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Transnational Cultural Ties in a Settler Colonial World: Carnegie Cultural Philanthropy and the 1933 Australian Museums Inquiry

Pre-publication version. Published in *Settler Colonial Studies*, 29 April 2014, DOI:10.1080/2201473X.2014.899550

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Keywords

Australian museums, Carnegie philanthropy, museum history, settler-colonial theory, race

Abstract

In the 1930s, the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) sponsored a series of inquiries into museum provision in countries of the British Empire. This article examines the 1933 inquiry into Australian museums and art galleries. It argues that existing analysis of the inquiry tends to dismiss its significance in terms of museum sector development in Australia. The article looks beyond this national focus to locate the Australian text within the context of the British Empire inquiries, and CCNY's concern about the underdevelopment of social and educational infrastructure in British colonies of settlement. The article deploys settler-colonial theory to draw attention to the racial politics that surrounds the Australian inquiry, particularly evident in its concern with encouraging a 'museum movement' in Australia's small towns and country districts.
Transnational Cultural Ties in a Setter Colonial World: Carnegie Cultural Philanthropy and the 1933 Australian Museums Inquiry

Introduction

In the 1930s the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) made a significant intervention in Australian museum policy by sponsoring a national inquiry into museums and art galleries\(^1\), one of a series of inquiries into public museums in Britain and the British Empire\(^2\). The Australian museum inquiry reflected CCNY’s concern with Australia’s under-developed cultural and educational infrastructure, a concern shared by other US philanthropic trusts active in Australia at that time\(^3\). The museum inquiry was followed by a CCNY-funded inquiry into Australian public libraries\(^4\), and complemented CCNY’s involvement in Australian education provision, through funding support of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), and through a 1938 inquiry into adult education\(^5\).

The limited attention given to the museum inquiry by Australian scholars – part of a wider gap in the analysis of Carnegie involvement with museums - has been generally dismissive of its impact. Interpreted almost exclusively within a national frame, the inquiry is seen as the failed precursor of more significant reviews in the late twentieth century that reformed the Australian museum sector and established current-day policy and institutional frameworks \(^6\). These later inquiries approached sectoral reform from a top-down, centralized perspective, illustrated by the focus of advisors and policy-makers on establishing new national institutions and administrative bureaux to lead the museum sector\(^7\). Thus, the argument goes, the onset in the 1930s of economic depression and war foreclosed possibilities for invigorating Australian museums and art galleries, until the return of prosperity and the expansion of national government cultural policy.

While there is some merit in this argument, its framing is decidedly national and teleological. By contrast, this article offers a more revealing analysis of the text and context of the Carnegie museums inquiry by locating it within CCNY’s interest in museum development throughout the British Empire. This reading suggests that the coordinates of the Carnegie inquiries were simultaneously local and international, in the sense that the perceived malaise of museums, and the remedies that were prescribed, were common across the span of the empire of settlement. Two key problems were identified in the inquiries: the lack of civic and municipal supports for museums, and the lack of professional museum curators and educationists to guide and coordinate these supports. The 1933 Australian report is representative of these concerns:
Probably in no other country in the world is there such an overwhelming proportion of government museums, and probably in no other country do cities do so little...it is small wonder that [city councillors] regard appointment to the Museum and Art Gallery committee as an unwarranted slight on their political or financial acumen.8

[There are] few opportunities for that constant interchange of opinion between experts which is one of the essential conditions of progress. ...too great a condemnation cannot be made of some ...honorary or part-time curators whose museums are a complete disgrace.9

The Australian inquiry’s report painted an unflattering picture of Australian museums, particularly smaller ones. The museum identified in the inquiry as Australia’s oldest – Ancanthe, a neo-classical structure established on Hobart’s outskirts by Lady Jane Franklin, wife of the colonial governor, in 1842 – was used as an apple shed, said the report10. Many small Australian towns and some major cities, said the report, “have over-crowded, badly selected and uncurated collections that fortunately do not attract the public”11.

However, the report also pointed to the latent promise of historical and other collections held in local Australian museums, a point made about local museums in other parts of the empire12. The significance of this point has been missed by Australian commentators, who, with the exception of Healy13, focus on the report’s references to the representation of history in major institutions. Additionally, the similarities between the museum report’s criticism of local museums and the 1935 Australian library inquiry’s scathing assessment of local library services has been overlooked. In concert with Carnegie-funded work in the UK and other parts of the British Empire14, these Australian reports spoke not so much to a concern about the condition of national or even state (provincial) level institutions in Australia, but of local-level failure everywhere.

Why this focus on local institutions? Why was the Australian museum report so concerned with the “country districts”15? This article seeks to answer these questions by examining the wider scope of Carnegie philanthropy, and the ideas, politics and personalities that shaped Carnegie interests in cultural institutions throughout the territories of what Andrew Carnegie referred to as “the English-speaking race”16. That phrase positions Carnegie philanthropy within a racial and imperial discourse that, this article argues, inflects the Australian museums report and its counterparts elsewhere in the British Empire. This discourse was more nuanced in Australia than in South Africa, for example, for reasons outlined below, but it shaped the Australian inquiry nonetheless. Analysis of racial discourse in Australian museums divides into a long-standing focus on Indigenous people as objects of museological research and display, and a late twentieth century interest in the documentation of Australia’s migration story within a rubric of cultural diversity17. The interpretation offered in this article seeks to broaden our understanding of the racial politics of Australian museums by outlining Carnegie’s concern with the educational and civic deficits of the settler population. Concerns about the progress of white settlement within
European imperial frameworks have been most substantially analysed and theorized in settler-colonial studies\(^{18}\). Drawing on this body of work, the article connects the Australian museums inquiry and its report to a wider set of ideas and initiatives promoted by Carnegie institutions that sought to bolster the perceived precarious position of white populations, notably through local-level cultural and educational programs.

The article proceeds thus: the following section briefly outlines settler-colonial theory and argues the case for its application to Carnegie cultural philanthropy. Section three discusses Carnegie philanthropy and its interest in museums, telling the story through the biographies of two key players, Andrew Carnegie himself, and S. F. Markham, a British parliamentarian and former secretary of the UK Museums Association, who conducted six Carnegie museum inquiries in the UK and the British Empire, including Australia. The article then examines the text of the Australian museum inquiry to show its particular concerns with the cultural and economic uplift of white settlers.

**Settler Colonialism and Cultural Institutions**

In brief summary, settler-colonial theory (SCT) focuses on the terms under which colonists inhabit new territories. Settler-colonialism differs from the colonization of territories for economic exploitation in its intention of establishing permanent settlement. This is achieved by simultaneously obscuring the circumstances of settlement, for example by denying the permanent presence of indigenous populations, while modelling the new society on the distant but controlling metropole\(^{19}\).

SCT departs from earlier, nationally-based imperial or colonial scholarship in identifying a pan-European outlook that links distinctive colonial empires\(^{20}\). SCT also pays close attention to the historical dynamics of colonization. Allowing for territorial and temporal differences, we see a gradual adjustment of settler-colonists’ perceptions of Indigenous peoples from absent or nomadic, to their permanent if subjugated presence, then to peoples with cultural, economic and political aspirations of their own. At the same time, settler-colonists deal with the arrival of later immigrant populations. Both processes require adjustment and reinforcement of settler-colonial cultural hegemony\(^{21}\).

This article responds to Coombes’ call for greater attention within the settler-colonial literature to trans-national studies of cultural forms and practices\(^{22}\), and contributes to the growing application of SCT to the analysis of museums and other cultural institutions\(^{23}\). This theoretical perspective is usefully applied to Australian museums at two levels. At a macro-level, SCT provides a powerful lens through which to examine a period of transition and consolidation of informal and community education in Australia, under the guidance of international experts. At a micro-level, it illuminates the museum sectors’ racialization of indigenous and immigrant populations, and, its flipside, the normalizing of the dominant settler population. The Carnegie museum inquiries show the pivotal role of museums in conserving and narrating a settler past, particularly its localized versions, while harnessing this with displays on emerging topics or
problems of social and economic life that encourage both personal agency and community solidarity. In Markham’s words, this linking of historical collections and current problems “…make[s] it obvious again to the man in the street that he himself is part of history, and that his actions can shape the destiny of this town or country” 24. In the period under scrutiny, though, new pedagogical and communication techniques were needed to attract museum audiences in danger of being lost to competing forms of cultural consumption and leisure. As Markham said:

[c]ulture must fight for its place in modern times, for unless it is willing to speak in as clear a voice as entertainments or sporting events it may become swamped by sheer neglect. 25

The timing of the Carnegie museum inquiries – conducted between 1928 and 1938 – was a period of renewed attention to the terms and conditions under which Britain related to its empire and to other nations. In the early twentieth century, concerns over Britain’s national decline – evidenced in negative perceptions of its defence capability, bureaucratic capacity, industrial power, and the physical and mental deterioration of its population – found an outlet at home in a quest for ‘national efficiency’ and abroad in imperial preference deals and the 1922 Empire Settlement Act. These trade and migration measures were infused with anxiety about class and racial stratification throughout the empire. As the British Royal Commission on the Poor Law commented in 1909:

No country, however rich, can permanently hold its own in the race of international competition, if hampered by an increasing load of this dead weight [of indigents], or can successfully perform the role of sovereignty beyond the seas, if a portion of its own fold at home are sinking below the civilization and aspirations of its subject races abroad. 26

Such anxieties were widely held amongst British policymakers and intellectuals, and found a focus in criticism of Victorian liberalism’s attachment to minimal government and the virtues of self-help. Government restraint had given rise to unchecked private wealth and pauperized the lower population strata. Responses to military failures in South Africa and the threat of what the Fabian and Poor Law commissioner Beatrice Webb termed the “highly regulated races” of Japan and Germany 27 included advocacy of a national government of businessmen (with Carnegie a nominee), to more generous support of educational and social institutions.

A similar critique emerged in the United States, with concern over ‘poor whites’ sharpening in response to changes in the status of the black population 28. In both countries, new techniques of social inquiry and social analysis became increasingly important in identifying problems of liberal governance, and the intervention of new philanthropic and professional bodies a key strategy in remedying these problems.
Andrew Carnegie serves as an emblematic figure in sponsoring this fusion of liberalism with emerging forms of expert governance. The following section traces this development through his philanthropy.

**Carnegie and his Philanthropy**

The life story of Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) has been well documented. A picture of a complex individual emerges: a poor, morally upright Scottish immigrant to the United States who amassed vast financial resources during his life by deftly combining entrepreneurial risk and crony capitalism, and who was determined to endow communities from profits derived by driving his workers’ wages down. Carnegie funded a wide range of philanthropic activities that promoted his views on personal and social development, civic engagement, democracy, and international relations. Carnegie’s early philanthropy was strongly influenced by a community self-help ethos that was activated through cultural and civic institutions:

...the best means of benefitting the community is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise – free libraries, parks, and means of recreation, by which men are helped in body and mind; works of art, certain to give pleasure and improve the public taste; and public institutions of various kinds which will improve the general condition of the people.

Carnegie’s good works began with the funding of a public library in his birthplace of Dunfermline, Scotland, in 1880, and proceeded modestly at first, focused on the provision of public libraries and church organs. The sale of his steel business to J P Morgan in 1901, made him the richest person on the planet, presenting the 66-year old Carnegie with the practical challenge of living up to his creed that “a man who dies thus rich dies disgraced.”

The mix of self-help and paternalism that underpinned his philanthropy was seen most clearly in the Carnegie library program, which granted capital funds on the condition that the local community provided the bookstock and recurrent costs. For all the talk of citizens being the joint proprietors of Carnegie libraries, there was no clear break with the moral economy of nineteenth-century charity. Carnegie argued that a town that wouldn’t agree to his conditions probably didn’t deserve a library. In the face of such sentiment, the scheme was not universally popular. Radical critics pointed to the ameliorative politics that underpinned such gift-giving. US labor leader Eugene Debs urged refusal of the grants, saying there would be libraries “in glorious abundance when capitalism is abolished and workingmen are no longer robbed by the philanthropic pirates of the Carnegie class.”

Carnegie applied business principles to his philanthropy, setting up a series of corporate trusts and systematizing grant administration. However, administrative costs and the distorting effect of the Carnegie scheme on municipal budgets led Carnegie advisors to establish an inquiry into the scheme in 1914. The process and outcomes of this inquiry had a profound influence on
the future of Carnegie philanthropy. First, the inquiry pioneered what became a basic methodology for guiding Carnegie subventions in both established and new fields. In the interwar years, dozens of inquiries were commissioned by CCNY and its UK counterpart the Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT), which was established in 1913. Second, the inquiry recommended a fundamental change in welfare strategy, involving a shift of focus from funding individual institutions, to cultivating professional knowledge and system-level cooperation. This move chimed with the embrace of expert rationality that was a hallmark of progressivist thought in the Western world. It also opened the door to new forms of knowledge that added biological and sociological determinants to moral judgments of deserving and undeserving. At the extreme, the work of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, a research institute established in 1902, extended far into the ethical darkness of eugenics and racial science.

While Carnegie gradually withdrew from direct oversight of his philanthropic enterprise, the various trusts he established pursued the major themes of his political and social analysis. One consistent strand in his thinking, particularly important for our purposes here, were his views on the English-speaking ‘race’. Carnegie attributed the dominance of white colonists in the Western world to innate gifts of intellect, entrepreneurship and political organization. One statement of his views is contained in a lengthy pamphlet he wrote in 1896 on the occasion of a dispute between Britain and the United States over the former’s annexation of a portion of Venezuela:

“The English-speaking race is the ‘boss’ race of the world. It can acquire, can colonise, can rule...It is a root passion, some of us think a prerogative, of our race to acquire territory...The management of the land acquired by our race has been best for the higher interests of humanity. It is an evolution, the fittest driving out the least fit, the best supplanting the inferior...It was right and proper that the nomadic Indian should give place to the settled husbandman in the prairies of the East; it is also well that the Maori should fade away, and give place to the intelligent, industrious citizen, a member of our race.

Carnegie promoted the unity of the United States and the British Empire as a “great federation of the race”. However, his views on race were not monolithic, evidenced by his interest in the potential of the “negro” in the United States and his support for black American educational institutions such as the Tuskegee Institute. Carnegie observed the progress of black Americans “from slavery to citizenship” in post-bellum America, arguing that a black smallholder “may be trusted to develop in due time into the likeness of his white neighbor and draw his race upward after him.” However, Carnegie noted, black Americans were outstripping sectors of the white population on a range of social indicators. While Carnegie recognized the appreciating “economic value” of black America, this progress threw into sharp relief the problem of the “poor whites”, particularly rural populations, with their “contempt for honest labor”, and lack of moral discipline and civic ambition. If whites were to serve as models for black development, investment in the intellectual, moral and economic formation of whites was essential.
The problematizing of ‘poor whites’ was shaped by the influence of Darwinian, Spencerian and Mendelian thought on social analysis from the late nineteenth century. Carnegie cultivated a friendship with the English philosopher Herbert Spencer, his “intellectual hero”44, who was a dominant figure in late nineteenth century social thought, especially through his adaptation of Darwinian evolutionary theory to social progress45. The socio-biological turn in the early twentieth century, especially the ‘rediscovery’ of Mendelian genetics, lent scientific authority to concerns over heritability, encouraging the conflation of social and scientific biases around concepts such as laziness46. The concept of national efficiency rested heavily on eugenic principles. These ranged from ‘positive’ measures for managing populations centering on educational programs, public health initiatives and migration controls, through to programs that sought to prevent the reproduction of population groups considered to be unfit or pathogenic47.

Carnegie’s concern with an English-speaking polity was manifest in the establishment of a large endowment to fund research in the British dominions. The lines of international cooperation and knowledge transfer within this polity were established through a wide-ranging series of Carnegie-sponsored inquiries, visiting fellowships and travel bursaries, and the loan and exchange of cultural collections48. The proliferation of surveys and inquiries had antecedents in both form and subject, from the statistical movement of the early Victorian era, through to the qualitative social surveys of Mayhew and Booth in the UK, Frederic Le Play’s study of household economies in France, the family visits by Chicago Settlement House staff, the family studies tradition of the US in the 1920s, and more. This form of empirical sociology grew so popular that by 1930 the Russell Sage Foundation (established in 1907 by a US railroad magnate) had published a bibliography of social surveys49.

The framing of the ‘poor white problem’ in the US, which Rafter calls an unselfconscious expression of white superiority and an idealization of rural and small town life50, provided a template for studies elsewhere. The best known example is a five-volume Carnegie-funded study of poor whites in South Africa51. While CCNY saw strong parallels between the US and South Africa, the focus on small towns and rural settlement was a lens through which CCNY also viewed other settler polities in the British Empire. This was an especially pertinent theme in the Carnegie inquiries into museums.

Sydney Frank Markham and the Carnegie Museum Inquiries

In contrast to the extensive literature on Carnegie libraries, the philanthropy’s interest in museums has been explored by only a few writers52. Andrew Carnegie’s major investment in museum building was the Pittsburgh Museum of Natural History, part of a larger library, music and gallery complex which opened in 1895. Initially intended to develop collections representative of the Appalachian region, the museum quickly expanded to include Egyptology and paleontology. The Pittsburgh complex was exceptional in several ways – the component institutions were independent, professionally staffed and well-
resourced. In the Carnegie trusts’ assessment, this was generally the case with the best of the large museums and libraries funded by higher governments or through private means\textsuperscript{53}. Local institutions, however, were everywhere in dire need of assistance. The Carnegie trusts were concerned to fuse municipal and civic contributions to these institutions with systematic cooperation and professional oversight, effected by the establishment of county or provincial networks through which expertise, collections and displays could circulate. Professionalisation also meant establishing separate institutional identities. The museum inquiry reports were consistently critical of the placement of local museums within libraries, a trend that was driven by financial stringency, the more advanced professional organization of libraries, and statutory powers \textsuperscript{54}. Museum collection and knowledge management procedures suffered in this arrangement. It also hindered the evolution of a distinctive museum pedagogy, in which conventional “Linnean classificatory displays” were being rejected as “too learned, too severe”\textsuperscript{55}, and replaced by more naturalistic exhibits, locally relevant knowledge and narrative approaches that appealed to “poor classroom learners”\textsuperscript{56}.

The outlook of the museum inquiries’ reports broadly aligned with CCNYs general educational and cultural strategy, particularly the desire to balance expert direction and the democratic ‘education for life’ advocated by progressive educators such as John Dewey \textsuperscript{57}. The consistency and force of the ideas in the inquiry reports can be attributed to the involvement of one person in six of the inquiries. This was Sydney Frank Markham (1897-1975), whose role in Carnegie philanthropy and museum history has yet to be detailed.

Markham’s career included military service in the Indian and British armies (where he reached the rank of major), secretary of the Museums Association (funded by CCNY), a freelance author of books on socialism \textsuperscript{58} and climate and national development\textsuperscript{59}, and a member of the UK parliament representing three political groupings (Labour 1929-1931, Nationalist 1935-1945, Conservative 1951-1964). While a political chameleon, Markham’s parliamentary contributions show a consistent interest in museums, including advocacy of an annual parliamentary debate on museums and galleries\textsuperscript{60}. Parliament gave him a platform for his views on the professionalization and funding of museums and their use in school education, points that he expounded in the Carnegie-funded museum reports.

Markham’s association with the Carnegie sponsored inquiries came through CTUK’s agreement in 1926 to fund a review of British museums, a sequel to several CTUK-sponsored inquiries and national conferences on public libraries. The museum inquiry focused on smaller museums, and was conducted concurrently with a Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries. Markham was appointed to assist the inquiry’s head, H A Miers, a mineralogist and university administrator with long involvement in the UK museum scene\textsuperscript{61}. The report\textsuperscript{62} was the first of five such collaborations. The Carnegie inquiry was overshadowed by the Royal Commission (on which Miers also served), but the two found agreement in recommending more funding, better institutional coordination, and more active public engagement with museums\textsuperscript{63}. More
pertinently, the inquiry signalled Carnegie philanthropy’s special interest in the local museum sector.

Markham clearly had a liking for this line of work. Between 1928 and 1934 he served as secretary to the steering committee overseeing the New Survey of London Life and Labour (NSL)\(^6^4\). This London School of Economics (LSE)-sponsored project, modeled on Charles Booth’s famous 1889 inquiry, was one of a number of surveys of working class households conducted during the interwar years. Part funded by CTUK, NSL painted a more positive picture of London life than Booth’s, finding comparatively higher incomes, shorter working hours, and improved health and literacy. NSL noted with approval a new concern with ‘self-culture’ amongst the London working class, acquired through visits to libraries and museums, adult education and travel. This evidence of “new civilization” encouraged the survey’s patrons who were keen to discern signs of recovery from a war that took, in the words of LSE co-founder, Beatrice Webb, “the best of the white race”\(^6^5\).

Markham’s views on ‘civilization’, particularly in colonial situations, were framed in similar terms. These views are best discerned in his major written work *Climate and the Energy of Nations*, published in 1942. Markham began researching this topic in the early 1930s, coinciding with the Carnegie-funded museum inquiries. In response to the economic troubles besetting the UK and other nations, Markham “decided to study the positive factors in building up a great civilization, or the causes of national greatness”. He records reading a long list of books – from the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to *Mein Kampf* - on the broad topic of nation and race. None of these, he observed, provided an explanation of the climatic, health and energy factors – the “raw essentials of civilization” - that underpinned national greatness\(^6^6\).

The work is synthetic rather than original, but this makes it all the more valuable as an indicator of the intellectual influences on Markham around the period of the museum inquiries. Most relevant for our purposes is a chapter on “the poor whites”, connecting Markham directly to Carnegie’s interest in this topic. Echoing the concerns of others about white settlement in warm climates, Markham observes:

> ...the first generation appears to maintain its energy practically unimpaired, but those that follow show a gradual deterioration, a social and economic retrogression, until...the white man becomes not only lazy, but also ‘something considerably lower than a decent native’.\(^6^7\)

Climate was not the sole cause of degeneracy. Markham approvingly cited G M Huggins, then Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, who, in a 1934 speech in Westminster, attributed the ‘poor white’ problem to the “intimate contact of two civilizations”, and advocated a survey of all British Empire possessions with a view to establishing separate racial enclaves\(^6^8\). Carnegie, Markham noted, was a step ahead here, marshalling its “almost limitless funds” and “some of the finest brains in South Africa and America” to conduct the 1928 South African inquiry. The chapter quotes from the inquiry’s report at length, supplementing it with
Markham’s own view on climate as an additional – perhaps the supreme - factor in the degeneracy of white settlers. The chapter concludes by quoting a recommendation from the 1928 Carnegie South Africa report “that seems to summarise the cause and cure at once: ‘[i]t should be the aim of education to help people to control their immediate environment’. That is precisely my view” 69.

Such views were well received in Australia, although during the 1920s scientific and policy interests in the relationship of climate and biology, focussed on northern Australia, were giving way to more nuanced interests in identifying the environmental and social conditions that would encourage the settler population to thrive anywhere70. For CCNY, social and educational institutions were a vital component. Australia was particularly deficient in this regard, a condition that required systematic review and support71.

The Australian Museums and Galleries Inquiry

Against this backdrop, the circumstances in which the Australian museums inquiry was commissioned were mundane. When Markham, now secretary of the Museums Association, looked to update the Association’s 1911 directory of museums, he approached CCNY for funds to revise the section on “Indian and Colonial” museums72. CCNY did much better than this. Drawing on the substantial funds in its British and Dominions (later Commonwealth) fund73, CCNY funded a general survey of museums in the British dominions. With $US30,000 to spend, Miers and Markham toured Canada, Africa, the West Indies and the Mediterranean. Miers became ill and ceased his involvement, and Markham travelled to Australia and New Zealand, reviewing several museums in Britain’s south-east Asian colonies en route.

Figures within Australia also pressed CCNY to fund reviews into museums and libraries, with ACER’s chairman and former education bureaucrat Frank Tate the most influential voice. Tate had a stronger interest in the library inquiry, writing that inquiry report’s forward74, but the momentum of the British Empire museum reviews, and politics surrounding the selection of the library commissioners75, can be suggested as two reasons why the museum inquiry was first underway.

The Australian museum inquiry departed from earlier practice by including local co-authors in Australia and New Zealand to work with Markham. Co-author of the Australian report was H C Richards, whose biography – he was a mineralogist and academic – mirrored H A Miers76. The rhetorical similarity of the Australian report and its counterparts from other parts of the British Empire, notably Canada, suggests that Markham played a major role in the drafting of each.

The inquiry was undertaken at a pivotal moment in Australian cultural life. A period of museum expansion in the early twentieth century had been interrupted by the First World War, and
However, in terms that echoed the New Survey of London, the report observed a revival of interest by the late 1920s:

a new generation (particularly on the science side) was beginning to make its influence felt, and that variable ally of the museum – the Press – was beginning to realize that the public also was interested in science and art.  

The “museum movement”, though, required support and guidance, particularly in smaller towns, where “the lack of competent and frequent curatorial work is a severe handicap to...progress”.

Only the largest Australian museums were properly equipped, staffed and financed, the report’s authors observed, while bemoaning that skilled tradesmen earned more than some museum directors and curators. In smaller towns, most museums were over-crowded, their collections badly selected and presented. Only a handful of museums provided education services to schools, and museums had not taken up the challenge of adult education in post-war era. Mineralogical and zoological collections dominated, said the report. As in the other Carnegie museum reports, the authors criticized the lack of displays on health and agriculture. Another gap was the lack of attention to history. The report identified only three institutions exclusively devoted to “historical exhibits” - an eccentric list, comprising the Australian War Memorial and Parliament House in Canberra and Vaucluse House, former home of prominent colonist W C Wentworth in Sydney. Consistent with calls in the reports on Canadian and South African museums, the Australian report urged greater attention to early settlement, particularly through reproductions of early dwellings, period rooms and domestic interiors, which was “one of the most notable gaps in the whole of the existing museum collections”. Most museums, though, had historical collections relating to the town in which they are situated, often museologically positioned as “bygones”. The challenge for local museums was to re-organise these collections in compelling displays that linked historical narratives of local settlement, with “topical exhibits” in areas such as agriculture, industry and health.

Similarly, art galleries played an important role in the cultivation of domestic taste and aesthetics. Art galleries fared somewhat better than museums in the Australian inquiry, perhaps because neither member of the inquiry team was an art specialist. However, as with the other Carnegie museum inquiries, the authors focussed on the didactic possibilities of art. In some Australian galleries “the public are left to appreciate art unhindered by any relevant facts”. However, it was not until Markham’s 1938 review of museums and galleries of...
the British Isles – which in many ways served as a summary of the Carnegie museum inquiries – that his views on art crystallised:

Art galleries must endeavor to educate our democracy not only in pictorial art and in pottery, but also in the selection of its wall-papers, radio sets, table-cloths and furniture.\textsuperscript{82}

The focus on housing and domesticity in local museum displays resonated with a wider concern of Carnegie philanthropy with the home as a site of physical and moral danger. The home, argues Magubane, was perceived as the locus of backwardness in Carnegie’s wider British Empire and Dominions program \textsuperscript{83}. Thus, the study of poor whites in South Africa, which offers the clearest picture of this concern with the physical and moral degeneracy of settler populations, has extensive descriptions of the poor living conditions of isolated communities and homesteaders. In Magubane’s uncompromising analysis

\text{[e]ncapsulated here is one of the unspoken but nevertheless critical, assumptions that motivates the racialization of class difference – namely, that if whiteness is to coexist with class stratification and racial diversity, one ideal has to remain sacrosanct, that of the innate improvability of persons called white...What we see in the Carnegie Commission is an exercise in rehabilitating incipient white citizens and preparing them for participation in social and civic life}.\textsuperscript{84}

Segregated education was, according to Magubane, a key element of Carnegie social programs, as was discussion of whether liberal education was suitable for blacks. Markham was more equivocal on this point, commenting adversely on the exclusion or conditional entry of blacks to some South African museums, while setting out the specific educational benefits that the black population could gain from museum visits\textsuperscript{85}. Similar views on the tutelary role of museums for subject populations are expressed in the reports on Ceylon, British Malay and West Indies, and India\textsuperscript{86}. One major difference between the Carnegie British Empire museum inquiry reports is the absence of explicit discussion of subject populations in those countries – Australia, New Zealand and Canada – where those populations were not numerically dominant. This did not mean that racial politics were absent from the Australian inquiry. Quite the reverse. Markham shared a commonly held view of Australia and New Zealand as social laboratories:

\text{...peopled almost exclusively by Anglo-Saxon stock – men who brought with them all the traditions of self-government and democracy, but without the aristocratic tinge such as pervades England or the alien elements of the United States}.\textsuperscript{87}

Despite this promising lineage, the Carnegie museum inquiry largely failed to invigorate the ‘museum movement’ in Australia. The inquiry did not have the impact on the museums sector that the Australian library inquiry exerted in its sphere. The latter is credited with direct influence on the inception of the free library movement in Australia, in turn boosting municipal investment in
libraries. The museums inquiry did succeed in channeling a modest amount of Carnegie funds into the circulation of travelling exhibitions, museum conferences, and tours of US museums by senior Australian staff. These outcomes sat comfortably within the overall aims of Carnegie cultural philanthropy, and should be assessed in that light. However, Markham and Richard’s ambitions for local museums were scarcely realized. Forty years later, another national inquiry into Australian museums, this time commissioned by the Australian government, was again predicting:

[t]he nature of Australian history and its relatively long democratic tradition suggests that folk museums might eventually occupy a role as important as that occupied by natural history in the nineteenth century.

The 1975 Pigott inquiry is widely considered to be a moment of change in Australian museums history, particularly in its acknowledgement of Indigenous cultural self-determination. However, are there undetected echoes of Markham and Richards in the 1975 report’s focus on local history and its demotic references to ‘folk’ museums? That is a question for a separate study.

**Conclusion**

This article has argued for a closer reading of the Carnegie Australia museums and art galleries inquiry of 1933 within the contexts of its companion museum inquiries throughout the British Dominions, and the wider project of Carnegie cultural and social programs. The article has argued that settler-colonial theory plays a useful role in explaining the Australian and its companion inquiries’ focus on local museums and their collections, the significance of which has been overlooked by other commentators. SCT, it has been argued, illuminates a preoccupation of Carnegie’s social and cultural programs in the British dominions with the uplift of settler populations. The class, race and spatial dimensions of these concerns are clear from a wider reading of the museum inquiry’s background, even if expression is nuanced in the Australian report. However, despite the relevance of SCT to the analysis of cultural policy and cultural institutions, the SCT literature in this area is relatively thin. This article has sought to contribute a new empirical study to that corpus, while also aiming to introduce SCT perspectives to the study of museum history. In particular, the article deploys SCT to urge renewed attention to a period in Australian museum history when the existing literature suggests that nothing much happened. The standard narrative holds that the major colonial museums and galleries were established by the end of the early twentieth century, and, save for the Australian Institute of Anatomy (1927) and planning for the Australian War Memorial (1942), there were no major institutional developments. While Markham and Richards’ report points to the establishment of new regional art galleries in the face of severe financial constraints, an exclusive focus on institution building can divert attention from the underlying reforms the report advocated. In this light, the article has drawn attention Markham and Richards’ arguments for fusing local history with contemporary social and economic concerns of local communities to produce, as Markham later summarized, centres that are “vitally
alert to the requirements of the time” and “to which all inhabitants can turn for cultural guidance”91.

While an analysis of the Carnegie inquiry into Australian libraries is beyond the scope of this article, the analytical framework offered here enables us to more clearly understand links between Carnegie interests in museums and libraries, and the ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ education sectors within a wider political and pedagogical project. In covering this ground, the article brings to attention a significant but under-researched episode in Australian and international cultural and educational politics.

7 Daryl Lindsay, Chairman, Report of the National Art Gallery Committee of Inquiry (Canberra: Department of Prime Minister, 1966); Peter Pigott, Chairman, Museums in Australia: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975).
8 Markham and Richards, Museums and Art Galleries of Australia: 13, 61.
9 Ibid. 21, 22
10 Ibid. 5.
11 Ibid. 2.
12 Miers and Markham, Museums of Canada.
13 Chris Healy, From the Ruins of Colonialism – History as Social Memory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
Markham and Richards, *Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*, 4.


Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*.


Ibid., 113.


The best critical biography is Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie*.


Ibid., 336.


Ibid., 453.

Andrew Carnegie, *The Negro in America – An Address Delivered before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh, 16 October 1907* (Committee of Twelve for the Advancement of the Interests of the Negro Race, Cheyney PA, 1907).

Ibid., 14.

Ibid., 20.

Ibid., 9.


50 Rafter, *White Trash*.
54 Miers, *Public Museums of the British Isles*.
56 Ibid., 113.
60 British Parliament 1938: *Hansard - House of Commons Debates* 19 July 1938
62 Miers, *Public Museums of the British Isles*. Markham is not credited with authorship.
63 Sheila Watson and Andrew Sawyer, ‘National Museums in Britain’, *Conference on Building National Museums 1750-2010*, University of Bologna, 30 March-1 April 2011
http://www.eunamus.eu/bologna-reports/britain.pdf; Lewis, *For Instruction and Recreation*.
66 Markham, *Climate and the Energy of Nations*, ix.
67 Ibid., 134-5.
68 Ibid., 135.
69 Ibid., 141.
70 Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*.
71 White, ‘Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia’.
72 Lewis, *For Instruction and Recreation*.
75 White, ‘Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia’.
77 Markham and Richards, *Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*, 7.
78 Ibid., 8.
79 Ibid., 4.
80 Ibid., 46. Miers and Markham, *Museums of Canada*, 50, sets out an “ideal sequence” of displays for a local museum.
81 Markham and Richards, *Museums and Art Galleries of Australia*, 33.
84 Ibid., 705.
85 Miers and Markham, *Museums and Art Galleries of British Africa*.
86 Miers and Markham, *Museums of Ceylon, British Malaya, the West Indies*; Markham and Hargreaves, *Museums of India*.
87 Markham, *A History of Socialism*, 268.
89 White, ‘Carnegie Philanthropy in Australia’.