

News from the National Library of Australia Xiaoli Li

Staffing news

Ms Bing Zheng, a new Chinese Librarian, has been welcomed to the Asian Collections at the National Library. Ms Zheng joined the Chinese Unit in 2015 with a strong background in academic education, research, information technology and a broad knowledge of Chinese history, culture and society. She has shown herself to be an intense, focused and passionate librarian with a very strong interest in collection development, reader services and promoting the Chinese Collection. Her inquiring mind, wide-ranging interests, knowledge of current publishing trends and researchers' needs will continue to deliver wonderful service to our users of the Chinese Collection at the National Library.

Current Exhibition Highlights

- **Chinese political posters**

'Waving the Red Flag: Chinese Posters 1949 - 1976' is on show in the Collections-in-Focus area in the Treasures Gallery from 18 July 2017 to 2 February 2018. The posters are powerful and capture almost every event or development that has taken place in the People's Republic of China since its founding in 1949. People like the posters not only for their colour, composition and content, but also because of their political message. Increasingly the historical and cultural values of similar posters are attracting attention from scholars. The exhibition is open from 10am to 5pm, please pop in and take a look.



- **Dombrovskis: Journeys into the Wild**

Peter Dombrovskis was one of the world's foremost wilderness photographers. His powerful, reflective and deeply personal images of the unique Tasmanian wilderness had a lasting impact, changing the way Australians think about their environment. The

National Library has over 3,000 Dombrovskis transparencies in its collection, and has printed 70 of the best for a special exhibition in tribute to this remarkable man, the most complete survey of his work to date in Australia. This exhibition has been open from 21 September 2017 to 30 January 2018.

Acquisition Highlights

A scroll propaganda painting in Chinese ink and watercolour of three People's Liberation Army soldiers in a training exercise, with two soldiers excitedly watching a third demonstrate how to hold a rifle steady. This was painted by the well-known artist, Fang Zengxian (方增先) and dated 1973. nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7501782

Here is a brief profile of Fang:



Over the past thirty years, Fang Zengxian (b.1931) has achieved international recognition for his works as an artist and has had exhibitions displayed internationally. He graduated from the China National Academy of Art in 1953 and soon returned as Professor. In 1978, he was appointed Vice Chairman of the Zhejiang Province Artists' Council and moved to the Shanghai Chinese Painting Academy in 1983 where he became Vice President the following year and was elected to the China National Artists' Council. In 1985, he became the executive director of the Shanghai Art Museum and continues to serve there as President.

A scroll of a full length portrait of Mao Zedong, in his characteristic suit, from October 1962 when he was just regaining his influence and power after the failures of the Great Leap Forward. The painting was by a well-known realist artist, Ma Jin and was beautifully painted in meticulous detail.
nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7501864



Rare paper currency notes issued by the Central Bank of China in the Republican era were donated by Dr James Hayes. Dr Hayes is a long-term donor to the Library of treasures from his personal collections. The banknotes are more than 87 years old, hard to find these days and have very high research values. If you look closely you might be able to make out the portrait of Sun Yat-sen, who was the first president and founding father of the Republic of China.



An album of thirty-nine small coloured Chinese gouache paintings on pith (approximately 11 x 6 cm) inserted into an album, which also includes monotone European collecting cards (approximately 6 x 10.5 cm) showing European landscape and theatre scenes with descriptions on reverse in German by Dr J. Temple. The pith paintings include a set of seven images showing the preparation and smoking of opium as well as twelve attractive images of flowers and butterflies. The other images show musicians with their instruments. The set of seven pith paintings showing Chinese people making, preparing and smoking opium fills a subject gap in the Library's pith painting collection.
nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7462360



A banned novel, the award-winning historical novel literally titled "Soft Burial" has been acquired. This novel which explores the excesses of China's 1950s land reform has drawn criticism from the Chinese communist party, culminating in the novel's banning in Mainland China.
nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7422475



A rare Chinese stitch-bound book entitled “Liu bai zi bian tong su jiao yu du ben” (or “Study of Dong Jingan’s 600 words popular education reader”) acquired upon the request of NLA fellow Sue (Shiwen) Chen. This book is the earliest and most outstanding textbook designed to launch a campaign against illiteracy in Republican China. Due to historical issues, this then extremely popular textbook has almost ceased to exist. The Library’s copy is the only known copy dating from 1912, the earliest extant edition. nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn7452099



Twenty-eight Chinese Communist Party (CCP) related items ranging from 1951-1987. These items are rare primary sources providing an insight into the history of the CCP, which further strengthens the Library’s collection of Chinese political science.



Rare, unique original ink and watercolour drawings on paper acquired from a private collector in Melbourne. The first drawing shows a large, stout man, personifying the USA, his left foot bearing the image of a solemn face, his ammunition belt full, standing over and protecting a thin and injured, Nationalist soldier. Beneath the soldier is a figure spewing “reactionary” capitalist ideas, also under US protection. The second drawing shows the wreckage of aeroplanes and ships lost in the Taiwan Strait, beneath a caricature of Chiang Kai Shek falling headfirst into the ocean, losing his hat and sword, as sharks circle nearby. The caption reads “The crabs and shrimps in the Taiwan Strait complain that the air planes and ships are always sinking, how can we live?”

