

NSW State Library secures landmark map of Australian exploration

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An extremely rare 17th century map believed to be the earliest to document Australia's northwest coastline has just been acquired by the State Library of NSW and will go on public display from **TODAY, Monday 21 February 2022**.

Published in 1628, the ornately decorated world map *Charte universelle de tout le monde* is one of only six known surviving copies in the world, and the only copy in a public institution in Australia. The map documents the earliest explorations of the Australian continent by the Dutch.

According to State Librarian John Vallance: "This fine map predates the voyages of Tasman and Cook and captures a pivotal moment in the history of Dutch mapping of the Australian coastline."

"It's an extraordinary addition to the Library's rich cartographic collection, made possible through the support of the State Library Foundation," says Dr Vallance.

Twenty years before Dutch explorer Abel Tasman surveyed the northern coastline of Australia, Jan Cartensz led an expedition for the Dutch East India Company to explore the coast of New Guinea to investigate potential trade opportunities and suspected deposits of gold.

The State Library's head curator Maggie Patton says, "Cartensz's 1623 voyage was the first European voyage to explicitly survey and describe the eastern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, although at the time they thought they were exploring the southern coast of New Guinea. They had yet to confirm the existence of the Torres Strait. The Cartensz voyage retraced the path of the 1606 voyage by Willem Jansz in the *Duyfken*, reputedly the first known European to have landed in Australia."

"This map is the first step in the incremental mapping of Australia by Europeans over the next 250 years."

In his journal, which survives in the archives of the Dutch East India Company, Cartensz describes the barren landscape, the lack of water and the First Nations people they encountered who were unimpressed with the glass beads and trinkets offered by the European crew.

Media Release



On 3 May 1623 Cartensz writes: "... it is very dry and barren, for during all the time we have searched and examined this part of the coast to our best ability, we have not seen one fruit-bearing tree, nor anything that man could make use of; there are no mountains or even hills, so that it may be safely concluded that the land contains no metals, nor yields any precious woods... In our judgment this is the most arid and barren region that could be found anywhere on the earth..."

Ms Patton says: "Visitors will be captivated by the large wall map, which is beautifully decorated with ships and sea monsters, and the double-hemispheres surrounded by cherubs with insets displaying celestial views of the northern and southern hemispheres – a fine example of 17th century Dutch mapmaking."

The new map is on display in the State Library's Amaze Gallery from 21 February to August 2022.

In addition, some of the Library's most rare and priceless maps, charts, atlases and globes are currently on display in its *Maps of the Pacific* exhibition (until 24 April 2022) and new Map Rooms.

Maggie Patton is available for interviews.

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