
Better ways of seeing landscapes: The *Queensland Historical Atlas*

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Abstract

The *Queensland Historical Atlas* (2010) takes a fresh approach to the atlas form by interpreting Queensland landscapes as lived, embodied and practised. As a project conceived in partnership with Queensland Museum, the Atlas brings this approach directly into museum practice. This article outlines some of the challenges of the conventional atlas form, and examines how the *Queensland Historical Atlas* has embraced opportunities to reinvigorate the form, including the adoption of new technology and developing new affective interpretation frameworks. Significantly, the Atlas places material culture, including historical maps, at the centre of interpretation of Queensland landscapes. Although the Atlas is not an exhibition, it creates ready-made modules available for exhibition interpretation. Each of these reflects on how Queensland is shaped by its landscapes and how, in turn, museum collections can capture the diverse landscapes of Queensland and the people who create those landscapes. As an electronic resource, the Atlas becomes a way of reconnecting cultural history and landscapes with museum collections.

Introduction

The *Queensland Historical Atlas* (2010) is an online journal and public website that centres landscapes in cultural histories of Queensland. Conceived around the landscape as lived, embodied and practised, the Atlas provokes new responses and approaches in museum practice. The Atlas is written and designed to provide ready-made modules of research, objects and images that can form the basis of exhibition interpretation. Together, these reflect how Queensland is shaped by its landscapes, how objects are a product of landscapes and how museums interpret those landscapes and objects. In turn, these modules show how museum collections can capture the diverse landscapes of Queensland and the people who create those landscapes. As an electronic resource, the Atlas becomes a way of redistributing cultural history back into the landscape as part of the dispersed museum, underlining the role of technology in engaging with communities.

Landscape

Landscape is a dynamic term that, in order to be fully understood, needs to be viewed from a cultural as well as a natural perspective, and increasingly is being studied within and across a range of disciplines. Waldheim (2016: 4) refers to its 'irreducible plurality of meanings'. Those meanings have undergone profound changes from the classical Eurocentric concept of landscape represented in sixteenth-century landscape painting with an emphasis on the subjective, aestheticised perception of nature to a term that now resonates across various academic disciplines in nuanced ways. Matless (2002: 227) argues that 'landscape has been a subject of understanding for many disciplines, and the sense of landscape as a territory with various proprietorial claims pertains in the academy and beyond'. More recently, both Waldheim (2016) and Fischer (2012) have traced the development of landscape theory along different disciplinary pathways. They suggest that ethnographers and cultural anthropologists stress production and projection while historians stress the changing social, economic and political structures, especially the growing national self-confidence that comes from so-called 'mastery' over nature. For historians of technology and environmental historians, landscape appears as 'civilized technicized space' (Fischer 2012: 326) and in new cultural geography, landscape is text to be interpreted (Waldheim 2016: 2-6). For urban, regional and planning disciplines, the boundary between town and country is emphasised, with Waldheim (2016) introducing the term 'landscape urbanism', while Fischer (2012: 327) points to Brinckerhoff Jackson's concept of vernacular or ordinary landscapes and the work of Hasse in relation to spaces like car parks, industrial sites and traffic routes, which breaks from a traditional aesthetic to include temporary, particular and 'ugly' landscapes. Likewise, many other academic disciplines, including art theory, cultural history, archaeology, critical heritage and museum studies, have embraced the interpretative potential of what could be now be grouped and termed 'new landscape studies'. For cultural historians, landscapes of memory — recollecting both real and imagined landscapes of the past — add to the transdisciplinary nature of landscape studies. This transdisciplinarity offers new opportunities for museums to venture beyond dislocated objects and engage with landscape. The museum curator (if not their exhibition, research or public program team) is often trained in one or several of landscape-related disciplines, making them well placed to take advantage of this dynamic understanding of landscapes, moving it beyond scientific and systematic descriptions or even a simple art focus.

The presence and impact of people in the landscape, in cities and suburbs as well as rural areas, add the cultural dimension to landscape and changes its definition to a lived, embodied and practised landscape (cf. Neumann 2011: 844). To Fischer (2012: 327), 'Human actors are no longer a contemplative audience — as they were in the landscape parks of the bourgeois era — but mobile, transitory players moving from place to place.' Fischer (2012: 326) uses the term 'cultural landscape', where landscape is the result of human influence. Landscape is now understood to be defined by meaning; modification and use are not necessary to render landscape cultural (Fischer 2012: 331).

Outside the academy, the general public also has an understanding of 'landscape', which it associates as much with cities and suburbs as with rural areas. Hokema

(2015: 71) investigates the existence of what she calls a ‘common understanding’ of the term ‘landscape’ and concludes that the layperson’s perception of what constitutes landscape intrinsically involves reference to the concepts of nature, beauty, country, city, garden and individual experience, where understanding of landscape is an aesthetic experience, distinct from but coexisting with physical elements and land use. She concludes (2015: 71) that ‘a societal discourse about landscape can be assumed’.

A focus on landscape and the history of a state’s landscapes is therefore a rich topic for museums to explore. It is imbued with both specific research agendas and a general understanding in the community. Landscape is a fertile category for research because it is both culturally and naturally conditioned (Fischer 2012: 331). For Queensland Museum, an institution with responsibilities for a broad spectrum of content spanning two primary programs — ‘Cultures and Histories’ and ‘Biodiversity’ — landscape becomes a means by which to bridge the cultural and natural division. An exploration of Queensland landscapes is thus an important vehicle for exhibition, collection and research that can integrate and convey the complex social histories of a geographic space.

The *Queensland Historical Atlas: Histories, Cultures, Landscapes*¹ was initiated as an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project between The University of Queensland and Queensland Museum. It was funded and delivered from 2007 to 2010 partly to mark the sesquicentennial of Queensland in 2009 with the additional aim of capturing new research into landscape and to bring Queensland landscape research to the forefront of trans-disciplinary research.²

The atlas as historical form

The atlas form has a long history as a means to convey the landscape to both the specialist reader and the general public. In Australia, atlases have been produced to mark the national centenary and bicentenary, and most state sesquicentenaries. In doing so, they conform to the notion that representing the landscape can measure national self-confidence and ‘mastery’ over nature where each atlas is used to review the ‘progress’ of the country or state. The risk in producing a new atlas is that the form is firmly planted within a dated historical tradition. The atlas mode in Queensland in terms of form, content and delivery is itself historical and dates to the 1860s (Stell 2010). The preceding atlas of Queensland was a 1993 Queensland government-sponsored multi-authored atlas produced in a coffee table style suitable for presentation to visiting dignitaries and to provide what its editor, geographer David Wadley (1994), called a ‘definitive statement on Queensland’. Titled *Reef Range and Red Dust: The Adventure Atlas of Queensland*, the atlas featured commissioned cartography and had eight major themes, beginning (somewhat predictably) with Aborigines (‘Keeper of the Dreaming’) and moving through exploration, immigration, war, the natural environment, city and country, land and sea, and ending with problems and projections. Reviewing the atlas himself, Wadley (1994: 119) later suggested the addition of another theme, ‘Improving Our State’. As a product of its time, the concept of ‘landscape’ remains unexamined, although the title attempts to convey a landscape ‘mood’. If anything, the inclusion of ‘adventure’ in the title reflects the idea of the Australian landscape as untamed, dangerous and inhospitable, mirroring the attitude that the landscape is something

to be conquered. The contributed pieces are thus embedded within a traditional historical framework that fails to find new connections or draw together histories and landscapes.

Wadley is by no means alone in having traditional thematic structure, form and delivery stifle his intentions. The challenge with an historical atlas is to present material that updates the mode in terms of content, within a mode of delivery that itself is historical. Two North American examples demonstrate the pitfalls and challenges of the printed contemporary historical atlas, especially where there is a reliance on historical maps that do not reflect the changing interests of the historian or public. Buenger (2010: 937) sums this up in his review of *Texas: A Historical Atlas* when he states:

The new atlas stands out as a glaring anachronism, a relic of a time in the early 1980s when high oil prices and a high rig count made Texans believe in the inevitability of greater prosperity, and when other groups besides Anglos received little notice from historians. For practicing historians, in fact, much has changed.

Buenger notes the absence of the growing importance of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries in the study of Texas, the African American and the Mexican American experiences in Texas, and the move away from the study of heroes to the study of everyday life and ordinary people, concluding (2011: 937–8) that the atlas was ‘testimony to one unchanged reality for professional historians — the frustratingly difficult process of moving this more modern history into the public consciousness. When it comes to anything related to Texas, a new history has not replaced the old history.’ Sutherland (2014: 151) saw many of the same issues emerge in his review of *British Columbia: A New Historical Atlas* (2012) when he reflected that alongside Canadian economic development went the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and their marginalisation and impoverishment, and that the atlas’s ‘emphasis on developers, schemers, and promoters, and on their plans, leaves us wanting to know more about how people experienced the emerging, changing, and imposed townsites, cities, and industrial projects and landscapes’.

Part of the answer is to challenge the form of the atlas itself. Bentley (2012: 219) questioned ‘What if the atlas were rethought as a space capable of creatively illuminating stories of the past?’ Drawing on her 2009 MA thesis from the University of Ohio where she designed and delivered ‘A Narrative Atlas of the Gunnison Beckwith Survey for the Pacific Railroad, 1853–1854’, and taking inspiration from the work of Denis Wood (1987), in which he argues for the atlas as a narrative form, Bentley (2012: 229) deconstructs the original railroad report and, using the explorers’ voice in text, design and cartographic elements (‘cartographic voice’), recreates a narrative of the journey allowing the reader to ‘conceptualise and visualize the expedition’. Thus she manipulates existing sources and creates new ones. She thus breaks the traditional format of the reference atlas, opening it up to critique regarding cartographic agency. She moves ‘sequentially through the narrative of multiple perspectives and data formats’ (Bentley 2012: 230). It is an interconnected representation that presents multiple points of view. It is an incorporated world, and it thus becomes a ‘text of pleasure’ (Bentley 2012: 224). While radically changing the content in her narrative atlas, however, Bentley still presents her atlas in a traditional format.

Creating a new atlas form

It was from this context of dynamic reconceptualisation of landscape studies and critique of the atlas form itself that the *Queensland Historical Atlas* emerged. In contrast to earlier Queensland atlases, the *Queensland Historical Atlas* sought to explicitly draw connections between landscape and history. It aimed to understand landscape as culturally, historically and socially constructed, rather than as physical space that might simply be encountered and recorded. Of critical importance to the development of the Atlas was not only the relationship between different schools of thought at The University of Queensland (history, geography, Aboriginal studies, Australian studies and physical sciences), but engagement with Queensland Museum and its distributed state collection, expertise and audiences across multiple campuses including Queensland Museum and Sciencentre (Brisbane), the Workshops Rail Museum (Ipswich), Cobb & Co Museum (Toowoomba) and the Museum of Tropical Queensland (Townsville). Queensland Museum itself has a traditional structure separating natural and cultural research, collection and interpretation. These core areas are further divided, with the cultures and histories program broken down into traditional areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Pacific, Social History, Technology and Transport collections, among others. These themselves separate cultures and histories of indigenes, settlers, migrants and others.

The Atlas employed a range of strategies to subvert the disciplinary boundaries of academia, the structure of Queensland Museum and the historicised atlas form. The strategies included the deployment of thematic frameworks, design, technology, material culture and connection to audiences. Importantly, it is the inclusion of methods and techniques drawn directly from museology that gives the *Queensland Historical Atlas* its distinctive style, direction and public accessibility.

Thematic framework

The *Queensland Historical Atlas* drew its thematic inspiration directly from several earlier museum projects, in particular a foundation exhibition at the National Museum of Australia entitled *Eternity: Stories from the Emotional Heart of Australia* (2001–17). Conceived and curated by Marion Stell (2001), *Eternity* was built around ten modules of interpretation, each focused on an affective theme (joy, separation, mystery, chance, devotion, fear, passion, thrill, loneliness and hope). These themes were determined through a systematic process of developing a detailed matrix of known historical events, significant in Australian social history, set against an affective framework of emotion and affect, inspired by and developed from the seminal work of Theodore Zeldin (1995). The final list of affective terms was distilled to provide an apparently simple suite of ten themes that allowed the telling of multiple stories encompassing both an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspective from Australia's past (Stell 2001). Importantly, each story was centred around one evocative museum object. This work was later extended and tested in a heritage tourism context, and shown to be an effective means by which to engage audiences (Pocock et al. 2010; Pocock, Stell and Mate 2018; Stell, Pocock and Ballantyne 2006).

The development of the *Queensland Historical Atlas* took a similar approach, mirroring that of an exhibition brief. A primary task was to identify themes that

Table 1 Queensland Historical Atlas affective themes.

Section	Landscape theme	Description
Quintessential Queensland	Distinctiveness	How Queensland is a distinctive landscape and culture
	Perceptions	How people understand the landscape
	Queenslanders	People in the landscape
Distance	Movement	How people move through the landscape
	Pathways	How things move through the landscape and where they are made
Division	Separation	Divisions in the landscape
	Conflict	How people contest the landscape
Dreaming	Imagination	How people have imagined Queensland
	Memory	How people remember the landscape
	Curiosity	Knowledge through the landscape
Development	Exploitation	Taking and using things from the landscape
	Transformation	How the landscape has changed and been modified
	Survival	How the landscape impacts on people
	Pleasure	How people enjoy the landscape

could provide a way-finding mechanism, initially for contributing authors and subsequently for readers as visitors. An initial structure for the way-finding themes was drawn up through the development of a social history matrix. It commenced with identifying significant events and themes in established histories of Queensland, and then analysing these to identify affective experiences. Significantly, it further included a deliberate and direct analysis of the Queensland landscape in order to bring out its nuances and to encourage new connections and scholarship. The initial suite of themes was subsequently refined, tested and expanded through a number of expert focus groups, comprising academics, curatorial, conservation and collections staff, and other scholars with expertise in aspects of Queensland social history. These groups were able to suggest particular topics, ideas or stories that had not previously been told about Queensland, and to test them against the new thematic framework. Formal focus groups, in the form of full-day workshops, were held in Brisbane and Cairns, with invited experts in Queensland history. The Atlas editors utilised university and museum connections in all major Queensland towns to identify and consult with potential contributors — especially those in Toowoomba, Gold Coast, Townsville, the Sunshine Coast and the Central Coast. Individual editors travelled to Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine, Emerald, Mt Isa, Charters Towers, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Wallangarra, the Torres Strait and Julia Creek to hold informal Atlas discussions and the regular Atlas online newsletter built discussion groups online, and reached Queensland scholars in other states and overseas.

The final structure of the Atlas used five main over-arching sections within which fourteen landscape themes were embedded (see [Table 1](#)). No temporal or geographic structure was imposed on the order of contributions to allow each article to contribute to the overall thematic structure.

Each theme is introduced by a major essay written by one or more members of the ARC Linkage grant team drawn from The University of Queensland and

Queensland Museum. The themes were distributed early in the life of the project to guide contributing authors in pitching and framing their Atlas entries. In the majority of cases, those with existing research interests identified the most relevant theme and, with direction, reconceptualised their research, often bringing the landscape focus to the forefront and bringing new insights to the earlier research. The engagement with the theme, and the selection and interpretation of maps, were among the most challenging and rewarding aspects of developing and writing for the *Queensland Historical Atlas*, and often involved personal discussion and planning prior to submission of material, as well as a significant amount of iterative feedback to authors less familiar with writing in an atlas format, working with material culture or thinking about affect. Thematic engagement with the landscape was a core element of assessment during the peer review process for each article.

Encapsulated within the thematic framework is the idea that the Queensland landscape is lived, embodied and practised (cf. Neumann 2011: 844). These new ways of seeing the landscape draw heavily on the self-identity of people and their landscapes (distinctiveness, perceptions, Queenslanders); on the ways we see ourselves and are seen by others; on physical distance (movement and pathways) — the tracks across the state mirroring Indigenous movement and commodity pathways with non-Indigenous railways and roads and forms of transport; on divisions (separation and conflict) — reflecting changing political and domestic landscapes; on dreaming (imagination, memory and curiosity) — drawing together the landscapes of memory, both real and imagined, and controversially blending with these the scientific knowledge of landscape; and on development (exploitation, transformation, survival, pleasure) — leading to the use of landscape with both a positive and negative legacy. Deliberately absent are themes that cluster Aboriginal stories into separate spheres, celebratory or state-building themes, future-looking themes or specialised themes like sport, war, immigration or progress, which are divorced from the landscape. That is not to state that these topics are not located throughout the Atlas; rather, they are reconceptualised within the wider framework of, for example, conflict or pleasure. Each article is a story, a narrative, and the Atlas comprises stand-alone articles by individual authors that together speak to a changing and evolving landscape narrative.

The balance of topics represented across the Atlas is nevertheless carefully planned and controlled, rather than organic, as the new themes might suggest. In line with a museum exhibition brief, the affective thematic framework was developed using a matrix of historical events in Queensland. This ensured a strong temporal mix of content in the Atlas articles. Similarly, the absence of an overarching geographic structure dictated that care be taken by the editorial team to spread the geographic base of Atlas articles. This base was monitored and measured, and rebalanced where necessary, using the Tourism and Events Queensland major geographic areas;³ however, the majority of contributions related to multiple areas or to the whole of Queensland.

It is the landscape focus of research in the themes that has the greatest impact on understanding the changing Queensland landscape rather than any geographic division. Every article addresses a sense of place, as each is located within Queensland. While many are inward focused, a large number are outward focused, reflecting Queensland's place within both colonial and modern society and the sharing of land borders with New South Wales, South Australia, the Northern

Territory and maritime borders across the Torres Strait with Papua New Guinea. Articles also cover the diaspora of a range of migrants and others, including South Sea Islanders, Pacific Islanders, Chinese, Italians, Scandinavians, Greeks, Hispanics, Lebanese, Indians, Irish, English and our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific. One of the effects of this focus on landscape is that geographic space is not seen in isolation from its national and global context, and specific cultural identities are freed of their spatial and temporal confines: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are of the past and the present, and migrants are not confined to particular industries, but instead all histories, cultures and landscapes collide.

Technology

Bentley's (2012) narrative experimental atlas was radical in conceptualization, but traditional in format and delivery. The last few years of the twentieth century into the first two decades of the twenty-first century witnessed a rapid acceleration of online formats and the beginnings of the digitisation of museum, library and archive collections. For those institutions with existing catalogues, this presented a number of challenges in terms of how to consolidate and present information online. The emergence of online exhibitions, sometimes by creating a trail through online catalogues, was one technique; however, curating online exhibitions — transferring physical exhibitions to a suitable online format — was one of the big challenges facing institutions (D'Amico and Stell 1996).

Although originally conceived as both a print and online atlas, the flexibility of the online platform offered the *Queensland Historical Atlas* project the most resilient (and ultimately the most cost-effective) platform to pursue. A print atlas was envisaged as a substantial product, appropriate as a souvenir or marker of the Queensland sesquicentennial, but the other major audience for the Atlas was perceived to be teachers and schoolchildren. As outlined above, though, print Atlas formats are expensive, static and unwieldy, and unlikely to be taken up by schools in the twenty-first century. The capacity to reproduce detailed maps is also limited. For content delivery, the synergies between online literacy and access match up with modern museum module and exhibition practice.

During the implementation phase of the *Queensland Historical Atlas* in 2007, neither The University of Queensland nor Queensland Museum possessed the technological knowledge or skills to program and deliver an online version of the Atlas. All technical aspects of the Atlas were programmed by an external technology consultant, using Drupal open source software. While experimental at the time, ten years later Drupal is today a common platform for many cultural institutions, and online delivery and search databases. The Atlas metadata standards were developed by the project team based at The University of Queensland. Serving in essence as an online exhibition of the Queensland landscape, the Atlas home page acts as the way-finding schema for the Atlas. It deliberately contains both self-evident pathways (such as randomised selections of articles) and pathways that the user must actively explore (such as a drop-down menu of themes). The home page acts as a museum attraction screen and contains a cycle-through set of maps drawn randomly from anywhere in the database, and three ways to explore the thematic structure and arrive at articles: a drop-down menu, a hyperlinked schema of the entire thematic

structure and a word-matching search function. A feature of recently added images gives the repeat visitor new material to explore in addition to a random selection of essays, maps, photos, art and objects. The intention of the online format is to replicate the visitor experience of visiting a physical exhibition, but with many more pathways to follow, including the ability to search. Technology delivers this experience of presenting curated combinations of maps, text, images and artefacts into what effectively becomes continuously changing online exhibition modules.

Each Atlas essay consists of a number of individual elements, brought together to form a cohesive story with elements that can be shared across different articles. As an historical atlas, the Atlas contains no new cartography, thus forcing authors to abandon traditional cartographic conventions (most commonly represented as dots on the map) and encouraging them to critique historical maps as part of their research and analysis of data sources. At the minimum, each article had about 800 words of text, at least one historical map, a number of images with captions and could contain other elements such as poetry. Of particular importance to the site is the ‘zoomify’ feature, which allows the visitor to examine each map or image in high-resolution detail.⁴ This technology frees the landscape from the confines of the printed page, enabling the viewer to explore historical maps and images in greater depth, enhancing legibility and visitor access. Technology also enables the online Atlas to grow, to build on itself and to create linkages across stories and between themes. These capacities are borne out in statistics for use of the site. Since the launch of the site in 2010, there have been over 600,000 unique visitors to the site, contributing to more than 1,210,000 page views. The visitors come from 215 countries and nearly 10,000 cities across the world (as measured by their ISP addresses), demonstrating the extraordinary reach of the Atlas. Queensland visitors account for almost half of all visitors, and are distributed across the state (see Table 2). The top 100 locations using the Atlas include 17 Queensland towns. Significantly too, usage of the site has continued to increase incrementally each year. Particular news stories or events in Queensland occasionally trigger a spike in user numbers but overall the numbers have grown each year, from a base of 40,000 users in 2011, rising to 110,000 visitors per annum.

Design

Like Bentley’s experimental narrative historical atlas, the *Queensland Historical Atlas* sought to develop a very particular look and feel. To ensure that the design reflected the underlying focus of the Atlas and the connection between people, landscape and stories, the Atlas project team developed a brief akin to those used in museum design and interpretation. A private design consultant was appointed to work directly with the project coordinator to develop a unique look, drawing on the project team’s knowledge of the themes, content and museum collections.

The project team selected Olive Ashworth prints from the collection of Queensland Museum to denote each of the fourteen landscape themes. Olive Ashworth (1915–2000) was a textile artist who drew inspiration for her popular textile designs from the landscape. Those produced in the 1970s were inspired by trips she undertook to the Great Barrier Reef and Far North Queensland tropical rainforests in the 1930s and 1950s (Kerr 1995). The aesthetic created by her use of Queensland

Table 2 Number of Queensland users by location, within top 100 global user locations.

	Within top 100 world locations	ISP location	Unique visitors
1	1	Brisbane	256,251
2	6	Gold Coast	13,363
3	9	Cairns	9,904
4	10	Sunshine Coast	5,453
5	11	Townsville	4,804
6	12	Toowoomba	4,671
7	15	Bundaberg	2,230
8	17	Rockhampton	1,812
9	21	Mackay	1,431
10	33	Victoria Point	579
11	36	Hervey Bay	546
12	39	Gladstone	509
13	43	Mount Isa	418
14	62	Gympie	339
15	63	Redcliffe	330
16	90	Buderim	208
17	97	Maryborough	191
Total			303,039

flora and fauna gives the Atlas a ‘retro’ feel, rather than a traditional historical feel of ‘old maps’. It gives the Atlas a mid-century modern aesthetic. The colours, both vivid and muted, and her design speak to the contents and signify to the reader that these stories are linked by a common theme. The prominence of the designs, and their recurrence throughout the Atlas, linking all articles and essays, signifies to the viewer the importance of material culture to the Atlas. The online design mirrors the design of an exhibition, guiding the visitor through each section and providing a reference point to orient their place within the Atlas.

The Olive Ashworth Collection is not currently available through the Queensland Museum’s own website, and the Atlas thus remains an important portal through which Queenslanders and other visitors can explore this collection. Images of tropical fish, starfish, seahorses, coral, sea anemones, shells, turtles, tropical flowers, plants and butterflies inhabit the pages, reminiscent of the Great Barrier Reef and Tropical Queensland advertising posters of the 1930s. They speak to the other images in the Atlas articles by firmly centring the landscape as a dominant theme. The colours of the fourteen themes are taken from the dominant colour of the associated Ashworth fabric and include colours drawn from the landscape that range across lime green, beige, mid-blue, khaki, marine blue, brown, light blue, teal, dirty brown, sea blue, green and bright teal. The use of fabric swatches also suggests a tactile, three-dimensional page. Because it draws on Ashworth’s colour palate, each theme is a recognisable landscape colour of Queensland. Online, as essays are randomly suggested to the reader on the panel on the right-hand side of the home page, the corresponding theme colour is displayed to locate the article within its theme.

In association with Ashworth's textile designs from the 1970s, the Atlas is enhanced by several other graphic elements that contribute to the mid-century aesthetic. These include the Atlas logo, which was adapted from the 1949 Royal National Show (Ekka) catalogue and features a stylised image of the Brisbane showgrounds. It highlights the main arena during the grand parade and associated pavilions imposed on a map of Queensland. These are vernacular Queensland landscapes that reflect popular culture, advertising and promotion, rather than traditional cartography. On the home page, a more familiar 'historical feel' is conveyed in the bottom left-hand graphic that invites readers to contribute their own map to the collections, using old-fashioned cartographic symbols and a sepia map overlay. Nevertheless, throughout the Atlas the look and feel of the design is dictated partly by the choice of historical maps and the cartographic conventions on which those maps have drawn, and what they reflect to the modern viewer.

Maps and material culture

While the affective thematic structure of the Atlas was a key feature of reinvigorating the presentation of the history of the state, it was the addition of historical maps and museum objects that had the capacity to create a new dialogue about the Queensland landscape. Rather than commissioning new maps, the Atlas contributors were asked to interpret historic maps — and indeed to reimagine what the word 'map' might represent. In doing so, contributors also questioned how they understood landscapes. It was the intention not to use maps as decoration, but to have them be central to the story that was being told. Hence the maps used can be classified as material culture objects, as each is interpreted as part of Queensland's past history. The cartographic landscape became a checkerboard of stories about Queensland.

According to Waldheim, at the end of the nineteenth century aerial photography, and later air travel, introduced new audiences to the reception of landscape as something to be observed from above, rather than ground-level views (Waldheim 2016: 141–2). Prior to this, it was through the particular view of the cartographer that the world was viewed in this way (Ingold 2000; Ryan 1996), and the Atlas utilises the technique of introducing audiences to maps drawn from conventional sources such as old atlases, military maps and land surveys, almanacs and explorers' maps, naval charts, marine surveys, geological surveys, mining maps, well and bore profiles, flood and cyclone maps, aerial surveys, estate maps, post office maps, government reports, local council maps, redevelopment plans, railways, electoral commission maps and so on. These are drawn from a range of archival sources, including and beyond the Queensland Museum collections.

At the same time, the Atlas challenged the authority of conventional maps by including and reinterpreting other forms of spatial representation. This includes pictorial maps depicted on tea towels, tourist brochures, advertising (Figure 1), popular travel magazines, crockery (Figure 2), in wood and timber souvenirs, street directories, freehand maps, maps on postcards and posters, and mud maps. These emphasise the connection between material culture and conceptualisations of space, place and landscape.

More radically, the *Queensland Historical Atlas* encouraged the reinterpretation of other spatio-temporal representations as maps by reinterpreting menus, landscape paintings, children's drawings, march routes, political pamphlets, garden and house

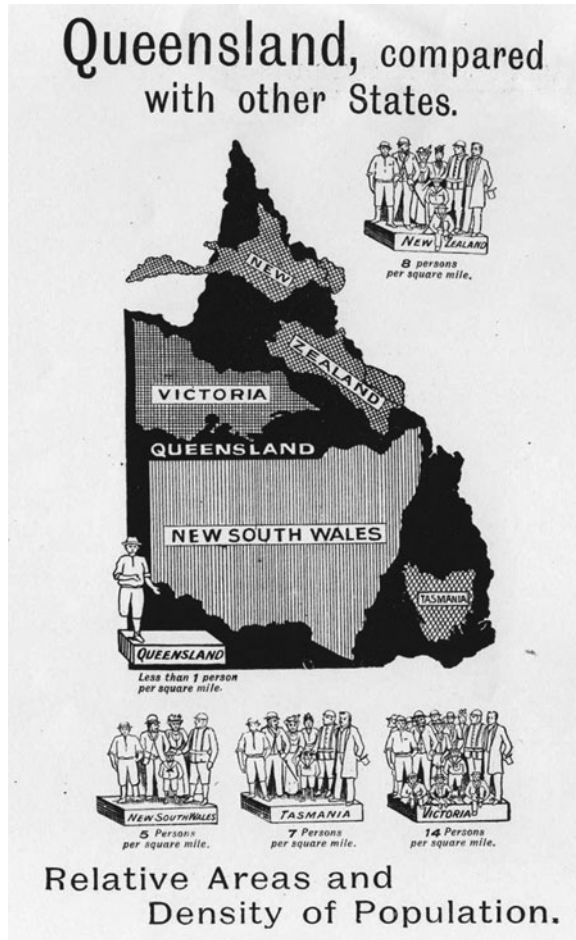


Figure 1
Queensland compared with other states, 1908. From *Land Seekers Guide to Queensland*, Brisbane, Pulsfields, 1908. Reproduced in the Atlas under the theme 'Quintessential Queensland' — Queenslanders (Source: Private collection).

plans (Figure 3), literary and historic trails, panoramas, information signs and timetables as maps. Many of these 'maps' blurred the taxonomy of map, object and image, instead creating a visual representation of different aspects of the Queensland landscape. For scholars who were more familiar with having maps drawn up to illustrate their own research, the process of rethinking their expertise through existing maps could be challenging; however, it was also very rewarding and deeply evocative. Atlas contributor, museum curator and Australian South Sea Islander Imelda Miller summed this up from a personal standpoint in her Atlas article:

When I was a child I would ask my mother where we came from, she would take a tea towel from the drawer and show me a map of the New Hebrides. This was one of the ways in which I came to understand my family history. If I had a map of my origins it would be that tea towel. (Miller 2010)



Figure 2

(Colour online) Karumba souvenir dish, Studio Anna, 1950s. The unique cartographic shape of Queensland is used in many souvenirs, and fits with the Atlas theme 'Distinctiveness'. (Source: Collection of Queensland Museum).

Material culture and landscape

All objects have a geographical reference tying them to their place of origin. Indeed, provenance is a critical element in assessing the significance of objects to be included in museum collections. Museum objects, however, have been in the process of collection, removed from their context, which often leads to a storeroom of anonymous artefacts that remain under-utilised in terms of exhibition and display — what Schlereth (1992: 382) describes as being 'out of site' and therefore 'out of sight'. The collections of Queensland Museum span the major identified collecting periods of international museums, beginning with the 'Age of Collecting' (1876–1948), in which high style, unique or elite artefacts were acquired, and the more recent 'Age of Analysis' (since 1965), which saw the collection of vernacular, typical and everyday items (Schlereth 1992: 380). However, few objects – even if well provenanced – are collected, assessed and displayed as an element in, or constitutive of, landscape as lived, embodied and practised.

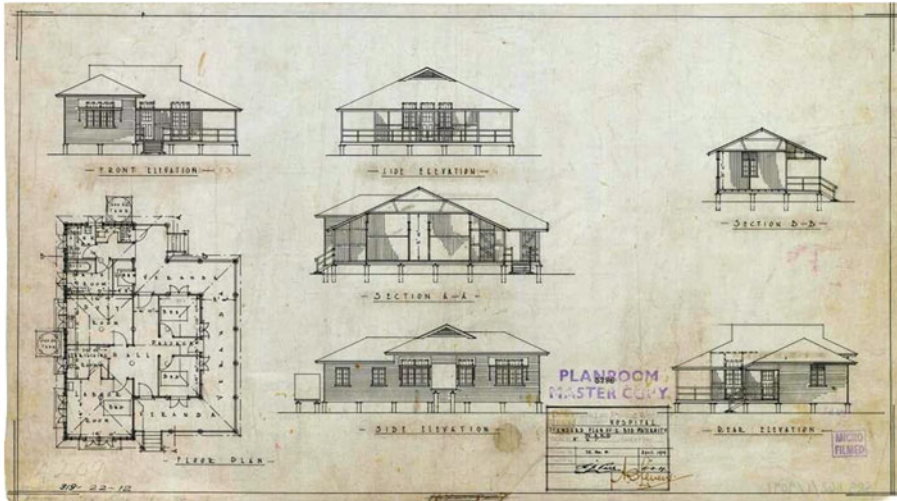


Figure 3

(Colour online) Plan for a standard two-bedroom maternity ward, 1929. This distinctively Queensland architectural plan shows the mothers' rooms opening onto a wide outside verandah. Included in the Atlas under the theme of 'Separation'. (Source: Collection of the Queensland State Archives).

An important component of the Atlas project was Queensland Museum's existing collection of objects with potential relevance to the story of the Queensland landscape. Like most museums, many of the objects selected for the Atlas had never been on display, meaning that little curatorial research had been conducted on them, nor had they been digitised or photographed for the museum catalogue. Those objects, progressively accessioned into the museum's collection since it began in 1862, could be repurposed and unlocked to tell the story of the Queensland landscape. The Cultures and Histories collections at Queensland Museum have developed organically since the museum's inception. Anthropological collections donated or purchased in the first 50 years of the museum were collected at the behest of successive directors. With the exception of a small number of objects, collecting of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material culture did not begin until around 1910 and only occurred in earnest in the second half of the twentieth century. Again, these collections grew as a result of enthusiasm of donors or the particular passions of a small number of curatorial staff (Mather 1986: 204–207). The non-Indigenous collections were topic driven and centred variously on History and Technology, Science Industry and Health, Applied Arts, Weapons and Numismatics. It was only in the 1950s that the notion of a 'responsibility to maintain a collection of material relevance to Queensland' became part of the acknowledged remit of the museum (Mather 1986: 225–35). To this end, the museum began appointing curators specifically for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous collections in the 1960s; since that point, the collections have grown exponentially. This curator-dependent and donor-driven approach has led to a collection that was more about representation of object type and personal interest than a link to context or place. It also results in some lacunae in the representation of significant themes in Queensland history.

The Atlas project provided the opportunity for Queensland Museum to identify gaps in the collection, but also to identify and reinterpret existing collections and to emplace them in a landscape context. By using objects in a Queensland-wide project, the objects could challenge the confines of their collections to be enlivened with new meanings and new connections, and be placed back into stories about the landscape. In this way, the objects themselves became redistributed into the landscape. They could tell multiple stories about place and connection to landscape.

The editorial team, including staff of Queensland Museum, used a matrix of topics, events, places and themes to identify a number of objects from the museum's collection that could be utilised in interpreting and illustrating the themes of the Atlas. In the period 2007–10, the state of the museum's cataloguing system did not permit the search for objects to be completed online; rather, it relied on staff-only access to museum catalogues and curatorial knowledge to identify suitable objects. The connections made to objects through the use of a new lens of inquiry meant that a new cohort of objects was identified for photography for the Atlas. This had a number of further repercussions for the museum collection: it identified objects for future display, added to the curatorial knowledge of both individual objects and groups of objects, reinterpreted objects with new themes, and allowed hitherto unconnected objects to be understood together in new ways. Although impossible through the museum's systems at the time, it has facilitated the online display of the museum's collections, which are now accessible through the museum's online catalogue. It has further publicised objects for future and alternate uses. Altogether, about 270 objects — from Queensland Museum's stores at Southbank and the Workshops Rail Museum — were photographed for use in the Atlas. Objects such as the coal scuttle and miner's helmet, lamp and tools speak to the personal dimension of mining and the domestic use of coal in Queensland homes; the glass drink bottles from Kirk's factory and the Ekka show bags emphasise the personal side of industry and factories; snake bite kits alongside civil defence artefacts and a chair made by a prisoner-of-war reinforce domestic dangers and fears.

A number of objects have been taken directly from the landscape by previous museum curators, including the Landsborough blazed tree, survey marks, pearl shell and Aboriginal points. Some objects, like the coal scuttle, cane knives, sugar bags and blankets, still feel as if they have the landscape on them. It can be argued that the Atlas has the potential to reconnect many of the objects to movement and to the landscape from which they came. Objects associated with migration, which Poehls (2011: 338) argues have long since ceased their movement and lost their ties to their original landscapes after being encapsulated within a museum glass showcase, can once again interact with their contextual elements. The Atlas, like other forms of dispersed museum collections or digital repatriation projects, has remobilised long-immobile objects, including trains, a dance headdress from Torres Strait and travelling microscopes. In the Atlas, these movements are multiple; the objects intersect with new themes and reach new audiences, and are reinterpreted as meaningful elements of and within landscapes. In these movements, objects and stories reach out of the museum collections to audiences and places far beyond the museum campuses, and even far beyond their point of origin. Their location becomes more diffuse and less specific, but has the capacity to be seen, viewed and re-experienced by people in those landscapes of origin. In reaching beyond the

museum and the landscape, the Atlas also invites people to visit and engage with some of these unique places.

Conclusion

According to museum staff involved in the Atlas project, the search for the objects of landscape in the Queensland Museum forced them to look at the collection differently, and changed their way of thinking. The perceived value of many of the ‘out of site/out of sight’ objects in the collection was changed. Curators, whose job involved thinking about objects located in a storeroom, were encouraged to think about the objects in their original places and their movement between places. They have also been challenged to rethink provenance as being more than just knowing where something comes from, instead coming to understand collections as part of broader concepts of landscape. This is an opportunity to reinterpret and re-use research collections, engaging with both affective themes and ideas of place, and our understanding of it in a way that links objects to events and their consequences across time and practice. This allows us to reconceptualise museum objects as originating in a lived, embodied and practised landscapes, and as being constitutive of diverse landscapes. The project has also encouraged museum conservators to think more about their practices, which often involve the removal of traces of landscape from objects, to consider what the value of those traces might be.

Objects collected by Queensland Museum over many years, whether elite or vernacular, have been recontextualised by more than 100 authors and now contribute to new stories about the Queensland landscape. The *Queensland Historical Atlas* remains primarily an atlas, an online accessible authoritative source on Queensland history. But each theme, with its expert research and illustrative material culture, provides ready-made modules of interpretation of landscape. The focus of new museology has been concerned with questioning traditional curatorial authority to facilitate greater community engagement and co-production in museum interpretation (e.g. Davies 2010; Harrison 2005; Kahn 2000; Mygind, Hällman and Bentsen 2015; Peers and Brown 2003). In contrast, the *Queensland Historical Atlas* embraces the authoritative expertise of its authors. The Atlas also provides limited opportunity for the general public to contribute articles or content, with the exception being the ‘contribute a map’ section. However, by drawing on affective themes about the landscape, the Atlas unlocks the ‘individual experience’ that Hokema (2015: 71, 73) discovered to be among the common terms for understanding landscape, where ‘landscape can be understood as an emotionally touching experience’.

Similarly, museum objects promote in the visitor what has been termed an affective mode of knowing, in which we comprehend another culture not with our minds but rather with our senses (Schlereth 1992: 334). Charles Willson Peale, curator of the Peale Museum in Philadelphia (1786–1827), was aware that ‘objects collected unsystematically or without any particular intellectual framework would provide little insight into the past’ and that ‘raw data in the historical collections could not be properly understood or effectively used unless [they were] organized in such a way that the object would be seen in the context of others, and in conjunction with additional information’ (cited in Schlereth 1992: 334). The *Queensland Historical Atlas* provides such organisation and context, inviting new insights into

history, culture and landscape. Contemporary approaches to exhibition theming reflect this affective approach, and provide an opportunity to reinterpret historically accumulated collections. In a recent review into the research potential of social history collections at Queensland Museum, the contribution of landscape research, as applied to historical archaeology collections, was found to provide new insight. It became apparent that while knowing where objects came from or were used provides a biographical narrative for objects, collection research can be extended to explore the connections between multiple objects and places to reveal new understandings. Reconceptualising collections in this way is important — particularly for collections that have evolved with an emphasis on typology that renders them inactive and under-valued.

The effectiveness of the Atlas in meeting its objectives has not been ascertained through the kind of museum evaluation available to exhibitions; rather, the scholarship displayed in the Atlas has been tracked and measured both through Australian Research Council reporting as well as through the University of Queensland scholarly impact assessment process, where Google Web Analytic statistics are one of the many tools used to provide insights into impact, engagement and use. The diversity of user locations alone suggests that the Atlas reaches a large and diverse audience. This is supported by anecdotal evidence from Queensland Museum staff, who regularly respond to public inquiries about objects and images in the collection that are generated by visitors to the *Queensland Historical Atlas*. The Atlas fulfils the ambition of Queensland Museum to speak for and to Queenslanders, and to enliven and extend the reach of the collections — particularly those that may never be displayed. Significantly, the Atlas also reaches a far greater audience than many static exhibitions. Its reach is local, regional, national and global.

The *Queensland Historical Atlas* takes a dynamic view of the lived landscape, imbues it with new energy by paying close attention to affective thematic structure, design, technology, maps and objects, and creates a new composite form online through which each of these elements combines with others to tell new landscape stories about Queensland. Moving the Atlas away from a geographical or temporal structure liberates the form, and combined with an emphasis on cultural history, material culture and accessibility, turns the Atlas into an online exhibition that showcases the latest scholarship on the Queensland landscape, reunites objects in the collection with their landscape site and delivers them back to a wide audience.

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Notes

- 1 See <http://www.qhatlas.com.au>.
- 2 Since 2010, the Atlas has been a registered online journal with editorial review board ISSN 1838-708X.

- 3 Tourism and Events Queensland has identified thirteen major areas of Queensland. See: <http://teq.queensland.com/destinations>, accessed 21 April 2017.
- 4 See <http://www.zoomify.com>.

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