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 RGSSA Library will be instrumental in checking the facts and uncovering additional supporting evidence to 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 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.

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