the collective cultural offering in Perth, the Museum participates in various festivals, with compelling programmes that showcase both the building and the Museum collection.

During 2023/2024 special events for Law Week, the City of Perth's Boorloo Heritage Festival and the National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival proved very popular, making the most of cross-institutional collaboration opportunities.

The Museum also held private events to celebrate achievements in conservation and digitisation with a special exhibition launch and an event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Museum's conception in 1974.

Heritage Festival Events: April - May 2024

April and May is a busy time in the Museum's annual cultural calendar with the Lotterywest Boorloo Heritage Festival (City of Perth) and the Australian Heritage Festival (the National Trust). These festivals boast a month-long calendar advertising events hosted by heritage and cultural institutions, connecting people with Australia's built, natural and cultural heritage.

In previous years the Museum held weekend open days to celebrate these festivals. This year with weekend operation already in full swing the Museum launched and advertised our special exhibition *A Just Legacy - Behind the Scenes: The Burt Family Collection* as its contribution to both the Boorloo Heritage Festival and the Australian Heritage Festival programming.

During Boorloo Heritage Festival the Museum participated in a cross-institutional collaboration with the City of Perth Library and hosted a special Heritage Storytime event for children. Young Peoples Services Librarian, Shannon Verbakel selected classic Australian children's books such as *Possum Magic* to connect with the oldest building in Perth.



Special Exhibition Launch: A Just Legacy – April 2024

Members of the Burt family, friends and supporters of the Museum came together to help us celebrate our latest special exhibition. *A Just Legacy*, an exploration of recent conservation and digitisation achievements and discoveries made whilst working with the Burt family collection.

Speeches on the opening night included Dr Toni Church, historian and a valued member of our Foundation Committee, who highlighted how conservation science enables discovery and human connection with historic figures. Janine Milton educator, agriculturalist and daughter or Sir Francis Burt AC QC gave a speech and provided insights and anecdotes about growing up with Sir Francis and his legacy serving the community.

Law Week 50th Anniversary Morning Tea - 13 May 2024

The Museum celebrated the 50th anniversary of its conception and the genesis of the Museum's collection. To mark the occasion a morning tea was held with founding members, long-time supporters, museum volunteers, significant stakeholder representatives, friends and colleagues coming together to celebrate the Museum's achievements over the half-century. A speech from the Museum's first Convenor and former Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, The Hon Bob Nicholson AO KC, outlined the humble means and determination of the founding years.

Guests at the 50 Year Anniversary Morning Tea. Photograph by Louise Coghill

Social Impact

2023/2024 was the first year of the Museum carrying out social impact measurement aligned to the Law Society's Education and Community Services Program Logic over a full 12-month period.

The building, and the Museum and Collection are significant to Western Australia's cultural heritage as evidence in the <u>2019 Statement of Significance of the Old Court House Law Museum</u> authored by Dr Joanna Sassoon.

The Museum allows local, interstate, and international visitors to explore how we understand our shared West Australian histories, what those shared histories teach us and how they impact on the present.

Social impact measurement feeds into the Museum's initiatives to diversify income with the goal of creating mid to long-term financial sustainability to ensure resourcing meets visitation and curatorial demands.

Entry to the Museum is free and diversified income for the Museum will ensure on-going equity of access.

A <u>Cost Benefit Analysis</u> of the Museum carried out in 2023 by Far Lane Consulting demonstrated that the economic benefits of the Museum, and the services it provides, extend beyond its operational cost.

Cost Benefit

Oldest building in Perth



A building and collection of State, National and International significance.³

1 and 2: Law Society of WA: Education and Community Services, Cost Benefit Analysis Report 2023 – Far Lane Consulting 3: Dr Jonna Sassoon, Statement of Significance of the Old Court House Law Museum, Perth, March 2019



Collection Management

Conservation and Digitisation of the Museum Collection

Conservation is the process of ensuring that significant historical, social, aesthetic, and technological qualities of heritage items are preserved for future generations. Conservation is a vast set of practices, from preventative methods which are an ongoing process to interventive treatment which works to stabilise items and minimise the rate of object degradation.

Digitisation is the process of digitally preserving collections and democratising access to the Collection by increasing accessibility online, thus allowing heritage collection items to have a wider reach and impact.

The Museum has a collection of over 2,000 items of state, national and international significance, these items are interpreted used for research, exhibited and safely stored. In 2023 the Museum received support from the Wright Burt Foundation to begin ambitious work to digitise and conserve items from the Burt family represented in the Collection. The Burt family items represent 10% of the entire Museum Collection and are some of the oldest, most fragile and significant items.

The Museum is working through a five-year collection focus and thanks to the support of the Wright Burt Foundation in 2023/24, the Museum has created a standardised digitisation procedure and work to begin to publishing the Collection online.

Conservation of Sir Francis Burt Robes

Monies from the Wright Burt Foundation donation allowed the judicial robes of Sir Francis Burt AC QC (great-grandson of Sir Archibald Burt), a former Chief Justice and Governor of Western Australia to receive conservation treatment and assessment.

Treatment work was undertaken by textile conservator Rinske Car Driesens, the robes were washed to stabilise the acidity of the fabric. Matching silk was sourced and damaged areas were consolidated so that the robes can be safely displayed and that their condition is stable in storage. The Conservator was able to identify the type of wool used to create the garment, and provide insight from the assessment of the wear and tear of the garment which revealed how Sir Francis held his hands whilst presiding over Supreme Court trials where the robe was worn.

Paper Conservator Hannah Hoffman demonstrating processes of paper consolidation with one of the Archibald Paull Burt notebooks. Photograph Edify Media



Sir Archibald Paull Burt KC's Notebooks: Conservation and Digitisation

There are 41 notebooks written by Sir Archibald Paull Burt, the first Chief Justice of Western Australia, in the Collection. They provide a record of almost every Civil and Criminal Supreme Court trial in Western Australia between 1861 and 1879 and demonstrate the Chief Justice's influence on the constitution and the evolution of the legal system in Western Australia. The notebooks were donated by Sir Francis Burt and includes letter books which contain copies of Burt's judicial, personal and business correspondence.

The Wright Burt Foundation donation has enabled minor consolidation conservation treatment to the Notebooks to strengthen the physical condition. Paper conservator, Hannah Hoffman, has been assessing each notebook and repairing tears, damaged spines and deteriorated covers. This conservation treatment also includes the creation of customised preventative conservation (storage) boxes for each notebook. These boxes are made from an archival board which is acid-free and maintains a microenvironment that protects the journals from rapid environmental fluctuations as well as light, dust, pollutants, pests and microorganisms.

Thirteen of the 41 Notebooks have received full conservation assessment and treatment and have been returned to storage in their new archival boxes. The 41 Notebooks have been photographed, page by page, to allow them to be transformed into digital flip books. Digital flip books convey the sensation of physically interacting with the notebooks, each digital flip book will include a transcription of the handwritten document.

The first flip book can be accessed here.

Our staff and volunteers are working to standardise the formatting of transcribed text and ensure that the document is formatted as close the original as possible.

Digitisation Photography

Monies from the Wright Burt Foundation donation have enabled the Museum to work with the experienced collections photographer, Bo Wong, to capture high quality digital images of the Collection. High quality photographs elevate the professional online presence of the Museum's Collection and allow better study of the objects without physically handling them. This standard ensures that the collection only needs to be photographed once. High and low-quality image files have been captured, with low-quality files used on the digital database and will be made available online to share with the world, the high-quality copies will be saved internally for the purpose of interpretation, special exhibitions and research; these files can be enlarged and printed.



Archibald Paull Burt's seal stamp photographed by Bo Wong

Operation Archibald - Completed

A significant achievement undertaken in February 2024 was the project initially referred to as 'Operation rescue' and later renamed 'Operation Archibald'. The purpose of this initiative was to remove Sir Archibald Paull Burt's Criminal Sittings Notebook No1 (the Notebook) and Sir John Virtue KBE's black cap off display from the capital punishment display case. Previously, this initiative was not possible as both items were inside a display case which was too tall and heavy weighing around 300kg. Whilst the long-term goal is to update the display case so that it can be accessed, it was a priority to remove both items off permanent display and have the Notebook receive a conservation assessment and digitised.

A crew of five installers opened display case and the procedure, 'Operation Archibald', was documented by a small film crew who were compiling footage for the A Just Legacy film. The items were successfully removed and replaced by a replica of the Cornelius Ahern's petition letter (which was found inside another of Sir Archibald Paull Burt's notebooks) and a black cap purchased as an exhibition prop.

A redesign of the Judge's Chamber gallery is scheduled in 2025 and the capital punishment display case will be redesigned to make it fit to display collection items.

The Collection Database

Following research, the Museum has resolved to shift its Collection Database to a new cloud-based platform, eHive. The shift to the new platform aims to improve the Museum's collection management of internal records and expand accessibility to the Collection. The new platform has been chosen for its user-friendly features, security, affordability and reliable technical support.

Work is underway to digitise the collection and the Museum is aiming to have completed the digital migration from the current collection database to eHive with 10% of the Collection to be published, and available to access online, by the end of 2024. The Museum team have been working to standardise terminology throughout the existing database and will ensure that the Collection metadata is up to date before the data transfer to eHive.

Action shot of install crew opening the display case as part of Operation Archibald. Photograph Edify Media

Interpretation

Situated within the building that first amalgamated the colony's judicial system, the Old Court House Law Museum is uniquely positioned to interrogate Western Australia's legal and social history and to engage with the Western Australian legal profession and courts to reflect on the rule of law in Western Australia, past and present.

Through well-researched permanent and special displays, collaborative public programmes; and by using a variety of media and formats: the Museum has a role in the global discussion on the relationship of colonialism to the rule of law and its contribution to systemic discrimination, the impact of which are still evident today.

With a mission to provide local, interstate and international visitors with a unique Western Australian experience that stimulates discussion and reflection, the Museum interprets themes which relate to the building, its history, the collection and the systems of law which are part of Western Australian history.

Textile conservator Rinske Car Driesens in the process of cleaning and stabilising the judicial robes of Sir Francis Burt. Photograph provide by Rinske Car Driesens

Special Exhibitions

Audrey Jacob: Trial by Public Perception March 2023 – March 2024

Audrey Jacob: Trial by Public Perception examined the trial; as well as the manipulation of gender stereotypes and social conventions in the court and media that surrounded the infamous Audrey Jacob and Perth's 1925 'ballroom tragedy'.

Considered an open-and-shut case, this display invited visitors to consider hidden documents, evidence, and media reports; and to weigh up the facts versus what was presented at court.

The Museum had the opportunity to display exciting items; the bullet that killed Cyril Gidley, and an original Ball Programme from the scene of the crime generously loaned from the State Records Office (SRO). The exhibition displayed copies supressed evidence from the prosecution case file (SRO) side by side with documents from defence case file (Museum Collection). A film documentary called *Murder* on the Dancefloor (produced by Sandbox), provided a detailed exploration of the case; while a manually operated flip book provided a tactile reading experience.



A Just Legacy-Behind the Scenes: The Burt Family Collection April 2024 – April 2025

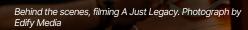
This exhibition documents the conservation focus on historic items in the Museum Collection from three generations of the Burt Family, whose legacy has shaped the evolution of Western Australia's legal and governance systems.

Allowing visitors to journey behind the scenes with the Museum and discover how conservation, research and digitisation can unlock stories embedded in artefacts and enable continued connection and conversation. The exhibition showcases recent conservation work undertaken on the Burt Family collection including the robes of Sir Francis Burt and a transcribed digital reproduction of one of Sir Archibald Paull Burt's notebooks. This exhibition provided visitors with insight to processes of conservation and the knowledge which can be gained from the conservators who worked with these items.

A Just Legacy - Short Film

Alongside the conservation and digitisation analysis of items from the Burt collection; the Museum launched *A Just Legacy*, a short film produced by the Museum, which serves to unpack the exhibition content and will remain a valuable Museum resource. The film is an exciting collaboration between the Old Court House Law Museum, Edify Media and the conservators who have worked with the Museum's collection. The film includes further insight into conservation practices including the behind the scenes process of "Operation Archibald" as well as interviews and footage of the conservators at work in laboratories and the Museum collection ((**b**) watch here).

This film is the start of a long-term project to create Museum resources which will be displayed permanently in the gallery on a new touch screen kiosk. This will allow visitors to view content such as films from previous exhibitions, collection images, and digital flip books.





A Charitable Entity

With its charity and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, the Museum continued to explore fundraising opportunities in 2023/24 through a number of initiatives that engaged with Foundations, corporates and individuals.

The Museum is very grateful to the Wright Burt Foundation, and individual donors (some new and some established) for their continued support.

The focus of the Museum in the reporting period and beyond is to build upon the significant progress made over in recent years in order to:

- Expand access to, and experiences within the Museum;
- Undertake important collection management work to conserve the Collection;
- Digitise the Collection and publish it online for wider public viewing, research and educational purposes; and
- Maintain staffing resources.



Raising an impressive \$52,746 in tax-deductible donations in 2023/24, the Museum has made positive progress towards its goals.

With the continued support of our donors, key stakeholders, the Foundation Committee, collaborative partners, and volunteers, this small court house with its big stories, has a bright future as a must see Western Australian cultural heritage site.

Donate Today

Key board from the new Supreme Court building This building, built just metres from the Old Court House, was opened in 1903 when the old commissariat store was found inadequate. The Crown Law Department was responsible for the administration of the Courts.

"The bringing together of the various courts and law offices under one roof could not but conduce to the speedy and efficient administration of the law... We wish that the building much contribute in the minds of all a care for justice and a feeling of securi in the parity of its administration.

Chief Histo

Photograph of Audrey Jacob with original Free Ward Ball Programme. Both items on loan courtesy of the State Records Office of Western Australia.

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Museum Donors

Making History – Framing the Future

Foundations

WRIGHT BURT FOUNDATION

Law Firms





Individuals

Founding Champions

- Sandy Anghie
- Ante Golem
- The Hon Dr Andrew Lu AM

Founding Donors

- Henry Boston OAM
- Peter Brindal
- Tony Chong
- Professor Brett Davies
- Danielle Davies
- Olivier David and Dr Bennie Ng
- Karen Farley SC
- Catherine Fletcher
- The Hon Nicholas Hasluck AM
- Stephen Josland
- Pino and Christine Monaco
- Dr Narrelle Morris
- Jodie Moffat
- Gavin Ryan
- The Hon Justice Melanie Sloss
- Carolyn Thatcher SC
- Aine Whelan
- Anonymous x 7



Museum Volunteers



The Museum's volunteering programme supports its daily operations. The achievements of the Museum in recent years, especially in terms of weekend opening, would not have been possible without the support, and dedication, of the Museum's volunteers.

Museum volunteers mainly support visitor services at the Museum, however there are opportunities for volunteers to support public programmes and collection management initiatives. In 2023/2024, with the Museum expanding its opening hours, the Museum's volunteer team has grown considerably.

The Museum is grateful to the Museum volunteers for their ongoing support and input. It is important to note the economic value of volunteer contributions to the Museum. Volunteer contributions demonstrate not only an economic value; their contributions also demonstrate tangible evidence of the importance that the Western Australian community places in the Museum and the services it provides.

2023/24 Volunteers

- Freda Bajrovic
- Elizabeth Borrello
- John Hylton Davies
- Randy Sharpe
- Trisha Christian

Volunteer Impact

- Karen Carrington
- Nina Ford
- Casey Chan
- Moira Joyce
- Jessica Tao

Economic value of volunteer contributions

- Matt Parry
- Portia Ho
- Aaron Eacott
- Peter Handford
- Asvira Asfar



15

Number of volunteers

\$40,602



845.7 Total volunteer hours

Community Engagement

Quarter Sessions

In 2023/2024, the Museum launched Quarter Sessions, a digital newsletter, to maintain and develop stakeholder engagement. The name of the newsletter is inspired by the early hearings held at the Old Court House and is emailed quarterly to donors, subscribers and friends of the Museum. Quarter Sessions shares the Museum's latest news and behind the scenes information, collection and collaboration highlights, as well as a section which includes fun facts and interesting finds.

Quarter Sessions has received great feedback and we look forward to continue bringing news to our community in this format. Stay in touch and click <u>here</u> to subscribe.



Welcome to Quarter Sessions

Welcome to Quarter Sessions, where we keep you up to date with news and events at Perth's oldest building – the Old Court House Law Museum.

We've taken our name from the hearings once held in the building – Quarter Sessions – and, as it suggests, we'll publish quarterly. We hope to connect with a diverse range of communities locally, nationally and internationally. Each issue offers behind-the-scenes news, collaboration highlights and a collection, or history, spotlight.

We hope that you enjoy being part of our community and invite you to share this newsletter with others, who may wish to subscribe.

Megan Shaw Curator, Old Court House Law Museum



