

Newsletter September 2017

The Cyril W Kett Optometry Museum and Archive

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY CRN CARDIGAN AND KEPPEL STREETS CARLTON VICTORIA 3053 AUSTRALIA

New archivist and a new project

Joe Chakman AM has joined the honorary archivist team. We now have five hardworking and knowledgeable archivists.

Joe Chakman was the CEO of Optometry Australia for 30 years, from 1981 to his retirement in 2011. He is greatly respected for his achievements while CEO and was made an honorary life member of the Association in 2014. He was also appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the same year for his contributions to optometry and eye health policy reform.



He is not an optometrist but nonetheless knows a great deal of the history of optometry having lived through a good part of it. His original training was as a microbiologist working as a food scientist and later as a hospital scientist, but a love of English literature took him to further study and into the world of communications.

The new project? His job as archivist is to liaise with the national and state offices of Optometry Australia to identify material of historical significance held by the associations and to work with them to ensure it is properly preserved and accessible to future historians. Some of the material will find a safe home in the Kett Museum and some may continue to be held by the association but will be scanned or photographed and recorded in the Museum's catalogue.

A new display in the Schultz foyer

Archivist Colin Bates has curated a new display of material held by the Museum. It is on the early years of contact lenses when glass and PMMA scleral lenses were all that were available. It features a Zeiss scleral lens set used by Melbourne optometrist Ernst Goetz in mid 1920s and scleral lenses made by John Strachan, another Melbourne contact lens pioneer. The display is in the Schultz Foyer outside the lecture theatre. Give it a look.



Isaac Barrow repaired

The Museum holds a copy of Isaac Barrow's lectures on optics and geometry, which was published in 1674. It's our oldest book. Barrow (1630-1677) became Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge in 1663 and was tutor to Newton, who it is suggested wrote down Barrow's lectures for this book.

We were always proud to hold this book in the Museum's Aitken Collection of Early Ophthalmic Books but it was a pretty tatty copy with a leather binding that was falling apart. We invested in its professional restoration and it looks and feels great and is back on the shelves. It now has a value of over \$5000.

You can get more information about [Isaac Barrow](#) and his book in the historical notes in the [catalogue record](#) for this book. Barrow (1630-1677) was quite a character. Although a Professor of Greek at Cambridge, he had no interest in the language. He made quite a contribution to the science of optics but was overshadowed by his student Isaac Newton.

New upload to the Museum's website

The Kett Museum's catalogue can be searched from the Museum's website at <https://museum.aco.org.au/> New catalogue data is uploaded every four months. It was updated on June 6 adding another 89 items to the online catalogue. The total number of items catalogued online is now 3327.

Have a browse. If you are a donor of material to the museum, then search by your name in the donor field to check that we have done a good job cataloguing the material you donated.

You can help

The Kett Optometry Museum acquires and preserves historically important books, ophthalmic equipment, spectacles and lenses, photographs, archival papers and ephemera.

Donations of your old stuff that may have archival or historical interest are very welcome. See the [Kett Museum's web site](#) for how to contact us.

We have a large number of optometrists who have donated material of great interest. Thank you.

What were contact lenses like 70 years ago?

We also get donations from members of the general public. A recent donation was from Lyonel Elston who lives in Whyalla, South Australia. He gave us the scleral contact lenses that were made for him in 1949, when he was nine years old, to correct his keratoconus.

They were fitted by Dr Herbert Kaye in the Ophthalmological Department of the Transvaal Memorial Hospital for Children in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The provenance suggests they were made by Bausch and Lomb. At the time B&L were developing mass production of scleral contact lenses (fitted from a trial set), a project that did not proceed. The donated lenses are PMMA without fenestration. Mr Elston could only wear them for a few hours and gave up after struggling with them for three or four years.



Scleral lenses without fenestration prescribed in South Africa for keratoconus in 1949. Cat No. 3330