

Report of internship at Sydney Observatory by Danielle Bujna

During my final year as an undergraduate Museum Studies student at Macquarie University, I undertook an internship as a research assistant at Sydney Observatory. It was a whirlwind over five weeks in November and December 2010 which gave me an invaluable insight into the workings of such an institution.

In my first week I spent some time becoming familiar with the site, particularly the history of the Fort Phillip Signal Station. This involved editing a previous intern's research on the Fort Phillip Signal Station. This editing was carried out in an effort to consolidate the information into a document of the station's history for the general public to read on Sydney Observatory's website. I also spent some time at the beginning of my internship having a look at some of the programs that the Observatory provides, such as viewing one of the new 3D astronomy movies.

In the second week of my internship I was able to attend a meeting between Sydney Observatory, Macquarie University and State Archives at the State Records building. This was an extremely interesting meeting surrounding the custody and maintenance of astronomical glass plates which Macquarie University were no longer able to house. I took minutes which were sent out to all who had attended the meeting. I was also able to gain front of house experience this week by being on the front desk and welcoming visitors.

Other work during my internship involved researching the work of Charles Todd, the Superintendent of Telegraphs and Government Astronomer in South Australia. This research focused on Todd's involvement in the publishing of the first weather map in South Australia and served as a starting point for work experience students to follow up and carry the research further. I also went into the Signal Station for the first time and did some work on determining which images would be appropriate to accompany the web document on the Fort Phillip Signal Station. I was lucky this week to accompany Richard Pool up the tower and watch him drop the time ball.

Towards the end of my internship I shadowed Toner Stevenson, Manager of Sydney Observatory, while she was at the Powerhouse Museum to see the behind the scenes workings of the Powerhouse Museum and the relationship between the two institutions. While at the Powerhouse, I was attended a meeting with the Indigenous Curator, James Wilson-Miller, which involved a consultation about having an Indigenous sculpture in the turning circle at the entrance of Sydney Observatory. I also attended a meeting with archaeologist Helen Nicholson concerning the details of Archaeology Research Week next year. I also did some more work finalising the Fort Phillip Signal Station web document. This included editing and finalising the images which would be included, contacting the owner of some of the images in order to gain permission to use them and sourcing soft copies of the images from the State Library and National Gallery of Australia in order to include them in the document.

During my internship at Sydney Observatory I was able to gain research and editing experience as well as being provided with an opportunity to develop a resource for the general public to use. My internship also enabled me to gain a fuller perspective of the workings and diversity of an institution such as Sydney Observatory through the various meetings that I attended.

Danielle Bujna, January 2011