THE WAY

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YEAR 12 HISTORY EXTENSION VISIT THE STATE LIBRARY

On Tuesday 17 November, our twelve students studying Year 12 History Extension students visited the State Library of New South Wales for a special program designed to help them prepare for their Major Projects.

History Extension is a one-unit course for students who wish to challenge themselves beyond the Modern and Ancient History courses. As part of the course, students complete a 2,500-word Major Project in which they investigate and write an essay about a historiographical debate, controversy or issue related to the construction of history.

The day began with a keynote Q&A with Professor Anna Clark from the University of Sydney. Professor Clark discussed her experiences as a historian and author, exploring how history is researched, written and debated. She encouraged students to think critically about differing interpretations of the past and emphasised the importance of evidence, research and developing their own informed perspectives.

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This was followed by a range of practical presentations focused on the Major Project itself. Students received advice on selecting and refining a topic, constructing an effective inquiry question, conducting research and managing their time throughout the year. Presenters emphasised the importance of developing a clear argument, engaging with different historical interpretations and finding a personal voice rather than simply repeating the opinions of others.

Students then heard from a panel of high-achieving former History Extension students who shared their experiences of completing the project. They offered practical suggestions on setting realistic goals, beginning the writing process early and maintaining a balance between research and writing. The panel also discussed the increasing use of artificial intelligence in education, stressing that while AI can be a useful tool, it cannot replace the originality, critical thinking and personal voice that are central to a successful History Extension project.

In the afternoon, students toured the State Library's exhibitions, which showcased a range of significant historical collections. Among the highlights were a 4,000-year-old cuneiform tablet, one of the earliest books printed in Australia, Indigenous artworks and a series of paintings depicting key moments in Australian history. Students also explored some of the debates that surround

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historical collections and museums, including questions about the representation of Indigenous peoples and whether artefacts acquired from overseas should be returned to their countries of origin. These discussions provided a practical example of the way history continues to be interpreted, contested and re-evaluated.

The program concluded with an interactive research workshop led by State Library staff, where students learned how to use the Library's catalogues, databases and digital resources to locate quality academic sources for their projects.

Students enjoyed the day and came away feeling more prepared and confident as they begin the process of researching and writing their Major Projects.

Mr Samuel Mills
ICT Leader, Year Advisor & History Teacher

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