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Title

The Social Archive: socialising Australia's wartime history

Summary

The National Archives of Australia (the National Archives) is embracing digital possibilities to improve access to and engagement with its collections. It is integrating physical and digital experiences, linking original archival records with curated information and community crowd-sourced content, enriching the shared knowledge and experience of visitors who engage with the Archives. Discovering Anzacs is a dynamic interactive website that is helping to socialise Australia's wartime history across community, historians and researchers, and importantly teachers and students.

Abstract

The National Archives of Australia (the National Archives) is repositioning itself to be a contemporary, modern and accessible archives in the 21st Century, embracing the possibilities that digital technologies present to improve access and deliver innovative opportunities for engagement with and learnings from its collections. It is integrating physical and digital experiences, including exhibitions, education and public programs, linking original archival records with other collections and community crowd-sourced content that enriches the shared knowledge and experience of visitors. Innovative education and public programs, delivered through emerging partnerships, is providing new opportunities to engage the Australian community with its history.

Key to this approach is using social media and online tools, in support of a targeted approach to education and public programs development that is all about socialising the collections; linking the authentic record, with shared knowledge from other collections through use of an API, that is enriched and contextualised by community contributions.

As the National Archives leads Commonwealth agencies in implementing the Australian Government's digital transition strategy for the creation and management of digital records, it is also changing its own work practices to implement life-cycle management of records for its Digital Archive, building a contemporary and dynamic 'Social Archive' – so its collections are accessible to all Australians, indeed the global community into the future.

As we transition to more and more digital content, original paper records are more precious to telling, sharing, interpreting and understanding Australia's historical narrative. At a time that we are commemorating the Centenary of WWI, a key initiative of the Archives' Anzac Centenary Program, that illustrates this approach, is *Discovering Anzacs*. It is a dynamic interactive website that is helping to socialise Australia's wartime history across the general community, historians and researchers, and importantly school teachers and students – through integrated physical and digital exhibition, education and public programs.

It places the digitised, valued and authentic record at the centre of the social discussion, using crowd sourcing and data sharing through an API (Application Programming Interface) to link with other third party content sources – providing an integrated learning experience. One that is easy to use and navigate, whether you're a first time or high power user. One that provides a new generation of Australians the opportunity to engage with Australia's military history in a rich and dynamic way, providing a digital window into untold and lesser known stories that shine a light on the enduring impact of the great war on a young, developing nation.

Audience: Open. Accessible across audience streams.