

DELIVERING DISCOVERY

*Visualising Infrastructures and Labour
in Digitised Library Collections*

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I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which this work was produced—the Wangal people, upon whose land I live, and the Gadigal people, upon whose land I study and work. I pay my respects to Elders past, present, and future, as the traditional custodians of knowledge for this land that was never ceded.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Timothy Busuttil, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Masters by Research (Design), in the School of Design, Architecture, and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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FORMAT OF THESIS

This thesis includes creative work. It is comprised of both *Delivering Discovery*, a prototype web interface available at www.deliveringdiscovery.com, and this exegesis.

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ABSTRACT

In undertaking digitisation projects, libraries create large digitised collections that present new opportunities for access and display. For designers and developers, these growing collections drive the development of generous interfaces that reflect the depth and richness of digitised library collections. At the same time, many scholars, in particular from digital humanities, media theory, and information science and design backgrounds, are engaged in discussions regarding transparency—or lack thereof—in the practices, labour, and decisions that factor into the creation of these digitised library collections. Every digitised collection is built on a complex ecosystem of hardware, software, and specialist knowledge. While generous interfaces shed new light on digitised collections, their generosity is rarely extended to the administrative structural metadata which contain evidence of this network of infrastructure and labour.

This project integrates the frameworks of generosity and transparency, creating a productive intersection where media-rich, browsable representations are combined with greater visibility of the infrastructures and labour which construct and maintain our digitised library collections. To achieve this integration, this project uses a Research through Design methodology to develop an interface that materialises a response to calls for transparency in a digitised library collection interface. It deploys diagramming and prototyping as key methods in an iterative design process which culminates in *Delivering Discovery*, a prototype web interface for a subset of the State Library of New South Wales' David Scott Mitchell collection. The interface draws on principles of generous interface design and applies them to the administrative and structural metadata embedded in the collection to create a more transparent interface that affords users a view of the infrastructures and labour which construct the collection. *Delivering Discovery* represents one approach to the integration of generosity and transparency in a digitised library collection interface. It is a propositional prototype that contributes to the ongoing exploration of this intersection, and opens the door to further research on the possible uses of administrative and structural metadata in digitised library collections.

