

# 1. Deep Histories in Time, or Crossing the Great Divide?

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*Long History, Deep Time* asks whether it is possible to enlarge the scale and scope of history.<sup>1</sup> If so, the vast shape-shifting continent of Australia may be a good place to start. It hosted a very long human history that endured through the great climatic epochs of the Pleistocene and Holocene. Rising and falling seas carved out new islands and coastlines, creating the larger Ice Age continent of Greater Australia that was connected to current-day New Guinea and Tasmania. Over time, its edges and internal waterways facilitated different kinds of travel, and its people created worlds of their own making.

Reliant upon measurable units of time to order its pasts, academic history tends to divide itself up according to place and time-period. Here, we consider how historians, humanities scholars and Indigenous knowledge custodians might combine to tackle an epoch of immense, arguably history-defying duration. Although the field of history is fluid and inclusive, it currently lacks a worldview commodious enough to encompass this trajectory. Unspoken limits pertain not only to history's timescale, but also to its geographic centre and scope, and to its range of human subjects.

In this volume, we consider history's temporality, and ask how it might expand to accommodate a 'deep time' sequence. We reflect upon the need for appropriate, feasible timescales for history, pointing out some of the obstacles encountered in earlier efforts to slice human time into thematic categories. History as a discipline has made strides towards producing environmental histories, but new strategies are needed to cross the great divide that blocks the peopled Pleistocene from the peopled present.

In the absence of other suitable terms, 'deep history' is used in this volume as a helpful term to distinguish it from periods of more recent history. However, it is still worth thinking about alternatives; perhaps our enterprise is really 'big history' rather than deep. Or perhaps we should call it multi-millennial history. When we do use 'deep', we use it as expansively as possible, with critiques and complexities in mind. It is difficult to find the right adjectives to describe an epoch of 40,000 years, probably 60,000 years of modern human time. Is it deep, distant, ancient, long history or prehistory? Modern history links past to

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1 Aslanian et al. 2013.

present, whereas these metaphors distance the viewer, reinforcing that past as too long ago, and too far away. Too remote to be included in ancient history, it remains the 'pre' – an era before history proper began. Lacking an obvious fit with existing historical narratives of rather short pasts that self-consciously lead up to the modern present, the deep past becomes an incommensurable past. As if history ran out of room, Australia's 60 millennia of human occupation poses a major stumbling block for world history.<sup>2</sup>

This volume ponders how the discipline of history might deal with a chunk of time so voluminous that change itself seems too slow, even imperceptible. The history discipline's expectations regarding the *pace* of history – of its anticipated speed and slowness may need to change to accommodate this period. We do not necessarily know where we are going. *Slow history* may take us more deeply inside history, or simultaneously throw us outside history as we know it. Methodology and theory will need to be rethought. New tools and techniques will be required.<sup>3</sup>

Even experts in the migration of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa, and in the biological and cultural evolution of modern humans, are thrown out by the Australian dates, for the continent's modern human occupation is seen as 'too early'. Yet, the idea of relegating this time span outside of History with a capital H – that researched and written about in scholarly forums – makes no sense. And there can be no such thing as a 'people without history',<sup>4</sup> let alone one whose descendants live today, some actively exploring such questions inside and outside the academy. Unless, that is, history wishes to concede that disciplinary limitations make this impossible.

Historians currently leave this field to archaeologists. Their energetic research and the burgeoning knowledge of Australia's past cultures is exciting indeed. However, since the 1980s, as dating and related sciences became more technical and complex, archaeologists have tended to publish their findings as scientific reportage around distinctive sites rather than as peopled, connected histories in a contextualised landscape.<sup>5</sup> Popular science journalism reports the new discoveries, but does not necessarily explain how they fit into the broader picture.<sup>6</sup> Historians have the capacity to pose different questions, and to develop analytically informed narratives in accessible language for wide audiences.

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2 For an excellent discussion on this theme, see Douglas 2010; Griffiths 1996: 42–62; Griffiths 2001: 2–7.

3 Chakrabarty 2009.

4 Wolf 1982.

5 The archaeology discipline in Australia has adopted an increasingly scientific style of technique and analysis. See, for example, the journal *Australian Archaeology*. Some recent works adopt a more narrative, coherent approach in the humanities style of writing. For example, Smith 2013; Hiscock 2008.

6 For a discussion on collaboration, see Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008. Chip Colwell is also engaged in a new venture to create a more accessible website for archaeology news.

Nonetheless, in recent decades, few historians have attempted to bridge the gap at all, let alone to collaborate in formulating research questions.<sup>7</sup> Nor have they attempted to critique and integrate archaeological findings as evidence for any larger history.<sup>8</sup> In order to tell the story of a peopled landscape story of long duration,<sup>9</sup> diverse kinds of research teams, forms of evidence collection, narration and analysis are required. If historians are interested in joining such teams, they will need to develop a different orientation, new training, and a change of gear.

Thinking about the longer epoch of Australia's past as *deep history* raises many and varied questions. Even finding suitably expansive metaphors is difficult. Depth – the deep – can be a dangerous place. Ideas of 'depth' and 'time' vary culturally and within culture. When astrophysicists discuss their work, they speak of deep space and ultra-deep space. Due to distance and the speed of light, they study objects remote in time and space. What they actually see through their telescopes is the ultra-deep past. This is something they work with every day, and theories of space-time remain central to their practice. Yet, physicists concede that the existence of time cannot exactly be proven.

When a surgeon talks about something 'deep', they refer to organs further inside the body. When geologists talk of deep time, they refer to millions of years before humans stepped foot on the earth. Transdisciplinary insights shift our sensibilities. Next time you crunch on dry grassland, consider what it once was. In the case of the track I use for my morning walk, I find that this place had once been in a steamy tropical rainforest with bubbling volcanoes. More astonishing was that the earth's surface was then several kilometres *above* the altitude of the present day. 'Deep' suggests the past is underneath – a vertical drop, yet 'deep' can mean below the earth – or in outer space, high above it.

The idea of 'deep' history probably mirrors northern hemisphere archaeology, where deep excavations became the standard technique to research several thousand years of human time. In searching for visualisations of vague categories like time and space, humans often imagine them as tangible and material. Timescales suggest horizontal lines, measurement and written traditions. Containing evidence of how places were different climatically, ecologically and

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7 Trained in ancient history and classical archaeology, in the late 1960s, scholars such as John Mulvaney established a disciplinary bridge between these fields in the subject called 'prehistory'. Mulvaney's *The Prehistory of Australia* (1969) was later followed by a popular Penguin paperback, published in 1975. Jack Golson and John Mulvaney believed that the desire of Aboriginal people to control human remains caused a research hiatus. See also Pike and McGrath 2014 (henceforth *Message from Mungo*, 2014).

8 The relationship between the disciplines of history and archaeology in Australia is a topic that requires far more attention than I could give it here. The disciplines have increasingly veered away from each other in approach and style. Only in 'historical archaeology' or studies of coloniser history are historians working with archaeologists.

9 See David and Haberle 2012. Recent advances in the field including Robin 2013: 329–340 and Blainey 2015.

socially, the physical stratigraphy of geological layers evokes the complexity of multiple-time history in the one site. Even the earth's magnetic forces may have been different.<sup>10</sup> Yet, portraying such pasts as always 'deep' is misleading, for it implies that this past is something that has to be dug up. Very ancient artefacts can appear on the surface too. All the current metaphors risk prescribing uniform directions and dimensions.

The notion of 'deep history' can be jarring for other reasons, because many Indigenous Australians hold a sense of the past as an immediate part of a living contemporary landscape. By the same token, due to colonising ruptures, the linguistic, spiritual connections and knowledge held by Indigenous people are not necessarily 'deep' in the sense of deriving from a multi-generational ongoing association.<sup>11</sup> In many Aboriginal languages,<sup>12</sup> there is an expression to convey the concept of 'long, long ago' – a zone that also converges with the 'dreaming', creation-time, which is actually not a discrete time at all, but an ongoing process. In Central Australian languages such as Arrernte, the closest term for 'deep' is *iperte*, which translates as 'hole'; it can also convey 'down', 'under' or 'inside'. In many groups, the past is represented in orientational terms, according to the body of the speaker. It is not a case of past/behind us, but past/in front of us. The deep past is akin to 'in front, before'.<sup>13</sup> The logic is explicit: you can actually *see* the past, not the future, which is out of sight, behind us. Astrophysicists say the same thing; they can see stars and galaxies of the deep past in present time.

In order to accommodate such long, long ago histories, the geography of global history may need realignment. In many accounts of ancient lives, the southern hemisphere is 'down under' – a telescope and an ocean too far away. When considered at all, Australian history is understood as white, modern, and lacking antiquity.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, North American history is generally restricted to the centuries since the 'discoverers' arrived – a history defined by Europe transatlantic ship and human arrivals. Both nations have histories that repeatedly allude to foundational 'arrival' narratives resting upon the technologies of European modernity.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps many people like to look back to a relatively recent familial and familiar ancestral past that connects with their own lives. In settler-coloniser societies, history remains contested ground. National parks and world heritage materials categorise 'historical heritage' as evidence of what happened after imperial arrivals. Indigenous evidence or association with heritage landscapes are described as 'cultural heritage' or 'prehistoric',

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10 An event called the Mungo excursion was observed in a fireplace. See Jacobs 1995: 94–97.

11 Byrne 1996.

12 Koch and Nordlinger 2014; Evans and Wilkins 1995.

13 Harold Koch and David Nash, pers. comm. to author, 6–9 August 2014.

14 A useful analysis is contained in Veracini 2007.

15 Guldi and Armitage 2014.

reinforcing a status as history's outsiders. As history scholarship in the academy has been content to portray a short past, in 'short history' volumes, this is hardly surprising.

This chapter uses 'Crossing the Great Divide' to refer to deep history, cultural and transdisciplinary divides. The term holds special resonance in Australian coloniser history. We may immediately think of the Great Dividing Range, a vast range running along Australia's east coast, in which each mountain has dual names – first one or more Indigenous names, superimposed with an English one. The range's rugged heights presented a great barrier for coloniser expansion and land takeover. 'The First Crossing' to be memorialised was that of the Blue Mountains near Sydney, which came to symbolise how the authorised white explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth had overcome a major obstacle.

This collection, *Long History, Deep Time*, attempts to subvert the coloniser trope of 'firstness', and its coloniser 'crossings' by suggesting crossings over a lengthy period that should rightly come under the umbrella of history. The crossings of this chapter title suggest journeys in multiple directions, and along quite different routes. The human crossings 'out of Africa' and the journeys via Asia, or the continental crossings from north to south, present other potential beginnings for a Greater Australia.

By the same token, searching for a 'deep nation' could easily become another colonial appropriation by anxious colonisers.<sup>16</sup> Given the colonising power relations that have shaped the worlds in which many of us now live, any venture into Indigenous histories carries the danger that this might become another precinct for acquisition and appropriation. Yet, for historians to ignore the people who lived in Australia prior to 1788 is arguably a more disturbing, if not unethical position. Neither history writing, nor its interpretation or representation, is the domain of the coloniser alone. In this collection, we hope to prepare the way for crossings that rely upon collaborative knowledge exchange, with clear benefits for participants outside the academy.<sup>17</sup>

But, can humanities scholars even imagine how they might step outside this truncated world of short coloniser-time history? Is it possible for history's latitude and longitude to be expanded across time and space? Without Europe as reference point, is the deep temporal and geographic field of Greater Australia even pertinent to global history? And without ornaments, text and monumental buildings, how can this be researched and classified? Furthermore, without

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<sup>16</sup> Byrne 2003.

<sup>17</sup> See Preucel 2012; Preucel and Mrozowski 2010.

a sense of chronology, can we have history at all? In order to make a start, we will first need to consider ways to think outside the usual constraints of historicised time.<sup>18</sup>

Australian Aboriginal people hold a sense of a much longer history that challenges the western historical imagination. They have a quantitatively and qualitatively different ambit of connection to the past. It is worth noting that narrative, metaphoric and visual frameworks of Indigenous history-telling vary regionally, according to people's lifeways and educational experiences, and according to the overall impacts of colonialism. Yet, both urban and remote dwellers often portray a historical ontology that works around an intricate folded-in place/time landscape. Time is multi-layered and mutable. Many view the recent and ancient past as something personal, familial, geological and omnipresent. The nature of this 'long ago past' stretches time beyond short timeframes. It is matched by narratives, in art and other enactments, that give prominence to the connectedness between human and other living beings, and in which the earth itself is a living force. Indigenous teachers explain a non-enumerated, undated, multi-layered 'now', with living spirits present and walking around, conducting themselves in the everyday.<sup>19</sup> Many Indigenous Australians do not sense any great chasm dividing the present from the past.

In this schema, specific places, people and landscapes are living archival repositories. They are not open access, for the level of revelation depends upon an individual's relationship to place, age, gender and their level of authority in the community. Through different methods of reconnecting with sites – including moments of physically being there, and of walking the ground, and through story, song, dance and ritual, people in the present keep place, spirit and ancestral memory alive. Similarly, untended history sites can die. Places contain connective routes – with songlines and storylines linking tracts and groups far and wide.<sup>20</sup> As Diana James, Karen Hughes and Rob Paton expand in their insightful chapters, Indigenous ontologies hold complex, entangled, subversive notions of what history might be. These gesture beyond measured scientific time towards an omnipresent, where the spirits of past peoples continue to affect the everyday now. Stories of place and of creation dreamings,<sup>21</sup> along with ongoing ancestral action, provide a sense of a very long but enduring epoch, an elongated now/then.

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18 The postcolonial movement challenged European-centred narratives. It allowed for different readings of history and its explanatory framings – the cross-cultural logic suggested in the provincialising of Europe. Post-modern approaches challenged the ways we argue, and think about truth – or at least to rethink history's objectivity and subjectivity. See Chakrabarty 2000; Hokari 2014.

19 Wolfe 1991.

20 There is a rich historical and cultural studies literature on place which we do not expand on here. Tim Ingold's work is valuable, for example, Ingold 2000.

21 For more discussion of the meaning of dreaming, see Stanner 1979.

## Time immemorial?

European accounts have glossed Aboriginal history as 'timeless'. If time is lacking, of course, there would be no need for history. Did timelessness reflect a response to the apparent slowness of the pace of change compared with modern times, or was it its location *outside* modernity? This view mirrors Aboriginal people's own accounts of this past, which often give primacy to *continuity* over change. The Willandra Lakes custodians often become frustrated with the scientists' obsession with dating – a field where findings differ, and are constantly challenged and debated.<sup>22</sup> Some Aboriginal elders proclaim that they do not see the relevance because they knew 'we have always been here'.<sup>23</sup> Other academics and elders see the political uses of 'having a date', for they prove lengthy occupation in a mode that matters to the white population and to the ruling powers.<sup>24</sup>

Settler-coloniser nations use a confection of anniversary dates to celebrate the beginnings of white, European pasts. Ceremoniously staged in the Australian Federal Parliament by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, the Apology of February 2008 gestured towards a different Australian history of global relevance. He proclaimed: 'That today we honour the indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.'<sup>25</sup> The idea of being the 'oldest', of being 'continuing' and of being described as 'cultures' at once locates the Australians into stasis and inserts them into '*human history*'. Rudd's words were a welcome and long overdue recognition for a people who had suffered two centuries and more of racism, where they were classed as backward, and as lacking the historical achievements for which Europeans took credit. The phrase the 'oldest continuing cultures' is frequently echoed in official public statements these days. Yet, it holds the potential to dismantle and enrich current thinking, or to become an additional burden for Indigenous Australia.<sup>26</sup> 'Old' has no date; so is it more a state of mind?

Chronological sequences are intrinsic to history; they govern its thinking. The nation begins when European time arrived. Its starting gun is fired when Captain Cook's ship *Endeavour* drops anchor on the seabed of Australia's north-east coast, and in the south-east at Botany Bay in 1770. Soon after January 1788, shiploads of expelled British felons came ashore under marine guard. Explorers and white settlers follow. Maps are marked with new names and places. History

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22 See for example, Grün et al. 2000; Grün et al. 2011; Gillespie 1998; Gillespie and Roberts 2000.

23 Lottie Mitchell, appearing in *Message from Mungo*, 2014.

24 See also Marcia Langton, appearing in *Message from Mungo*, 2014.

25 'Kevin Rudd's sorry speech', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 February 2008, [www.smh.com.au/news/national/kevin-rudds-sorry-speech/2008/02/13/1202760379056.html](http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/kevin-rudds-sorry-speech/2008/02/13/1202760379056.html).

26 See McKenna 2014; McGrath 2011.

writings repeated the dates of the white pioneering ‘firsts’, which served to expunge the ‘firstness’ of First Nations peoples and the validity of their prior histories.<sup>27</sup> As mediaevalist Kathleen Davis has pointed out in her wonderful study *Periodization and Sovereignty*, periodisation is power.<sup>28</sup> By not challenging the datelines, even ‘postcolonial’ and ‘decolonising’ histories inadvertently validate imperial and coloniser sovereignties.<sup>29</sup> For imperial and settler-coloniser contexts outside Europe, the markings and datings of European arrival are ubiquitously memorialised in texts and monuments. In nations like Australia, imperial timelines are recycled as the key means of carving up time.

Other influences preceded maritime imperialism and colonialism. As Daniel Lord Smail, the historian of mediaeval Europe and of deep time has pointed out, the chronological range of history has generally been restricted to ‘sacred time’ and specifically to Biblical chronology.<sup>30</sup> Divinity scholars often led European intellectual traditions, including the rise of the university system. The Irish intellectual, Bishop Ussher’s dating system for the time of the earth’s creation left a lasting legacy. Although the old markers of ‘BC’ – before Christ – are less used, being replaced by ‘BP’ – before the present – sacred time continues to foreshorten histories that stretch too far beyond modern nations. Historians have been loathe to venture outside the epoch of 4,000 BC. Even the calendar we use for dating the present is handed down by Pope Gregory.

Historians of the 1970s onwards challenged the Anglocentric narratives, the ‘great Australian silence’ that had omitted the Aboriginal past from history books. Other historians argued that there was no text-based evidence for writing Aboriginal people into history, but this has been proven resoundingly false. In decades of growing civil rights action, historians made a concerted effort to tackle colonising power relations. Their studies highlighted racism, oppression and other injustice, and signalled a hoped-for redress and reconciliation.<sup>31</sup> With new legislation and entitlements following in their wake, a major backlash followed, with ongoing, well-publicised and highly politicised controversies vaunted as ‘the History wars’. In North America, the ‘culture wars’ were raging simultaneously, focusing especially around new histories of race and national identity. Inevitably, histories of colonial invasion and post-invasion reinforce the image of Aboriginal people as victims of conquest, while their enduring history of survival across dramatic climatic and geographical change suggests alternative, even empowering, plotlines.

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27 O’Brien 2010.

28 Davis 2008.

29 McGrath 2014.

30 Smail 2008; Shryock and Smail, et al. 2011.

31 McNiven and Russell 2005. On reconciliation, see Chakrabarty 2001.

Today, the game-changer of a new climatic era, the Anthropocene, is encouraging historians to consider longer time spans beyond nation and the transnational.<sup>32</sup> History as a discipline has stressed identifiable change over time, tracking and accounting for its processes, its stories, patterns, causes and effects. As it stands, however, certain times, places and peoples receive more historical attention than others. Despite projects to the contrary, the greater Europe of the western imagination still stands at history's heart, carving out standardised chronologies and reference points often associated with the rise and fall of 'civilisations' or nations.<sup>33</sup> The ancient history sections of European and North American bookshops and libraries contain studies of the Middle East (even this term derives from a European vantage point), and Imperial era museums hold their treasures. Native peoples, on the other hand, are not part of 'ancient history'. Rather, they are displayed in natural science and older-style museums as exemplars of hominid biology – either in skeletal form or in the now objectionable 'Stone Age' dioramas.<sup>34</sup> In Europe, Aboriginal Australians are still ranked, in many instances, as the fossil primitive – historyless – at least until Europeans came. By this logic, they did not – and cannot now – make history.

One answer to the problem of such selective human exclusion is to think about our common humanity, and to think bigger. At a time when leading scholars are starting to contemplate the question of scale in history, much is at stake. In play are the discipline's methodology, conceptualisation, and the politics of developing a history practice that speaks to the present. Historians such as David Armitage and David Christian<sup>35</sup> have called for 'big history' – more ambitious, broader history projects. After rejecting the grand narratives still popular up to the mid-twentieth century, historians turned to micro history, but now they are making a return to the French Annales school. In 1958, Ferdinand Braudel theorised and took up the *longue durée* approach, arguing for the importance of the texture of the everyday, as well as the less noticeable, slowly evolving, environmental structures. With the sea as a key agent of history, Braudel's three volume work, *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949) explored the relationship between people, travel, weather and ecology.

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32 Smith 2005.

33 Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000) challenged this with timely effectiveness. It not only interrogates the intellectual roots and logics of western academe, but opens a path to consider the logic of historical causality and the possibilities of other ontological framings.

34 See Russell 2001, 2012.

35 Christian 2004; Armitage 2012.

Braudel advocated interdisciplinary richness – with outreach ‘to all the sciences of man’ with history to be ‘totale’.<sup>36</sup> The *longue durée* may thus prove useful for our purposes, as it argues for attention to both change and continuity.

Of late, historians have started to reconsider optimal size – that is, on what scale of geomorphic time can we do history best, or most usefully? In the annual Conversation section of the *American Historical Review* this problem was explored at length.<sup>37</sup> Big questions need big thinking. Exactly where and when on the planet should we start – with that of the universe or planet before human time, or perhaps with our human precursors, the earlier hominids? Or should it be with modern humans? Are any of our framings of time and space stable? On what scale might we measure ‘stable’ anyway? Will an overstretched historical imagination become too weak to work properly?

As David Armitage and Jo Guldi argue in their upbeat tome, *The History Manifesto* (2014),<sup>38</sup> the return to the *longue durée* ‘is now both imperative and feasible: imperative, in order to restore history’s place as a critical social science, and feasible due to the increased availability of a large amount of historical data and the digital tools necessary to analyse it.’<sup>39</sup> The *longue durée* is ‘intimately connected to changing questions of scale. In a moment of ever-growing inequality, amid crises of global governance, and under the impact of anthropogenic climate change, even a minimal understanding of the conditions shaping our lives demands a scaling-up of our inquiries.’ Furthermore: ‘The moral stakes of *longue-durée* subjects – including the reorientation of our economy to cope with global warming and the integration of subaltern experience into policy – mandates that historians choose as large an audience as possible’.<sup>40</sup>

Having aimed at analytical depth in neatly or broadly contextualised analyses, the discipline of history has perhaps become too confined by its own stylistic and encultured sense of scholarly rigour, with its contextualised time zones and micro-studies.<sup>41</sup> Possibly historians are still trained to be overly cautious;

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36 Lee 2012: 2. With new scientific knowledge, historical interpretation is being modified. For example, the environment, and the climate are no longer understood, as Braudel’s time frame allowed, as constant, unchanging elements. Lee’s other works critique nineteenth-century assumptions about knowledge, and argue against the two cultures of science versus the humanities. For example, see Lee et al. 2005.

37 Aslanian et al. 2013.

38 This has triggered vigorous debate. See, for example, *American Historical Review* 2015 – ‘AHR Exchange: On *The History Manifesto*’: Introduction; Cohen and Mandler 2015; Armitage and Guldi 2015.

39 Cited in Guldi and Armitage 2014: 84–85; Braudel 1958, cited in Wallerstein 2009. See also Armitage and Guldi 2014: 1.

40 Guldi and Armitage 2014: 85, 84.

41 Guldi and Armitage 2014, Chapter 2: 38–60.

too narrow in their temporal and spatial specificity.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, with the exception of environmental historians, they became increasingly concerned with human action as something separate from nature – from plants, animals, things, geology and climate. Furthermore, historical scholarship dealt with philology, with the eras of writing and the manufacture of letters, newspapers and print media. Indeed, as Daniel Smail explains, leading historians such as Vico and Ranke argued ‘that writing made the past knowable ... Writing ... actually put civilization on the move and created history out of the historyless Paleolithic.’<sup>43</sup> So it was that history was proscribed from reaching further back than a few millennia. Yet, in the future, the new environmental and climatic turns potentially ally social science and humanities scholars more closely with biological and natural scientists. Noting that humans are not alone as agents of history, some scholars, particularly in sociology and anthropology, are arguing for a rebalancing of agency, and a decentering of the role of humans in the world.<sup>44</sup> What is characterised as ‘evidence’, as object, may not be passive at all; remains can be ‘actants’ or agents of history too.<sup>45</sup>

## Bones

Can bones speak? Daniel Smail and Andrew Shryock have argued for a reappraisal of history’s beginnings, and a reunion with our ancient ancestors. By appreciating the history and propensities of the hominids that preempted our living *Homo sapiens* selves, we gain insights into the forces of human history. Not only the decisions of great men and women, but embodied hominid

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42 Armitage 2012. Today’s history profession prides itself on being modern in its approach, and accordingly, it has been particularly concerned with *modernity*. It has been particularly concerned with modern nations and empires. Its techniques teach careful scouring of evidence, predominantly in text form. It is never static, responding to challenges, key questions, philosophical and political trends of that ever-changing era that we call the present. Over the twentieth century, it switched and reconfigured its scale by favouring a positivist ‘scientific’ practice, an emphasis on storytelling, and an emphasis on narrative. History has generally argued its case in clear language. It has deployed categories of power – to do with economics, race, gender, class, religion, and to pluralise by considering culture, or to make more tangible by considering environment. It valued the rational dismantling of decision-making processes. It has also been a discipline that tells stories to varied audiences – it creates tales to satisfy or to challenge national imaginings. In this, history’s strokes have potential impact upon framing the future. For a summary of developments in the practice of history over time, see Curthoys and Docker 2006.

43 Smail 2008: 35.

44 Concerns for future human survival raises complex philosophical questions. Sociologists, led by Latour, ask whether humanity has given itself too much pre-eminence over geography, geology, animals, plants and even over the making of the universe itself. Animals, plants, the climate, even things like boats, shrimp and computers are actants too, however unconsciously they may have reshaped the world.

45 Schmidgen 2015.

drives, longings and motivations underpin the currents of human history.<sup>46</sup> In a scientific turn, mediaeval experts such as Patrick Geary and Michael McCormick are collaborating with scientists specialising in stable isotopes and the human genome to consider isotopic and DNA evidence as data for European history. In settler-coloniser societies, however, palaeoanthropology or research into skeletal remains takes on a very different dimension, sparking profound anxiety and contestation. To Indigenous Australians, human remains are not 'scientific evidence' to be controlled by outsiders, but something personal. They are relatives, ancestors. By reactivating their relationships with the long dead, they reassert Indigenous connection with landscapes and legacy, fulfil social obligations, and enact their sovereignty and law. Their work with the ancient dead revives kinship and living relationships.

Scientists understand ancient human remains as an invaluable archive offering potential clues to knowledge of human history. To prehistorian John Mulvaney, this is also part of a discrete history of a continent of which he believes all Australians should be proud.<sup>47</sup> However, debates over the repatriation and reburial of remains of people who lived in the Pleistocene remain deeply contentious, not least because of the legacy of trauma left behind by nineteenth and twentieth-century collectors, who robbed graves and sold remains to metropolitan museums in the Imperial centres such as London, Berlin, Paris, Sweden and elsewhere. Significant finds that resonate as iconic individuals include Kennewick Man in Washington State in the United States, and Lady Mungo and Mungo Man in south-western New South Wales, Australia. Their fate has been at the centre of repatriation negotiations between scientists and Indigenous peoples. Recent histories of coloniser massacre, theft of land, and state-induced family separations through boarding schools, adoption and other institutions, mean that few Indigenous people trust the state and its entwined scientific and historical practices.<sup>48</sup>

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46 As Andrew Shryock and Daniel Smail's *Deep Histories* (2011) has powerfully demonstrated, a history that explores hominin time before the *Homo sapiens* promises to tell us more about the way humans think and have made history through our bodies as well as our minds. Outside the obsession with the fast pace of modernity and rapid change, the mediaevalists lead the way in new, scientific directions for historical evidence and thinking. Daniel Smail's works, for example, represent major breakthroughs for the history profession. In an open-ended way, and in close collaboration with a range of scientific experts, *Deep Histories* urges us to engage with the long evolutionary history that made *Homo sapiens* what we are today. He argues that our hominid instincts, urges and needs may be crucially responsible for making history. Perhaps more important than the ideas and thoughts of 'great men'. Patrick Geary of the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, is involved in important work with leading European scientists tracing isotopic evidence to ascertain the movements of European tribes and thus critiquing accepted accounts. Through the chemistry of disease, Monica Green is tracking histories of diseases and plagues that cannot be known through documents.

47 John Mulvaney articulates this stance in *Message from Mungo*, 2014.

48 McGrath 2014.

Scientific removal of people's remains from their long resting places brought anxiety and spiritual harm. Many Indigenous people saw these remains as worth fighting for. Whether genetically related, terribly ancient or not, they wish to fulfil their duty to ensure that the dead are undisturbed. At the same time, they assert their right over this tangible link to, and power over, their history. They are often fascinated by what science can reveal, and collaborate with archaeologists, palaeoanthropologists and earth scientists on archaeological projects, some of which require access to human remains. By being involved, they gain some control and, under Australian heritage laws, are entitled to ensure that respectful practices are followed. Although dialogues over human remains become sites for highlighting historical hurt, they also open paths to possible redress, and for cultural and national recuperation. And, as elucidated in Wailoo, Nelson and Lee's edited collection, *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of DNA, Race and History*, in many instances, breakthroughs and increasing use of DNA research can play a role in reconciliation.<sup>49</sup>

Ethical practices should be central to the research process. At the Deepening Histories of Place Symposium held at The Australian National University in Canberra, many Aboriginal people were in attendance. Consequently, Daniel Smail sought advice as to whether to show an image of a prehistoric European burial in his keynote address. Some researchers ask, some do not. But the right to say 'no' presents a conundrum. When scientists and Indigenous custodians cannot reach agreement on proposed projects, this effectively compromises future knowledge gathering. Yet the issues are incredibly complex and enmeshed in wider and localised politics. Whether certain research goes ahead or is blocked, in either instance, it is not clear-cut who loses most.

In an age where science and economics seem preeminent, scholars of the humanities call for more traction for their own disciplines in explaining the world. They can only achieve this, however, if they embrace 'epistemic diversity' – that promise of enrichment when people work across disciplinary and cultural ontologies.<sup>50</sup> The project of deep history calls for serious and sustained cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration. In order to engage with Pleistocene history, historians need to learn the research languages and techniques of disparate disciplines; they will need to understand and critique the ways they use evidence and analyse data. They will not be able to bypass the politics.

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49 Wailoo et al. 2012.

50 The Harvard Initiative for the Science of the Human Past is making strides in this direction.

## Diving into the digital deep

Digital visualisation and interactive maps offer useful ways of advancing studies of history, and of handling complex interacting agents over great spans of time. Historians are starting to experiment stylistically with different writing and multimedia presentation techniques, including digital formats for history telling. Digital history is often narrowly understood as using the digitised archive and reference library. Certainly, an enormous amount of historical data, including climatic and geological information, can be searched, stored and cross-referenced; and it has a profound search capability. But there is more to it. Biographical analytics have the capacity to reveal astonishing social networks that can be interpreted almost instantaneously by desktop computers.<sup>51</sup> Universities are investing in supercomputers that have optimal storage and fast analytic capacity. New technologies and scientific insights, such as 3D scanners, more sophisticated dating technologies, advances in neuroscience, DNA and isotopic research, all offer breakthroughs in data analysis, and new ways of researching history and science. Additionally, new apps provide tools for quantitative and qualitative analysis, and innovative research tools are constantly being developed. Digital platforms enable wider circulation of the traditional monographs, edited collections and journal articles, and they enable historians to present history in a multitude of other ways. Increasingly accessible tools allow people to develop DIY (do-it-yourself) history websites, edited videos and films, animated history-scapes and tours, virtual exhibitions, and blogs.

Digital innovations deliver exciting interpretative and methodological directions now, and as yet unmapped possibilities in the future. New kinds of evidence, expanded storage and expedited data analysis, creates expanded possibilities for novel questions to be asked of the past.<sup>52</sup> Humanities scholars should play a role in developing the tools for both analysing and presenting history-specific visual, textual and aural data and findings. Interactive time and place maps – for example, featuring geological and ecological change and human, animal and plant mobility – are possible. Affect-driven web interfaces, and other creative programs will change the way we conduct our digital work. For example, we might create visualisations to convey multi-temporal histories, to connect up geological and seasonal maps of bush food, and to develop trade route maps that track ochre and stone manufacture and ceremonial exchange. We might analyse the nuances of multi-vocal representations of an event or a sequence of events.

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51 For example, the Australian Dictionary of Biography runs an Obituaries database with capacity to map out human networks.

52 The American Historical Association has been especially proactive in this regard, appointing digital history developers and discussing the future of digital collections at its meeting in 2013.

Experimenting in a basic way with ANU Press' digital platform, *Long History, Deep Time* integrates links to aural, visual and multimedia content throughout. We take you, or hyperlink you, to places where you can find more. Although no more than a modest step forward, this digitally enhanced volume anticipates some of the potential of digital modes of delivering history.

## A space-time project?

As indicated, this book arises from a symposium held in 2013, which in turn was part of a larger project entitled 'Deepening Histories of Place'. The aim was to consider the historical theme of deep history in spatial contexts, and to try some new directions in digital history. The project, which commenced in 2010, attempted to address the limitations of the short time span of Australia's history.

We wondered if we could provide another kind of history tour. As you drive up the highways that connect Australia's key cities, you will be using roads named after European explorers of the nineteenth century, such as the Sturt and Stuart Highways, and you will notice the monuments and memorials of white, usually European-born pioneers. The road to the Blue Mountains, for example, is memorialised by towns along the route named after the explorers who were attributed as the pioneers of the first successful crossing: Lawson, Blaxland and Wentworth.<sup>53</sup> When you visit North Queensland, you will encounter islands and towns first named in the journal of the British navigator Captain James Cook in 1770.<sup>54</sup> You will also find statues and memorials to soldiers who died in northern hemisphere wars. Again, it would appear that Australian history is contingent upon being made by the European-born or their descendants, including those who travelled to fight in Europe or the Middle East. Memorialisation expunged the time and people that preceded their arrival. Europe certainly had a big role in making the modern nation of Australia, but so too did Aboriginal people. For one thing, they shaped the landscape over thousands of years.

By looking towards less visible layers of time and place, our project aimed to scour beneath the surface of short history as currently understood. We thought we might be able to do this by focusing upon discrete places – sites of both recent and 'deep' history and of historical entanglement. We hoped to uncover stories written into selected landscapes, most of which were located in areas classified as national parks and World Heritage areas. In order to achieve this, we developed a partnership funded by an Australian Research

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53 The Old Great North Road, built by convicts, is a World Heritage walk, [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/dharug-national-park/old-great-north-road-walking/walking](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/dharug-national-park/old-great-north-road-walking/walking).

54 Carter 1987.

Council Linkage grant through The Australian National University. We paired with the University of Sydney, gaining the insights of the renowned historian of landscapes of belonging and of Aboriginal Australia, Peter Read. We also partnered with organisations that specialise in multimedia collections and with research bodies, including the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the National Film and Sound Archives and Ronin Films. They contributed funding support, expertise and collections resources. Partnerships with Parks Australia and National Parks New South Wales enabled us to pay close attention to World Heritage areas, which often had joint management arrangements with local Indigenous custodians. The Aboriginal Advisory Committees of these organisations provided opportunities for the team to negotiate formal permission to undertake research, to suggest and inform people about proposed projects, and to agree on mutually acceptable research protocols. The Northern Territory Government also joined us, being particularly interested in the project's potential for Indigenous training and tourism. Investigators included Peter Read, Luke Taylor, Denis Byrne, Shino Konishi and myself, as well as a range of representatives from partner organisations. We held a series of multimedia and archaeological training workshops for students and community participants. As well as producing scholarly journal articles and this edited collection, we aimed to connect with digital users and younger generations, and to ensure the participants themselves received useful outcomes. Some were not particularly interested or schooled in using scholarly books, but were keen on websites and DVDs.

The Deepening Histories of Place project used versatile delivery modes that would be part of an integrated research platform. This required development of a new interactive architecture for historical research, some of which would become public. Humanities scholar Jason Ensor was engaged to build a digital history research platform on which the team could store, edit and develop their material in high quality formats for future preservation. In consultation with Australia's top Indigenous Intellectual Property (IP) lawyer, Terri Janke, the project devised sets of ethical protocols and templates aimed to protect Indigenous IP. Intended for use by researchers and participants, they are also open to all scholars to use: [www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/ethical-protocols/](http://www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/ethical-protocols/). Intellectual property protection and control was integrated into the design of the digital history platform.

The project developed a website which would serve as the front end of the history database. Once approved and polished for public consumption, we posted the downloadable and web-based histories. We also developed a large collection of raw files, stored in the highest quality possible, to form an archive of history data. Research Associate and project manager, historian Mary Anne Jebb, expertly managed a great deal of complexity – not only keeping all

these balls in the air, but also achieving key goals. Three doctoral students – Rob Paton, Julia Torpey and Shannyn Palmer – were trained in multimedia data management, undertaking video editing and creating digital history products in website and downloadable formats.

A visitor to the project website can click to discover many different layers of historical interpretation – in text articles, still images, voice/audio, moving footage, edited short films and maps. This web and data design process allowed us to reflect upon the multiple layerings of historical time and interpretation and its potential to present many voices. In preparing content, we did not wish to lose the sense of the visual, tactile and spiritual nature of people’s engagement with history. Wherever possible, we filmed and recorded participants in situ – in the deeply storied landscapes that they selected. We thought it was important not to lose the specificity of the relevant landscape, or the positionality of speakers. In this style, they could often stand ‘on country’ and speak for it. The Deepening Histories project – [www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au](http://www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au) – thus explored multiple possibilities for new ways of researching, documenting, archiving, presenting and storytelling. This platform and the website continues to evolve, with more to be posted once the students complete their doctoral projects.<sup>55</sup>

As indicated earlier in this introduction, disciplinary and knowledge limitations seem to be preventing us from doing ‘deep history’. So whereas we may agree that it is *timely* to do such histories, *how* might we do them? Our aims for the June 2013 Symposium were threefold: firstly, to consider some fresh approaches that might expand the possibilities of ‘history’ by diving into ‘the deep’; secondly, to consider how we might ‘deepen history’ by having a transdisciplinary conversation about time and history; and thirdly, to exchange ideas cross-culturally with Indigenous custodians of knowledge about new understandings and approaches relating to time, and history as lived, living and enacted experience. Our project aimed to make steps towards epistemic diversity – to use an enriching practice incorporating insights from different knowledge regimes.<sup>56</sup>

We knew that this would not be easy to achieve, as Aboriginal people are not necessarily interested in the academy, and scientists are pressured to research and publish within the discrete knowledge systems and economies of their own disciplines. The symposium’s keynote speaker, Daniel Smail, along with Andrew Shryock, have pioneered a form of ‘deep history’ that is collaborative across the disciplinary spectrum; in an open-ended way, it works on history questions with researchers in neuroscience, biology, psychology and evolutionary science.<sup>57</sup>

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55 We hope we can keep this live, as long-term access is a major issue for both databases and web-based histories.

56 Wylie 2002, 2006. Bohman and Roth 2008. See also Dawid et al. 2011; Wylie 2010.

57 Shryock and Smail 2011; Smail 2008.

The paper that Smail presented at the symposium argued for taking the 'Pre' out of Prehistory, with the full article now published in *American Historical Review*.<sup>58</sup>

Inviting scholars from the 'hard sciences' of geology, geomorphology and palaeoanthropology, the symposium stepped outside the humanities and social science departments. In order to think about history in more expansive ways, we reconsidered some basic concepts – time and space-time being the most fundamental and the most complex of all. Although historians deal with time, few of us really reflect upon what constitutes time itself. Astrophysicists Lisa Kewley and Charlie Lineweaver from the Mt Stromlo Observatory provided compelling insights into how physicists understand the universe, which is all about measuring time. Suddenly, the time breadth we hoped to tackle seemed minuscule.

Certain scientists are already crossing the barrier between scientific and Indigenous knowledge. With the promise of thinking about time and history together, the symposium shared conversations across Indigenous knowledge, archaeology, anthropology, geography, geomorphology, history, prehistory and museology. We had discussions with physicists, astrophysicists, literary experts and novelists. It was exciting to be in the room with so many accomplished experts from multiple fields and we are pleased to bring some of that to you in this collection. Astrophysicists such as Ray Norris are working with Indigenous peoples to collect stories and to assess rock art and engravings that contain detailed predictive astronomical, ecological and climatic information about the past.<sup>59</sup> They conclude that scientific knowledge may not be so modern and western after all. As the astrophysicists were unable to contribute papers to this collection, we invited physicist and philosopher Peter Riggs to share his expertise on the conceptualisation of time in a special chapter. The space-time theories of contemporary physics raise the question of that unsolved conundrum of time itself – does it actually exist?

About 30 Indigenous people – custodians of the Willandra Lakes and Blue Mountains and Sydney regions – participated in the Deepening Histories of Place Symposium. They offered valuable insights across the breadth of academic disciplines.<sup>60</sup> Aboriginal people do a lot of history, using mediums that include autobiography, autofiction, fiction, art, dance and musical. Some interpretations of history through musical performances in many genres are showcased on our project website and also available for download – as a free iBook at [www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/](http://www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/) and as a website at [dhrq.uws.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/](http://dhrq.uws.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/). As Jeanine Leane explained, many Aboriginal people see scholarly history and writing as too constraining, and we hope that these accounts of landscape connection are more accessible.

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58 Smail and Shryock 2013.

59 Norris 2009.

60 See also Nabokov 2002.



**Figure 1.1: Visitors and friends from the Willandra Lakes World Heritage region at The Australian National University in June 2013.**

From left to right: Ann McGrath, Darryl Pappin, Leanne Mitchell, Tanya Charles, Joan Slade, Dawn Smith, Robyn Bancroft, Beryl and Roy Kennedy, Eric and Maureen Taylor, Warwick Clark (at rear), Sam Wickman (at rear), Marie Mitchell, Lottie Mitchell, Ricky Mitchell, Richard Mintern, Warren Clark.

Source: Photograph by Monica Conaghan.

The Willandra Lakes Community of south-western New South Wales was represented at the symposium by a full complement of elders who held authority to speak on behalf of the Mutthi Mutthi, Ngyiampaa and Paakintji (Barkindji) peoples. We had not expected such a large turnout, not only because they are not employed as academics, but because they had to travel more than eight hours by bus to get there. Among the younger people were National Parks officers employed as Discovery Rangers, who present public educational tours about the deep history of the World Heritage area. One of the Mutthi Mutthi present, Darryl Pappin, works as an archaeological fieldworker, while others regularly supervise archaeological work. Participants in the Willandra panel discussion included Marie Mitchell, Ngyiampaa elder Roy Kennedy and World Heritage and National Parks officer Richard Mintern.<sup>61</sup> Significantly, the Deepening Histories of Place Symposium coincided with some very important Willandra cultural business – supervision of the DNA research into ancient ancestral remains still held at The Australian National University.<sup>62</sup>

61 We recorded audio of this discussion for our database. The film *Message from Mungo* elucidates the story of the 'discovery' and 'surfacing' of Lady Mungo and the relationship between scientists, parks officers, pastoralists and Indigenous custodians of the landscape. For another take on these debates, see Tuniz et al. 2009.

62 The research was being conducted by Michael Westaway and Dave Lambert of Griffith University.

A few weeks before the symposium, in order to facilitate a 'Yarning about Willandra Lakes History' event, Malcolm Allbrook and myself had visited Lake Mungo, near the site where the ancient Pleistocene remains of Lady Mungo and Mungo Man remains had appeared in 1968–69. Rather than discussing the deep past, which the locals and the parks authorities tend to categorise as 'culture' rather than history, the group expressed an interest in recalling their own lives, especially the impacts of state intervention and racism. We recorded their memoirs in professionally filmed interviews on country, and they received copies of these.<sup>63</sup> Again, at the symposium, there was strong interest in discussing the coloniser era, especially child removal, which had an especially painful and damaging impact. History, as they had been taught – history with a capital 'H' – was European coloniser time: massacre time, autobiographical, state-surveillance and rupture time. They valued having a space to be heard, and demanded wider public awareness of what they had endured. Older people laughed at the irrelevancy of school lessons proclaiming that European navigators had discovered Australia. But they lamented the denial that Aboriginal people had any history before whites arrived, for this denigrated their grandmothers and past generations. I wondered whether we were wrong-headed to have spent so much attention researching the deep past. Were these recent experiences of history of greater direct relevance, and therefore in need of more urgent community and national attention? Historians may think the Prime Ministerial Apology has happened, the commission of enquiry and Sorry Days happened, but many stories remain untold and these legacies of injustice continue to eat away at people.

Perhaps there is another explanation for the fact that the 'deep history' concept as imagined in the academy lacks draw-card appeal. People from the three tribal groups of the Willandra Lakes did not refer to the ancient ones as occupying a 'deep past', because they do not distinguish recent and ancient pasts; all are 'recent' in a sense, as ancestors are present in the landscapes of the here and now, and their pasts are immanent and observable. Past actors represent not 'history', but culture, their ancestral legacies standing outside time. In public forums like these, the deep past is political and its continuity is what they choose to embody and re-enact. 'History' is colonising rupture and pain. Opening up the many layers of mutual historical understanding may open up different routes for understanding projects of value for the present and future.<sup>64</sup>

In recounting their histories for the Deepening Histories research project, many of the Willandra and Blue Mountains people shared what their parents and grandparents told them. This underlined how listening and telling stories are

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63 This took place on 14 and 15 May 2013.

64 McGrath 2014.

deeply meaningful, cherished activities that connect them to an ancient past. In considering what historians currently describe as deep history, the fact that Willandra elders do not necessarily consider that there is any great depth to dive into, may provoke fresh ways to think about the past. The documentary *Message from Mungo* (2014) conveys this feeling about the past.

The symposium presented an opportunity to obtain feedback on the near-final version of this documentary feature film that Andrew Pike and I had been developing with the Willandra community since 2006. Attendees at its screening included some of the researchers, the Aboriginal interviewees, parks officers and a much-respected archaeologist who worked with the community in the 1970s and 80s, Isabel McBryde. The trailer of the final film, *Message from Mungo*, which explores several contrasting perspectives on the world heritage of human remains, can be found here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOuHgVss9Wk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOuHgVss9Wk). A shorter sampling is posted here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLF6TwhJhAY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLF6TwhJhAY). A discussion of the making of the film, which also touches on the significance of deep history, is available at this site: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGM3jzOWv8c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGM3jzOWv8c). The film presents contrasting perspectives, for example the scientific 'discovery' versus the Indigenous 'surfacing' of Lady Mungo, and the often tense exchanges that led up to the repatriation ceremonies that followed in 1992.

It is worth recalling the emphasis on 'discovery' in the historical narratives of settler-coloniser nations like the United States, Canada and Australia, who asserted sovereignty on the basis of discovery, conquest and land takeover. These performative enactments involved planting flags, toasting kings and delivering speeches on behalf of European monarchs – all of which took place on lands of long Indigenous connection, where ancestral remains stood as proof of successions of inter-generational connection. Coloniser governors required ink markings as proof of discovery – the journals of navigators and explorers were printed and circulated, followed by printed sets of laws pertaining to land, civic and criminal matters. Colonisers and descendants later compiled and published written histories of exploration and pioneering settlement that offered enduring encores to earlier European performances. Australia was *terra nullius*, a wasteland or occupied by 'no one'. If noticed at all, the long occupation of Aboriginal Australians was depicted as 'timeless', and certainly outside modernity. According to imported intellectual traditions, these were a people 'outside time', and outside of the national future. The logic of literacy and its lack became another key justification for the exclusion of the pre-European past from the study of history.

New questions might be asked by research consortiums comprising such expertise as archaeologists, geomorphologists, geographers and geologists. The big dating experts, the time lords of carbon dating and photoluminescence,

the isotopic and DNA experts will be essential to such an enterprise. If we could start to write this mass of relatively unknown world history into a convincing, more detailed historical entity, this would help transform the way we think about global history. Possibly, too, it could change the way historians think about Europe, as well as potentially transforming the practice of history itself.

Although history has fruitfully grown out of western intellectual traditions, our ontology and practice requires modification. To research and present the ambitious history that finds an appropriate place for the *longue durée* of Australia's human past in world history, mutual exchanges with Indigenous knowledge holders are essential and enriching.

To sum up, the Deepening Histories of Place project aimed to think about a deeper chronology for a Greater Australia that cut beyond the European anniversary dates. We had started to consider 'deep' as something usefully witnessed in the landscape – in a kind of material and human ecology evident in the present. Such histories adopt a revived interest in place, in geography, and a collaborative practice where historians work with archaeologists and other scientists. But how else to go about 'deepening histories of place'? A deep history evokes longer, more meaningful association with histories of place. This plays out somewhat uniquely so in Australia, as Indigenous people occupied the continent for 60,000 years. Scholars are only beginning to appreciate what might be called 'ancient memory' – the ways in which this sense of a long-enduring past are carried and held in living memory.

What becomes clear in our engagement with Indigenous modes of historical practice is that the 'deep past' does not fit neatly, if at all. Australian Indigenous concepts of time are already expansive. The Central Australian languages of Kattetye, Anmatyerr and Arrernte refer to 'long ago' as *arrwekele*, which means in front, before and in the past. An ancestor, too, can be seen in front – this 'one from before' can be seen ahead of you. As earlier discussed, the future sits behind a person, sight unseen.<sup>65</sup> The past sits in front, known, or at least knowable.

By the same token, Indigenous culture has been rocked by coloniser regimes, and many people struggle to hold onto language, let alone to visit country that has been sold off, fenced off, turned into tourism businesses, farms, towns or into big cities like Sydney. For Indigenous people, from the nineteenth century through until the 1970s, government reserves, missions, child removal, assimilation/urbanisation severed multi-generational association with place. Yet, in video interviews, many people testify to deep spiritual associations with place.

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65 Koch and Nordlinger 2014.

Even when 'shallow' in length of past visitations, association with place could be 'deep' in terms of identity and in a more spiritual sense: [www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/](http://www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/).

## The paper run

In order to take a fresh look at the concept of time and history, the papers in this collection begin with Diana James' chapter 'Tjukurpa Time' – the embodied and emplaced sense of time held by the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara peoples of the Western Desert of central Australia. Tjukurpa time resides in the living, the dead, in the landscape and in spaces beyond and below the earth. Integrating anthropological and linguistic insights, Diana James provides fresh perspectives into an Indigenous ontology that stretches time and space. Actors converge in landscape; whether living or dead, everything and everyone is, or could be, concurrent. In accessible language, Peter Riggs' chapter provides an up-to-date, solid empirical framework of time and space through the perspectives of western science, particularly physics. Further, his chapter explores approaches to time through western philosophy, and elaborates on how physics and philosophy have histories of their own.

In his research with Indigenous people in the Top End of the Northern Territory, archaeologist and historian Rob Paton finds not only that time and space can be mutable, but also that, in order to heal a community suffering a deep trauma, the past can be ritually reconfigured. Dreamings were crafted into material objects that stand for something beyond themselves, creating powerful effects, and rearranging history itself, as well as its epic stories. Readers can also witness this through the interactive sites posted on this website: [www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/sites/pelican-dreaming/](http://www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/sites/pelican-dreaming/). The Pelican Dreaming module includes historical footage, maps, analysis and discussion of the repatriation or return to country of images and videos, much of which prompted further re-remembering with Aboriginal participants and descendants. Historian Karen Hughes' illustrated chapter describes Aboriginal women's storytelling practices at Ngukurr in the north-west of the Northern Territory of Australia. Acutely aware of its power in the real politic, local women revealed how ancestral histories dynamically changed past landscapes. The process is encapsulated in her useful revival of the term 'irruptions of dreaming'. This kind of deep time pierces the earth's surface from beneath, changing the present.

Through the lens of Arnhem Land artists' bark painting and its rich iconography, anthropologist Luke Taylor dismantles and critiques the notion of 'old' and 'new' art. Art is a form of history making, which simultaneously negotiates the space between tradition and modernity. The art business reminds us how

the market is often more interested in Indigenous stasis – in an imagined ‘authentic’ culture frozen in time – than in one of real dynamism and change. In a contrasting example, Peter Read rejects the view that people from the highly urbanised, early colonised Sydney region and surrounds are only authentic if they had continuous residency or custodianship. He stresses the legitimacy of acknowledging *disconnection*. Spiritual ties can be visceral and immediate – even recent – rather than enduring over continuous generations. Eora scholar Julia Torpey probes the immediate, embodied nature of belonging, as materialised in a variety of landscapes – wilderness, rural and urban. In one of her digital histories, an artist takes control of directing the film of her story on site, on the local rubbish tip, where she makes sculptures that express her identification with ancient stories of connection. In her much-cherished Blue Mountain locale, she creates a visually delightful telling here: [www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/](http://www.deepeninghistories.anu.edu.au/at-the-heart-of-it/).

Wiradjuri literary scholar, poet and novelist Jeanine Leane examines Alexis Wright’s rich novel *Carpentaria*, in which the whites are befuddled at the wild moods of the monsoonal, cyclone-prone and ever-changing far northern coastline. Its local Aboriginal characters anticipate many more environmental turns, and it is these, and not necessarily coloniser time, that created the most drastic changes in the *longue durée* past. They are conscious of a seamless, intensely storied and ever-disputed landscape where human transgressions can engender past and future change and transformation. Because of the protagonists’ confidence in local and enduring Indigenous knowledges, the authority of science or the process of ‘scientifying’ information is treated sceptically, as a newfangled fad. Presenting a world in active negotiation with its ancient past, *Carpentaria* cracks history’s borders. In such an inspirited landscape, with long past actions alive in memory, people of the past and present jostle to speak, argue and fight with each other. The landscapes themselves are principal actors capable of changing everything.<sup>66</sup> In this world it is the whites, the non-Indigenous Australians who are the ‘historyless people’.

In his chapter, the prize-winning Tasmanian/Pallawah Aboriginal author Bruce Pascoe argues for Indigenous dynamism and achievement. When he discusses the long-overlooked technological innovations of Aboriginal Australia, he takes us away from the scientific emphasis on burials and stone tools, debunks historical stereotypes, and reveals his ancestors as modernisers and innovators. Much recent Indigenous literary, oral and multimedia storytelling examines the complexities of history-time with wit and insight. Historical scholarship is in dire need of such eye-opening perspectives.

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66 Wright 2006.

So too is an examination of the epistemologies of the western disciplines, the 'scientifying' that we often take for granted as common sense. Archaeologist Harry Allen provides a detailed account of the now-entrenched scientific taxonomies of human progress. Consequently, it was remnants of stone tools, ceramics and metals that provided the evidence to create a classificatory system for 'prehistory'. These relied upon the happenstance of their resilience in geology. Based upon a narrow European view of the development of discrete technologies, prehistory encountered difficulty accounting for other cultural and social practices. Such formulations have enduring intellectual legacies. Even the assertion that Aboriginal people had the 'oldest continuing cultures' – currently understood as a positive spin that is empowering of Aboriginal identity – could reinforce entrenched notions of the 'oldest' as unchanging and backward. Physical anthropologist Martin Porr expounds the theme of the 'exceptional primitive'. Examining the practices of molecular genetics in relation to the origins of modern humans, he considers the controversial politics of bioanthropological research in contemporary Indigenous spaces and knowledge regimes.

Archaeologist Nicola Stern explains how a meticulously applied grid approach to surface archaeology will lead to more exact and reliable data about changing technologies, societies and economies at Willandra Lakes. Malcolm Allbrook and Ann McGrath outline the historical and archaeological significance of that region, explaining how a collaborative history-sharing approach is recording the region's past. The evolving twists in the relationship between scientists, parks officers, pastoralists and Indigenous custodians of the landscape are being explored in sustained conversations and on film.<sup>67</sup>

Probing the connections between deep time, present time, place and history will allow for many future conversations, but we will need all the right people in the room. To be good historians, we must challenge the presentism of our everyday assumptions, while at the same time acknowledging that our historical questions are framed within sets of intersecting cultures moulded by histories of the present, immediate and longer past. Furthermore, we will need to address audiences located in the imminent future. In this collection, we listed some of the diverse ontologies that promise to expand history's horizons. Witnessing how scientists think in different registers about time, distance and the pace of change provided a shake-up. Critiquing historical methodology and concepts with Indigenous knowledge holders equally so.

If it is possible to join these 'partners in time', and to gesture towards future collaborations, historians will need to deploy new digital and multimedia platforms for historical research, interpretation and presentation. We hope that

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<sup>67</sup> *Message from Mungo*, 2014.

this volume displays some of the many layers of history that might be explored and complemented by such techniques, as well as hopefully prompting some better ideas.

We aim at a capacious history – one that can travel the surface, and the deep. As well as the shallow soil that was once deep below, we hope to embrace the ground of history that we can no longer see – that was once above where we stand – that ubiquitous surface of now. The ‘we’ refers to all those people currently occupying the earth’s surface in the present. Such an elongated house of history might host far-sighted eyes and telescopes looking out and in. The landscape of history can be as big as we are – or as small.

One of the possible approaches is to develop a chronology for the deep past that is beyond the climatic, and that also looks beyond the stone tool. We can only grapple with these issues if we acknowledge how imperialism is implicated in all that we do – our disciplines, and even the global measurement of time. Space and time might be one entity, but there is much more thinking to be done around both. Perhaps widening history’s temporal and spatial hemispheres will be a step towards producing integrated historical perspectives with room for all.

We hope that reading, viewing and listening to *Long History, Deep Time* will challenge some of the ways we think about ourselves, about time, place and history – both what we can see in front and what we cannot see behind us. We hold out hope for new histories that can generate ripples that change the climate of history towards greater inclusion and equity. These might be connected with modern *national* futures, but also integrated into global analyses.

Chasms and mountainous obstacles still pose a great divide between the deep past and the present. But in ways not so distant; these times happened in the same places, if not upon the same ground, where we can walk around today. Experts, passers-by and descendants witness tangible human presences in landscape and objects left behind. As well as the horizontal linearity that we might equate with the term ‘long history’, we also know that history can be buried. The past’s stratigraphy is both horizontal and vertical – long and deep. The earth and its past spirits wake us up to a deeper sense of place as history – an ever-present site of change and continuity that emanates the present and the presence of the past. Ultimately, we would like this book to help spark the possibilities of what the inclines and the expanses of history’s places might be.

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