

2019 Australia's Year of the Public Domain

28 December 2018

Canberra, Australia - 2019 will be a golden year for culture and learning in Australia. As of 1 January millions of items from our national collections - from Captain Cook's carrot marmalade recipe and Henry Lawson's letters to war posters and theses - will fall out of copyright for the first time, finally becoming free for all to use.

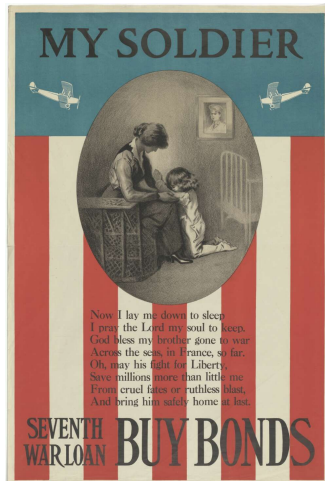
This wealth of new material is a result of changes to copyright law introduced by the [Copyright Amendment \(Disability Access and other Measures\) Act 2017](#). As those who [Cooked for Copyright](#) in 2015 will remember, an aberration of Australian law has meant that unpublished materials - from letters to diaries to shipping manifests - currently remain in copyright in perpetuity. This means they rapidly become locked, unuseable, behind laws that require you to seek permission from an often impossible to identify copyright owner before you publish, adapt or even copy them.

The [new laws starting on 1 January](#) reverse that, giving unpublished materials the same copyright term as their published counterparts. This means most of Australia's national collection will now have a copyright term of 70 years after the author's death. The changes also create a new term of 70 years for materials with unknown authors, known as orphan works.

Just some of the materials that will finally be freed by the new provisions include:

- Captain Cook's diaries and Jane Austen's correspondence held at the National Library of Australia;
- Ephemera from both World Wars, including posters, postcards, and advertising;
- Handwritten manuscripts and letters from numerous Australian poets, including famed miners' poet and socialist, Marie Pitt;
- The personal papers of a multitude of former Australian politicians, including Governor General Sir Isaac Isaacs and Premier of South Australia Sir James Penn Boucaut;
- Soldiers' letters home, including love letters from acclaimed WWII RAAF pilot, Charles Learmonth;
- Indigenous language research from the papers of former Protector of Aborigines Archibald Meston;
- The records of one of Tasmania's first banks, the Derwent Bank, including its historic "Convict Savings Bank" accounts.





To celebrate this great cultural windfall, Australia's libraries and archives are declaring 2019 the Year of the Public Domain. Throughout the year, we will be holding events aimed at highlighting the newly freed materials, and celebrating how they can be put to use for all Australians - including competitions, hackathons, exhibitions and remix festivals. Watch out for more information on each event as we get closer to it.

As a start, in January Australia's libraries and archives will begin releasing the new public domain materials, flicking the switch for them to be reused by all Australians. One of the first collections to be released will be the Henry Lawson papers held by Rare Books & Special Collections (RBSC) at the University of Sydney Library. These scrapbooks contain letters between Lawson and his agents, collaborators, peers and associates, and other personal material in Lawson's own hand, revealing the complexities and human frailties of the man behind the legendary literary figure.

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About the ALCC - <http://libcopyright.org.au>

The Australian Library Copyright Committee (ALCC) is the primary advocate in Australia for the copyright law reform in the interests of Australian libraries, archives and information providers. We make submissions to government, organise copyright education, and provide online resources targeted at the library and archive sectors. The ALCC and its members support a copyright framework that appropriately protects the interests of right holders while ensuring access to important cultural, educational and historic content in the public interest.

About ALIA - <https://www.alia.org.au>

The Australian Library and Information Association is the national professional organisation for the Australian library and information services sector. Together we seek to empower the profession through the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual professional support. We are governed by a constitution and guided by our vision, objects and values.

Image credits

Image 1

Title: Women! help Australia's sons win the war [picture] : buy war loan bonds

Created/Published: Sydney, John Sands, [1915-1918]

Copyright: Public Domain

From the collection of the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135721145/view>

Image 2

Title: My soldier [picture] : Seventh War Loan, buy bonds

Created/Published: Sydney, Mason, Firth & McCutcheon, [1918?]

Copyright: Public Domain

From the collection of the National Library of Australia, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-135720801/view>

Interviews and media contact

Interviews available by arrangement.

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This press release available online at

<http://libcopyright.org.au/media/2019-australias-year-public-domain>