

# George Lyndon Hicks Fellowship for Southeast Asia Collections

**Curious about the George Lyndon Hicks Fellowship? Find out what our fellow, Mr Ronald Milne, has to say about the fellowship.**

**NL:** You've held a number of senior and director-level positions at the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand; British Library and Oxford University, what is the one thing that has kept you in this field?

**Ronald:** It may sound trite, but I have a passion for libraries. I firmly believe they can change people's lives, and I've always believed in what I've been doing. (That's three things in one!)

**NL:** How will you go about assisting NLB in the development of its Special Collections?

**Ronald:** So far, I've been doing a lot of information gathering and forming preliminary views on a number of matters. It's been important for me to understand how the whole NLB system works. When I first arrived at the NL, members of staff made a series of presentations. I've been following up on those, having conversations and discussions with a wide range of colleagues. I have asked to study a lot of library documents, particularly those that have a bearing on the development of the library's collections, both physical and digital, and services and staff relating to them. And, of course, it's been vital, and of great interest, to become acquainted with the library's holdings.

**NL:** Can you share your experience with the National Library so far?

**Ronald:** It's a great institution, with excellent, dedicated staff. It's good to be working in such a collegial environment.

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**NL: How have the librarians in the National Library helped you in your Fellowship undertaking?**

**Ronald:** Colleagues in the National Library have been enormously generous with their time and supplied any information that I have asked for, whether it be about collection development policies, accessing collections, or particular aspects of the Library's operations. On a more personal note, being new to Singapore, I've particularly benefited from staff keen to ensure that I settled into my new environment quickly. I've really appreciated the hospitality shown and the efforts people have made to help me become well versed in Singapore history and its culture(s) and to introduce me to the Singapore way of life.

**NL: What are some of the best practices from other libraries that NLB can adopt for the development of its Special Collections?**

**Ronald:** I think the current 'From the Stacks' exhibition has provided a great launch pad for a variety of documentary heritage-related activities. There was an excellent feature in The Straits Times and other exposure in the media. I think it's important that there are 'good news' stories about the Library, its collections and activities appearing in the media at regular intervals. Of course, this has to be matched by an ability to deliver, so I'd like to see an enhanced profile for Singapore and SE Asia (including Rare) material in the Library and, in parallel, significant growth in collection building and enhanced physical and digital access, together with a message that documentary heritage and other library material is for use. In my view, there is little point in a library developing its collections, unless they are made available for researchers and the general public to study, learn and enjoy.

**NL: Could you give some tips to other fellow experts applying for the George Lyndon Hicks Fellowship?**

**Ronald:** Think of how you can best use your knowledge, expertise and skills to help the library develop its collections and how you can best impart these attributes to the Library staff. Use your network to assist staff in making connections so they may benefit from the knowledge and advice of colleagues in Singapore, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world.

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**NL:** Would you recommend this fellowship to your peers and why?

**Ronald:** Yes, most definitely. I think it's a great opportunity to engage with collections and staff and help the library develop. Particularly if they are coming from overseas, it's also an opportunity to experience a fascinating, vibrant and friendly multicultural environment.

**NL:** What kind of impact do you hope your Fellowship undertaking will have?

**Ronald:** I hope that my observations and recommendations will have resonance and that the library may develop some of its policies and practices in such a way that rare and special collections will have a high profile and are developed in such a way that the Library is increasingly regarded as a research library of note and a centre of excellence for the study of Singapore and SE Asia.