

Media Release



State Library creates a new space for Aboriginal communities to connect with their cultural heritage

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In an Australian first, the State Library of NSW launched today a new digital space for Aboriginal communities to connect with their histories and cultures which are held in the collections at the Library.

The innovative website is called *Gather* and uses an open-source platform called Mukurtu, developed by Washington State University in consultation with First Nations communities in Australia, the United States, Canada and other countries.

According to State Librarian John Vallance: “The State Library is very pleased to be the first Australian institution to join this exciting project aimed at supporting Aboriginal communities to explore and share their cultural heritage.”

The State Library holds some of the most significant extant material relating to Aboriginal history, language, art and culture, such as language lists and vocabularies, historic photographs, missionaries’ and explorers’ diaries, as well as contemporary Aboriginal works and stories.

“For the most part, the Library’s collection represents Australia’s First People as told by the third parties - colonists, missionaries, travellers, policemen and others - who documented the lives and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” says Damien Webb, the State Library’s Manager of Indigenous Engagement.

“This historical information is incredibly important to Aboriginal people because it may be the only known surviving records of their community and family from the time.

Gather is place where, for the first time, communities are empowered to add their stories and perspective to the record.”

One of the ways community members are being encouraged to engage with the Library’s collections is by helping to identifying people, places and stories in the photographs and other materials that can be found on *Gather*.

“There are hundreds of items in the Library’s collection where a large piece of the story is missing because this information simply wasn’t recorded. We invite anyone interested to get involved and welcome any new information they might be able to share,” says Mr Webb.

“We think it’s most important to ensure that Aboriginal communities feel welcome to add their own voices to the historical record” says Dr Vallance.



IMAGE: GATHER CATEGORY DETAIL 'MOBI', © / INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY BY JAKE DUCZYNSKI 181D5531220



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Gather's striking visual identity and artwork has been designed in collaboration with Gamilaraay and Mandandanji artist and animator, Jake Duczynski.

"A site like *Gather* is incredibly important," says Jake. "As a digital conduit between institutional collections and the communities seeking those materials and knowledge, I wanted to develop a visual identity that celebrates the fluidity of contemporary Indigenous culture, but simultaneously acknowledges foundations in tradition. I wanted to emphasise that we are not stagnant, or defined only by what it was to be Indigenous pre-colonisation, but instead, celebrate the fact that First Nations people exist in so many innovative spaces today - and we are thriving."

Gather is available online at: www.gather.sl.nsw.gov.au



IMAGE: GATHER CATEGORY DETAIL 'MOBI', © /INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY BY JAKE DUCZYNSKI E&D-55312-20

