



National Centre of Biography News

March 2025

The NCB News is the monthly newsletter of the National Centre of Biography. Got biographical news to share? Send us an email at ncb@anu.edu.au.



The Australian Crowd, by Stephen Baxter (2014)

The Nan Phillips Library



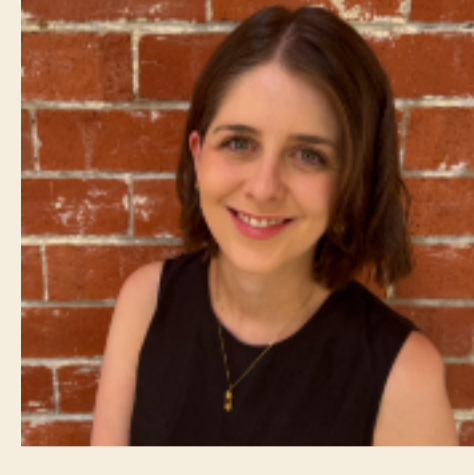
Nan Phillips. Source: The ADB's Story (ANU Press).

Last year the team set out to rename the ADB Library after a woman who had contributed to the ADB but had not yet been publicly recognised. After much research, we selected a candidate: Nancy (Nan) Phillips (née Wearne).

Phillips joined the ANU History Department in 1961 as a departmental assistant. With Professor Douglas Pike, she helped establish the infant ADB, and in 1963 became a full-time ADB administrator and research assistant. She has been credited as the organising force behind the ADB's formidable early reference and filing system and the author of its first style manual.

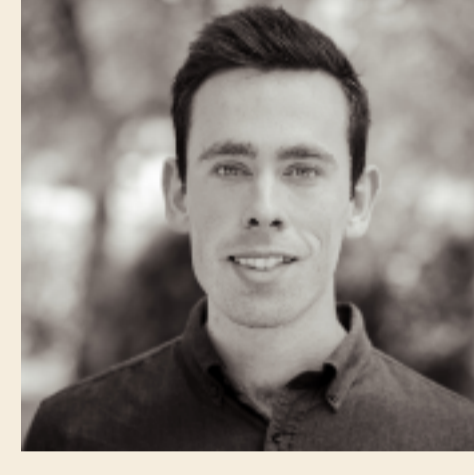
Many of the books in the library were donated by Phillips, who was considered the 'heart and soul' of ADB. It is therefore very fitting that the room will henceforth be known as the Nan Phillips Library.

News & notices



Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship

On 5 March at Adelaide Writers' Week Dr Michelle Staff was [announced](#) as the recipient of the Hazel Rowley Literary Fellowship for 2025. The fellowship will support her research for a biography of sisters and feminists, Bessie Rischbieth and Olive Evans. Congratulations, Michelle!



Teaching award

PhD student Matt Cunneen recently received a Student-nominated Teaching Appreciation Certificate for his work with the University of Tasmania's Diploma of Family History. This is a wonderful testament to his passion and skill as an educator. Well done, Matt!



Family history writing competition

The E.M. Fletcher Writing Competition is open until 15 July 2025. Sponsored by Family History ACT, this prize is for the best short story of 1,500-2,000 words on a family history/genealogy theme. More info [here](#).



Biography Workshop

In the February Biography Workshop, our very own Dr Shauna Bostock will speak about her award-winning book *Reaching Through Time: Finding my family's stories*. Please note the day/time differs from our usual schedule: Tuesday 18 March, 2-3.30pm. More details [here](#).



Discovering Millicent Armstrong

On 19 March the National Library of Australia will host a talk by Dianna Nixon, who has spent the better part of a decade uncovering the life of playwright Millicent Armstrong. Tickets are available [here](#).



Book launch

On 28 March Dr Catherine Bishop will be in conversation with the NCB's Dr Emily Gallagher on her latest book, *The World We Want: The New York Herald Tribune World Youth Forum and the Cold War Teenager*. Register [here](#).



Olive Cotton & Wolfgang Sievers

Also at the NLA, on 8 April Emeritus Professor Helen Ennis will talk about two iconic photographers, Olive Cotton and Wolfgang Sievers. Tickets [here](#).



Temporary staff movements

Professor Melanie Nolan will be on study leave for the next six months. While she is away, Dr Malcolm Allbrook will be acting in the role of ADB general editor and NCB director. In turn, Dr Stephen Wilks will be undertaking Malcolm's usual role as ADB managing editor. Melanie's absence will of course leave a big gap, but we anticipate that the ADB and the Centre will continue to function with minimal disruption.

Read, listen, learn



New Biography Series title

The latest addition to ANU Press' Biography Series is out now: *Politics, Pride and Perversion: The Rise and Fall of Frank Arkell*, by Erik Eklund. Order your copy [here](#).



An intellectual biography

Our colleague over in SLLL, Dr Tom Geue, is celebrating the recent publication of his book *Major Corrections: An Intellectual Biography of Sebastiano Timpanaro* with Verso. It is available to [purchase](#) now. Congratulations, Tom!



Afternoon Light Podcast

One of the School of History's PhD students, Colin Milner, has spoken about his research on Sir Robert Garran for the Afternoon Light Podcast. Listen [here](#).



Oceania Lives, AJBH no. 9

A special issue of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History*, 'Oceania Lives', is out soon with ANU Press. Guest edited by Prof. Katerina Teaiwa, Dr Nick Hoare, and Talei Mangioni, it features dialogues, reflective pieces, and research articles. Register to be alerted when it is published [here](#).



Follow us!

Our social media channels have had a refresh!

You can find us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Bluesky](#), [LinkedIn](#) & [X](#) under the name 'Australian Dictionary of Biography'. As our main project, we wanted to put the ADB front and centre of our online presence.

Join us wherever you'd like to get your regular biographical fix!

ADB feature entry

Each month we highlight a new addition to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

This time round we're sharing an entry from the *Indigenous Australian Dictionary of Biography*, which to date has published 96 new entries on First Nations subjects.

Dharug woman Marion Elizabeth Smith (1891-1957) moved overseas as an infant and never returned to Australia. She trained as a nurse in Massachusetts before enlisting in the nursing service in Canada. She was potentially the only Aboriginal woman from Australia to serve during the war.



Marion Walls (née Smith) and Victor B. Walls, 1930

Read more about Smith in the entry written by Professor Odette Best and Abigail Stinger [here](#).

