From Microfilm to Digital: 50 Years of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau

Kari James, Pacific History Association Conference

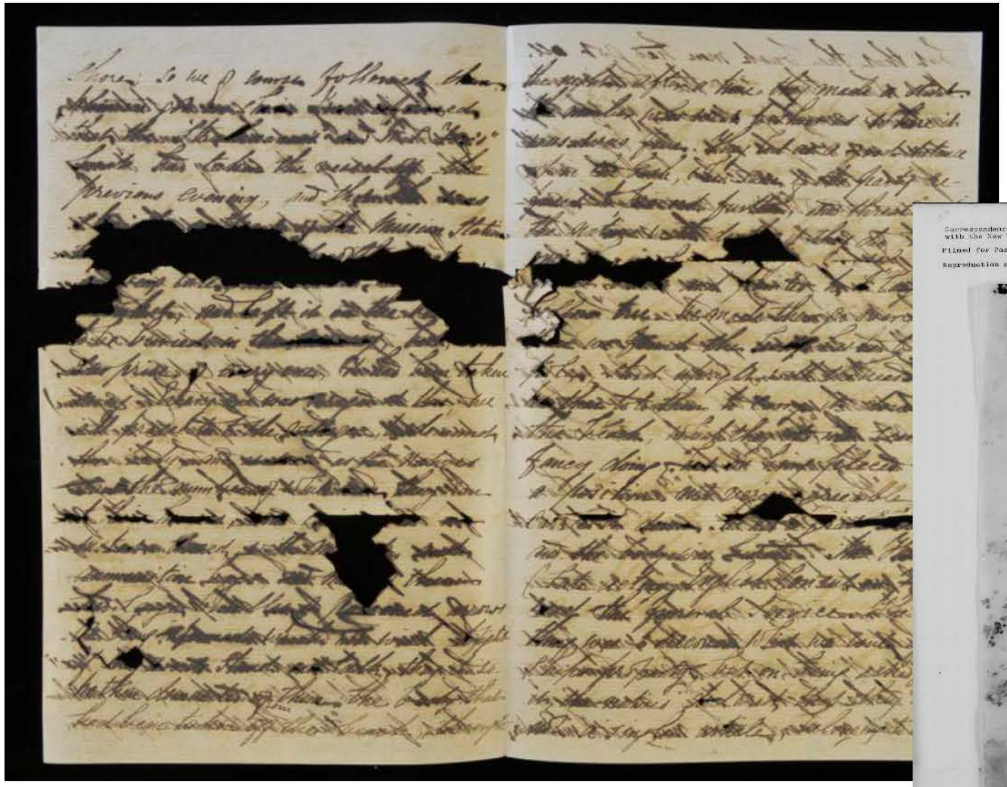
Cambridge, 5 December, 2018

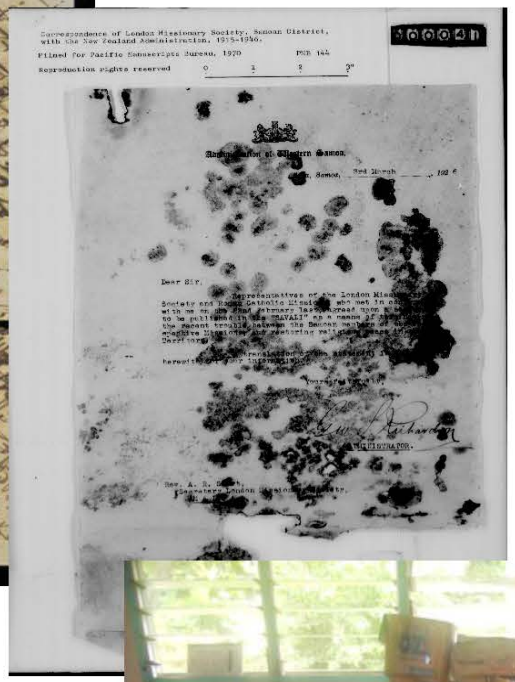
What is the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau?

- Lists and copies manuscripts, photographs and rare printed materials about the Pacific Islands.
- Makes these copies accessible to researchers through an international consortium of libraries.
- Provides reference support to researchers.
- Advocacy and information sharing with archives and libraries in the Pacific Islands

Overview

- History and achievements
- Microfilm to digital
- Contemporary challenges and opportunities:
  - Access for Pacific Islands communities
  - Collection representation
  - Regional changes
- PAMBU's role going forwards





Correspondence of London Missionary Society, Samoan District, with the New Zealand Administration, 1915-1930.

Filmed for Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, 1970 PMB 144

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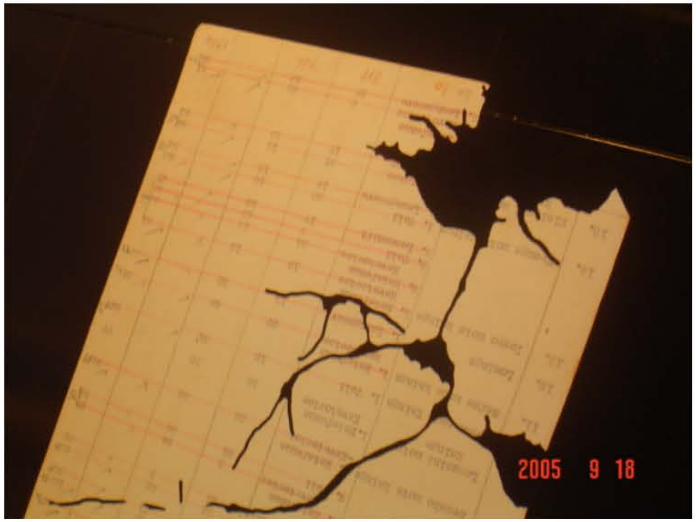

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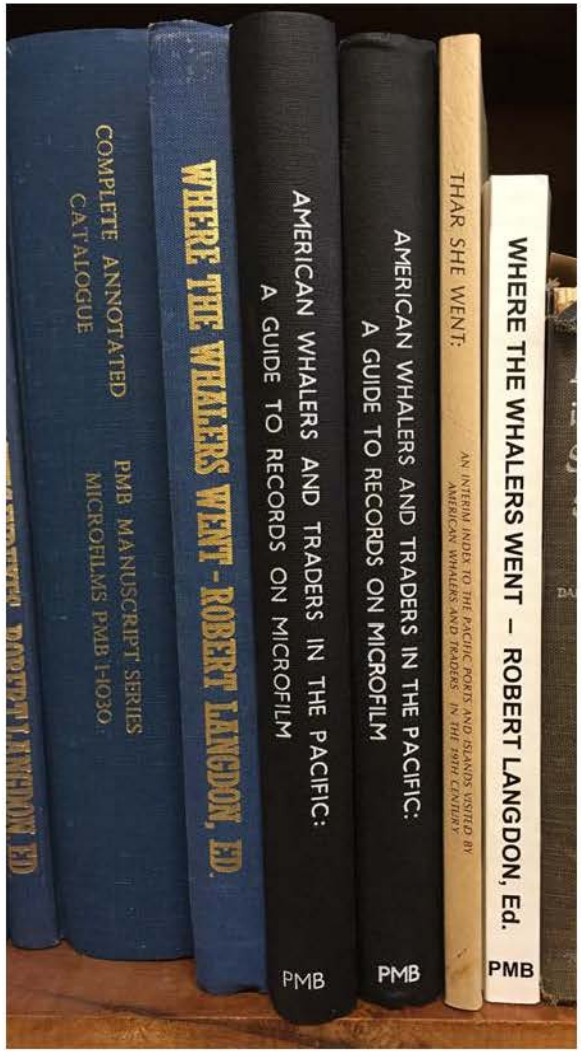
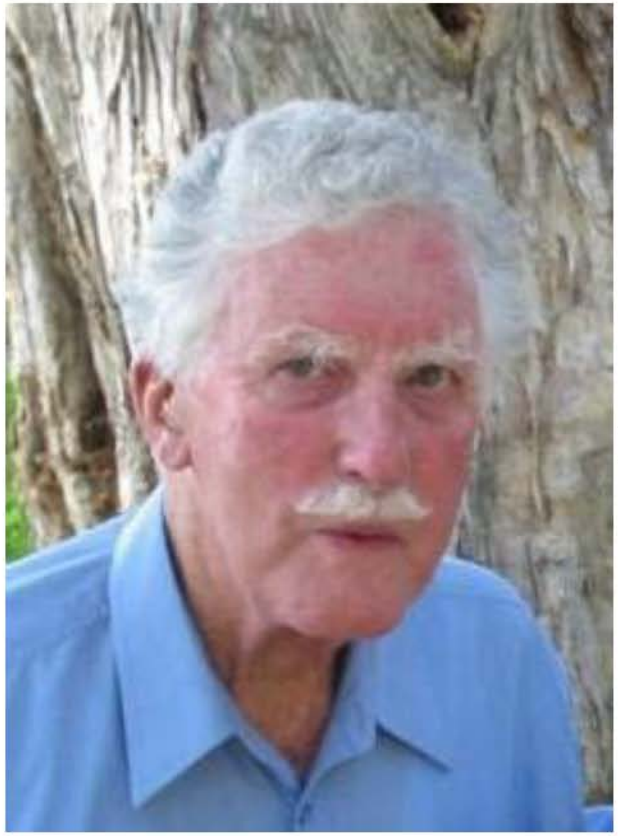
Henry (Harry) Maude
Research Fellow,
Australian National University
https://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/maude

Gordon Richardson
Librarian, Mitchell Library
State Library of NSW
http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p259901/html/ch07.xhtml?referer=79&page=14

Dr Floyd Cammack
Librarian
University of Hawaii
https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/elegant-pack-of-business-avatars_1292967.htm





Robert Langdon, the first PMB Executive Officer, 1968-1986

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Pambu

The monthly newsletter of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau,
Research School of Pacific Studies,
Australian National University, Canberra.

No. 1 August, 1968

VIVID PLANTER'S DIARY COPIED FOR
PACIFIC RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Microfilm copies of a vivid day-by-day diary kept by an Australian planter in the New Hebrides at the turn of the century will be distributed soon to the four sponsoring libraries of the newly-established Pacific Manuscripts Bureau at the Australian National University.

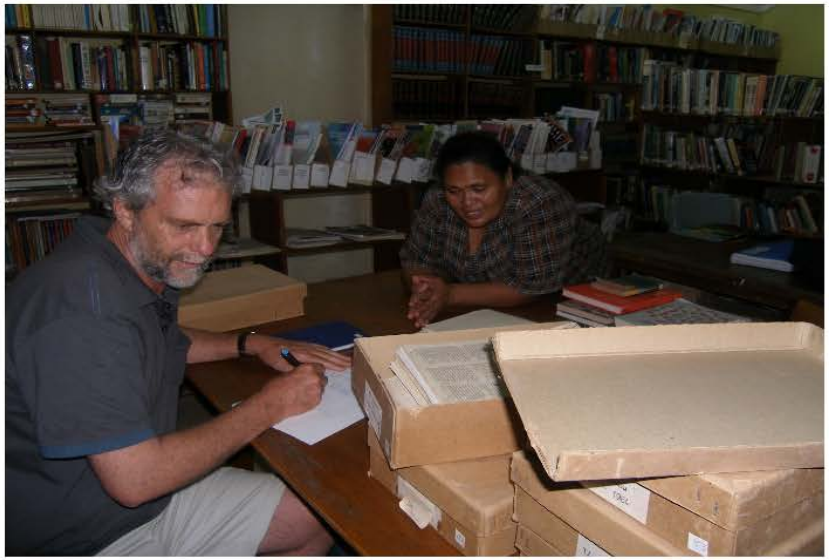
The diary contains frequent references to wars between native tribes of the Hog Harbour area of the island of Espiritu Santo. It gives a lively account of a planter's problems and difficulties, and describes, among other things, a gruesome custom in which the widow of a deceased chief publicly committed suicide by hanging herself from a tree.

The diary was kept in 1905 by the late Maurice M. Witts, the first European to walk across Espiritu Santo from west to east. It was made available to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for copying by his daughter, Mrs B.L. Tyler, of Burradoo, New South Wales.

The Bureau was established several months ago in the ANU's Research School of Pacific Studies to locate and obtain copies of unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands for four world libraries specialising in Pacific research. The libraries are the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

The executive officer of the Bureau is Mr Robert Langdon, formerly assistant editor of the Pacific Islands Monthly.

Adrian Cunningham,
seconded from the NLA



Ewan Maidment at Tuvalu National Library and Archive, Endangered Archives Programme, 2005

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"I once worked on the Levers Archives in the Russell Islands… I was in Honiara and was waiting for the ferry across, but there had been a cyclone and the ferry didn't come. So I got on a mission plane out to the islands. It was the kind of plane that the pilot says a prayer before you take off."

"To make the microfilm I'd use a Hirokawa camera, which weighed about 19 kilograms, I'd have to take the film for the camera, so on a trip like that I'd have to take about 25 rolls, which was another 20 kilos plus the extra gear…I worked long hours there, but going back at night in Yandina I remember the fireflies in the coconut groves. The Russell Islands are a stunning set of islands."

"The captain prayed again before we left, and we headed off in the darkness through a maze of islands. He had no map except for his sense of the sea and a spare can of petrol. On the other side I got on a truck back to Honiara. Very glorified filing indeed."

http://chl.anu.edu.au/news-events/news/998/pambu-safeguarding-documentary-heritage-pacific-50-years

Microfilm to Digital

Former Executive Officer, Kylie Moloney, microfilming in Samoa

The new digital camera, Cook Islands

The Microfilm Collection

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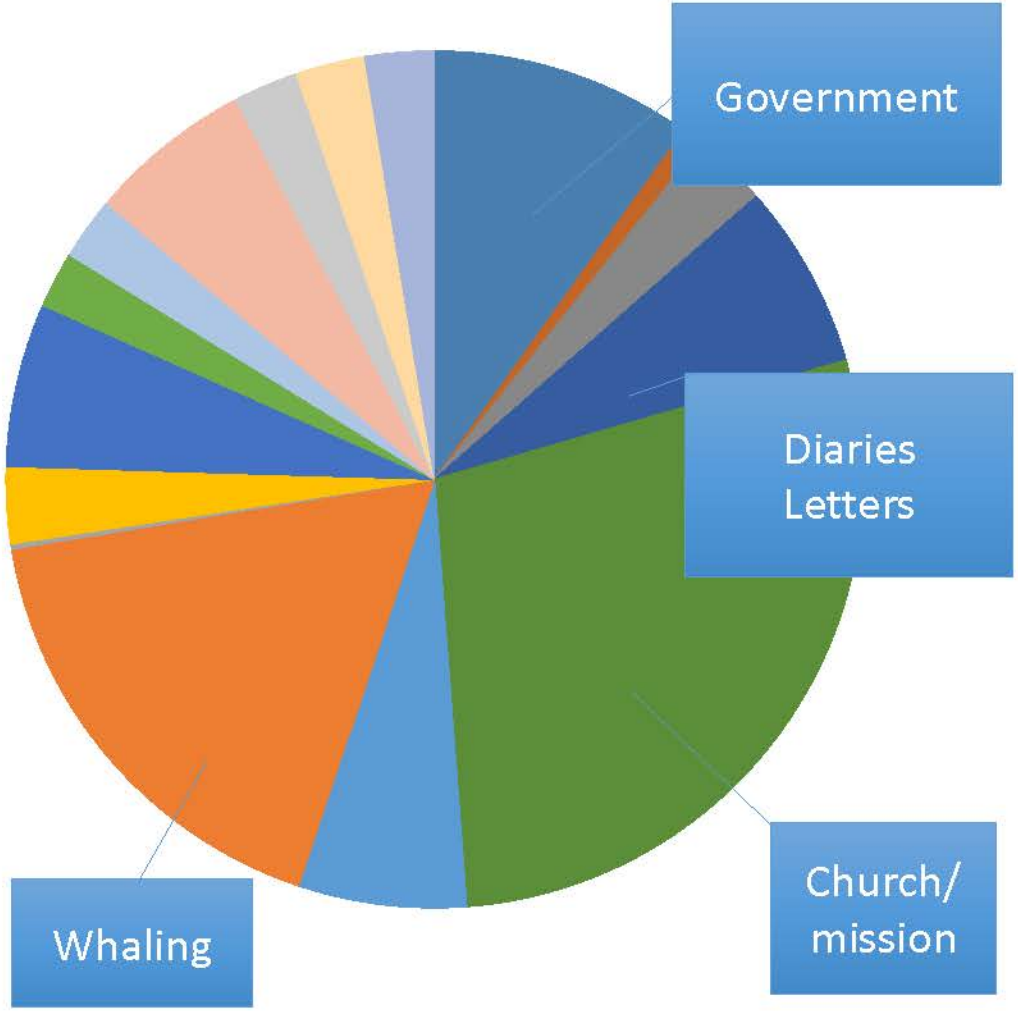

Pacific Membership

UPNG signs on as Pacific Manuscripts Bureau member, August 2018

USP signs on as Pacific Manuscripts Bureau member, 2016

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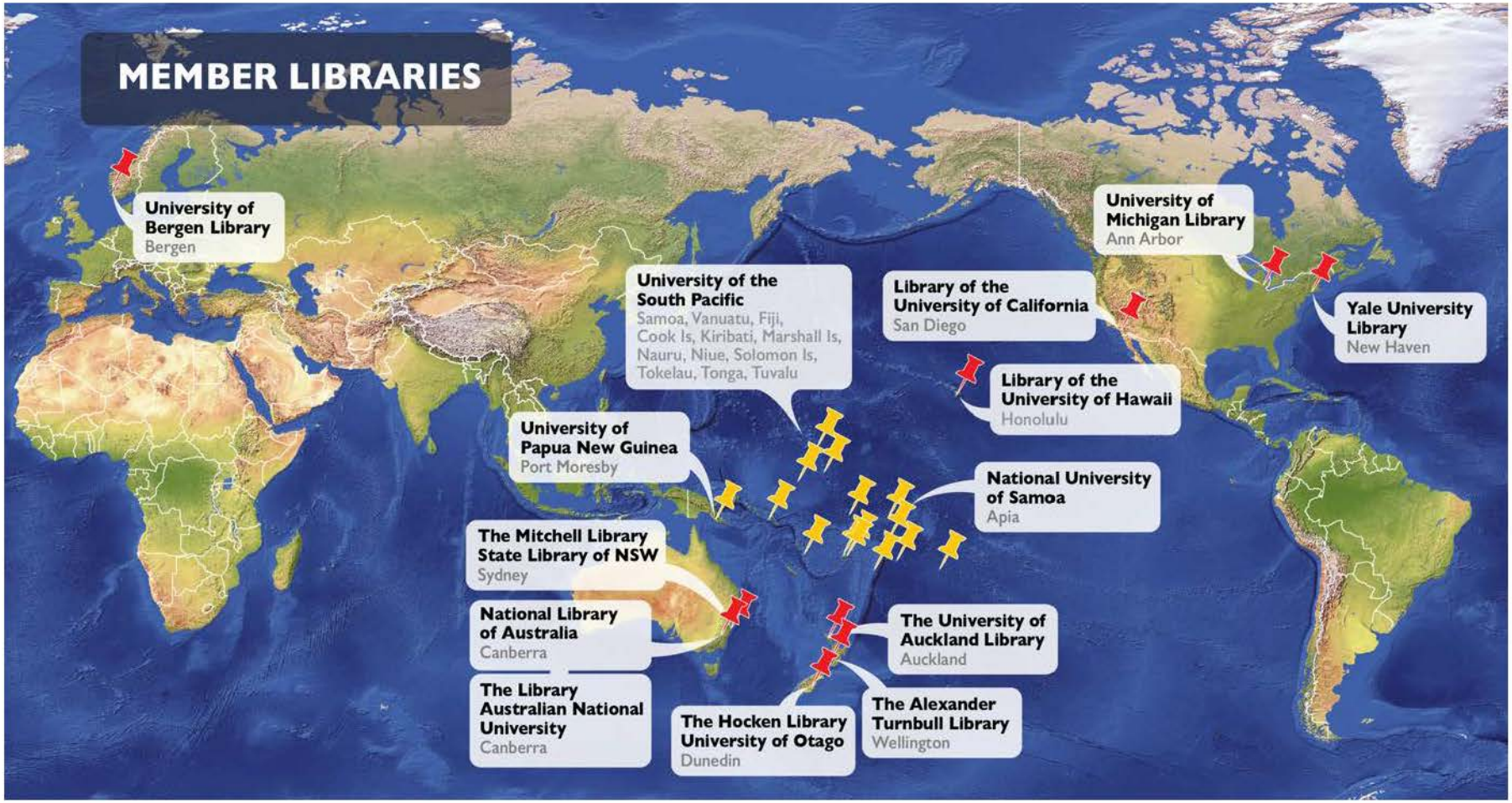

Photo Collections

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Pacific Manuscripts Bureau

Holdings Quick search

▼ Collection PHOTO 58 - Solomon Islands...

240 more...

Item 194 - Portrait of Woodford holdin...

Item 195 - Spear fisherman in the sea. I...

Item 196 - Crab-claw sail canoe (lakatoi)...

Item 196a - Crab-claw sail canoe (lakato...

Item 197 - Crab-claw sail canoe (lakatoi)...

Item 198 - View of village with women s...

Item 199 - Tree houses.

Item 200 - View of a village with villager...

Item 201 - Large canoe (lakatoi) at sea -...

40 more...

Item 197 - Crab-claw sail canoe (lakatoi) in water with people standing on board - PNG.

Solomon Islands photographs > Crab-claw sail canoe (lakatoi) in water ...

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Add

Explore
Reports
Browse as list
Browse digital objects

Import
XML
CSV

Export
Dublin Core 1.1 XML
EAD 2002 XML
MARC

Identity area

Reference code	AU PMB PHOTO 58-197
Title	Crab-claw sail canoe (lakatoi) in water with people standing on board - PNG.
Date(s)	• nd (Creation)
Level of description	Item
Extent and medium	Digital photograph scanned from original

Context area

Name of creator	Woodford, Charles Morris (1852-1927)

Pacific Manuscripts Bureau
14 November at 13:26 ·

As Fiji goes to the polls today, we look back to 1966, to the first elections in which political parties competed for power in the government of Fiji. This photo is polling day in Lomanikoro. See the full collection of Robert Norton's 1966 election campaign photos here: https://asiapacific.anu.edu.au /.../slides-and-photographs-of-...

Pacific Manuscripts Bureau PHOTO 103_143a

974
People reached

128
Engagements

Boost Post

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Access barriers

- Member libraries in the Pacific don't have access to PAMBU microfilm collection
- PAMBU not resourced to digitise the entire microfilm collection
- Internet speeds

The Future

- More Pacific voices
- Potential for different media formats
- Continue core operations of copying collections, threats from climate change
- Continue core operations of copying private collections
- Greater scope for potential collaborative projects

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Thank you!

Contact Us pambu@anu.edu.au

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