Learning [1]

FAR Out! Treasures to the Bush

I felt excited because it’s cool to see things that have been in your history.

I felt happy/excited because we got to see real items from a long time ago

I felt excited because they were centuries old and not many people had seen them.

Tonight, when I go home I’m going to tell my family about the whole thing because now seeing just some of the things that are at the Library I want to go see them.

This feedback from students at Kingscliff Public School signals mission accomplished for Learning Services and it is just a small sample of the fabulous feedback we receive from participants in the very popular, FAR Out! Treasures to the Bush program.

Now in its fifth year, FAR Out! has travelled across NSW providing primary students with the opportunity to engage with original collection material from the State Library. Not replicas, not photocopies or facsimiles but the ‘real’ thing presented as part of an interactive workshop designed to bring history to life for students and their teachers.

In 2018, with the support of the Library Foundation we have been able to provide this program to 2693 students and 144 teachers in 31 schools in regional communities around Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga and Armidale. We have designed a new workshop linked to curriculum outcomes for both History and Geography and students have the opportunity to get ‘up close’ to four intriguing collection items with rich stories to tell.

The beauty and exquisite detail of a travelling globe [2] from 1754 introduces students to the notion of exploration and the development of an accurate map of Australia. The shark skin cover, celestial and terrestrial pictures captivate their imagination as does the evidence that only a limited part of Australia had been accurately mapped at the time this globe was produced.

Series 65.06: Letter received by Banks from Matthew Flinders, 8 February 1801

Matthew Flinder’s list of requirements, [3] submitted to his sponsor, Sir Joseph Banks makes for interesting reading as he details his navigational instruments, charts, books and stationery supplies. Included in this list, and of particular fascination to students is his request for 2000 quills, 20 bottles of Japan ink, 12 doz plain black pencils and paper of various sizes – all essential requirements for a master map maker! This collection item was claimed as a favourite by 11 year old Mia because it shows his handwriting and what he needed in those days and it also showed what the paper was like.
An image of Bungaree [4] drawn by Ambrose Wilson provides an insight into the interaction between British explorers and the Aboriginal people and students are quick to identify the mistake made by Flinders in assuming that Bungaree would be able to communicate with the different Aboriginal people encountered as they circumnavigated Australia - more than 250 Aboriginal languages were spoken at this time.

A telescope, [5] believed to belong to Ludwig Leichhardt attracts very close examination as students struggle to read the letters scratched onto its surface and speculate on what may have happened to Leichhardt who disappeared without a trace in 1848 - a real life history mystery that captures the imagination of students as the call goes out around the classroom ‘Where are you Ludwig?’

Costumes, props and the active participation of students in telling the stories of early exploration create memorable and meaningful learning experiences and the observations made and questions asked inspire and delight the Learning team.
Everyone enjoys sailing on the Investigator as they haul up the ropes, climb the rigging, scrub the decks and salute Captain Matthew Flinders and meeting his faithful cat Trim always captivates the group. Gathering round a large replica of Matthew Flinders map published in 1814 is another highlight as student point out parts of the map we have discussed during the presentation.
The commitment to this valuable program speaks to the focus Learning Services has to providing equity of access to students and teachers across NSW and we look forward to visiting more regional communities in 2019.

Final words go to Zak, aged 10

_I felt amazed because they were holding history in their bare hands._

Well said, but not quite Zak – didn’t you notice the blue gloves!


Links