

A rare collection of books, manuscripts and artefacts that document the history of the Catholic Church in Australia previewed at ACU

An historical archive of books, manuscripts and artefacts that document the history of the Catholic Church in Australia will be available for a sneak peek at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) North Sydney Campus on Tuesday 30 July.

The collection will preserve and commemorate the rich and diverse social history of Australian Catholicism. This diverse collection includes both ecclesiastical and social history.

It includes rare items such as printed and manuscript material by the first Catholic priests in Australia, who accompanied the La Pérouse expedition and landed in Botany Bay in January 1788; three pamphlets by William Duncan, published from 1843 to 1856; two books published by Edward Flanagan, celebrating the scholarly achievements of his brother Roderick; six books of poetry and prose by Marion Miller Knowles; and an inscribed presentation copy *On the Volcano of Taal* by Reverend Tenison-Woods.

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Greg Craven will introduce the historical archive to the ACU community at a formal celebration of the collection and its important contribution to Catholic anthropology.

The event will include the official launch of the book, *The Church that would not Die, St Michael the Archangel, Wollombi*.

Professor Craven raised the possibility of developing a research collection on the history of the Catholic Church in Australia in 2016. He saw an opportunity for ACU to take the lead in establishing a collection accessible to researchers in Australia and overseas as part of the University's broader arts and culture program, which aligns with its Mission and commitment to the pursuit of knowledge.

"ACU is a dynamic, modern Catholic university with a deep and abiding commitment to culture. Drawing on the long and rich heritage of the Catholic Church as a patron of the arts, we support and engage in a wide array of arts and cultural activities," said Professor Craven.

"The rare book collection is a key component of our role as a leading Catholic institution and is integral to our Arts and Culture Strategy. In just over two years, the collection has grown to more than 1,000 books, manuscripts, ephemera and historical objects.

"The richness and diversity of the collection was made possible thanks to the dedication of a small team of ACU Library staff, including a rare book trade expert and specialists in cataloguing and processing such resources.

"These initiatives simultaneously reflect the University's unique Catholic mission and vision while strengthening our identity as an ambitious and vibrant intellectual community."

The collection will be located at ACU's North Sydney Campus Library, where a purpose-designed space will be available from the second half of 2019. Researchers will have access to engage with the collection.

In addition to rare books, manuscript materials and historical artefacts which illuminate the history of Catholicism in Australia, the University seeks to acquire publications and other items that recognise the significant contributions of people traditionally overlooked or marginalised in historical records. These include Catholic women during the 19th century, and Indigenous authors.

Given that a large number of the materials are rare and unique, the University will look to digitise the content to provide an online resource for researchers in Australia and internationally.

More information on the collection can be found on the [ACU arts and culture website](#).

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