

PISG Member Awarded 2024 Fellowship with the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia

By Dr. Donald Patrick Albert

PISG Board of Directors

On December 7, 2023, I received notification of a successful application for a 2024 Royal Geographical Society of South Australia (RGSSA) Library Fellowship. The extract below outlines the history, purpose, and expectations of this award. The RGSSA Library Research Fellowship program was created in 2023, using funds from the Dorothy Pyatt bequest, to give scholars from around the world an opportunity to pursue their work in proximity to a distinguished collection of primary sources.

The RGSSA Library contains over 25,000 items and is one of the most significant collections of rare geographical books and manuscripts in Australia. Fellowships will contribute to a greater public and scholarly understanding or knowledge of the society's collections; promote scholarly commentary on geographical issues which informs and engages contemporary discourse; and enhance the national and international reputation of the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia as an institution of scholarly significance.

During this fellowship, I will compare Henry E. Maude's "In search of a home: From Mutiny to Pitcairn Island (1789-1790)" with Brian N. Hooker's, "Down with Bligh, Hurrah for Tahiti." For context, Maude's article appeared in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (67:2, 104-131). He claimed the HMAV *Bounty* sailed west from Tahiti (September 1879) before curving southeast to Pitcairn Island (Figure 1). While in Hooker's *Mercator's World* (6:5, 38-43) article, the *Bounty* either sailed to the northeast to the Marquesas Islands or southeast to nonexistent islands charted as "Spanish discoveries" before settling on Pitcairn Island (January 1790).

The rare books and manuscripts located at the RGS-SA Library will be instrumental in checking the facts and uncovering additional supporting evidence to

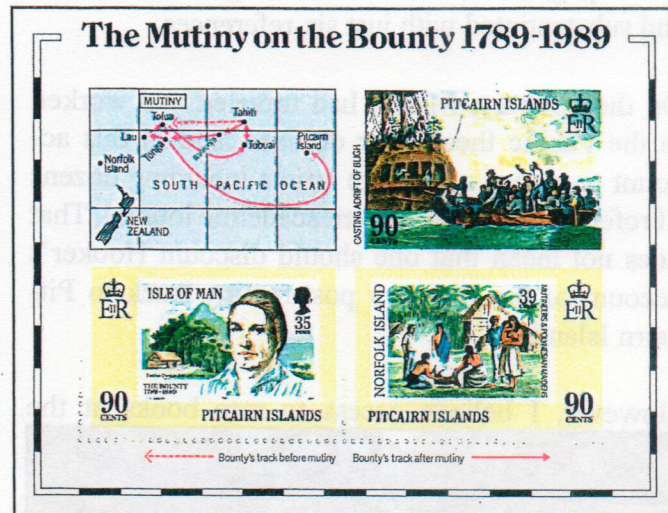


Figure 1

Mutiny on the Bounty Bicentenary issue 1989, Scott #331 s/s with 331A-C including label (map, top left) and dashed border. Clive Abbott, designer, joint issue with Pitcairn Island, Isle of Man, and Norfolk Island. Source: Vernon Kisling's Pitcairn Islands Postal History and Stamps, 1790-2015.

substantiate the post-mutiny track of the *Bounty*. Scholars have cited Maude's article 33 times since 1958 but have yet to cite Hooker's work since 2001 (see Google Scholar). Both authors made claims about what books were available aboard the *Bounty* that Fletcher Christian had access to. For example, Maude mentioned a medical compendium from the *Bounty* that later turned up along the *Bounty*'s post-mutiny route.

The RGSSA has numerous rare books including those from Barrow, Beaglehole, Beechey, Blecher, Bligh, Cook, Brodie, Hawkesworth, Moerenhout, Shillibeer, and others that informed the studies of Maude and Hooker. Finding more about Christian's direct access to William Bligh's library aboard the *Bounty* might allow a determination on whether Maude or Hooker better advances knowledge of *Bounty*'s post-mutiny track.

Another caution for contemporary scholars involves comparing the rigor of dissimilar sources (*i.e.*, jour-

nal versus magazine). While Maude and Hooker both offer points worthy of consideration, it seems a disservice for a magazine (*Mercator's World*) to sensationalize an alternative view in a short article of six pages, half devoted to images and figures, and substantiated with just six references.

On the contrary, Maude had traveled and worked in the Pacific theater for decades, and in this account produced a 30-page article including dozens of references in a prominent academic journal. That does not mean that one should discount Hooker's account of the *Bounty's* post-mutiny track to Pitcairn Island.

However, I believe access to rare books at the

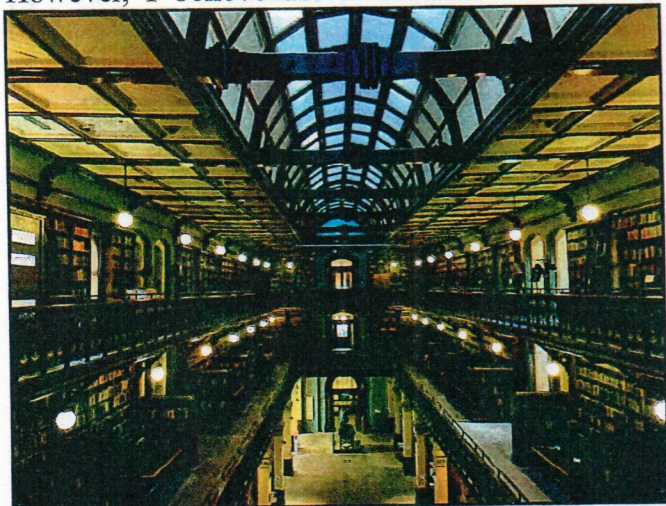


Figure 2

RGSSA Library, Adelaide, South Australia.

Photo Credit: RGSSA Library.

<https://rgssa.org.au/library/library-overview>.

RGSSA Library could help resolve the disparity between the authors' (Maude and Hooker) conclusions. While historians will never know the complete trajectory of the *Bounty* on leaving Tahiti on September 22, 1789, knowing which track is more plausible will reduce conflicting claims for *Bounty*/Pitcairn enthusiasts.

This RGSSA Library Fellowship would overlap with my participation at the Institute of Australian Geographers Conference planned for Adelaide, South Australia from July 1-5, at the University of Adelaide. This is an unexpected coincidence that enhances this planned visit to Australia. The start and end dates for the RGSSA Library Fellowship

have not been nailed down, but a time frame from June 15 to July 15, 2024 is a probable range. I look forward to using the rare primary and secondary sources available from the RGSSA Library (Figure 2) this summer (their winter!).

I would like to thank the Pitcairn Islands Study Group for its support and encouragement. Special thanks to Herb Ford, Director of the Pitcairn Islands Study Center, for writing a thoughtful and timely letter of recommendation to support my RGSSA application. I also appreciate Dr. Everett Parker, current PISG President and *Log* editor, for encouraging me to submit this note, thanks again. Once I get to Adelaide, I will post an appropriately stamped card to the PISG in care of Everett. In the meantime, if PISG members have any thoughts and ideas about the divergent *Bounty* tracks described earlier, I would be thrilled to receive an email: geo_dpa@shsu.edu.

Donald Patrick Albert is a Professor of Geography in the Department of Environmental and Geosciences at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. He is the founder and co-editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Applied Geospatial Research, and 2024 Fellow with the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia. Albert's publications are available free from the Pitcairn Islands Research Station at <https://shsu-ir.tdl.org/collections/3fcf9ab9-937a-4240-8bf8-68b99dc35ecf> or capture the QR code shown here..



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