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Lightning talk: *Playing the Collection*

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ABSTRACT

In 2016 the South Australian Museum undertook an ambitious project to tell the story of didjeridu. Working in collaboration with Yolngu people of North East Arnhem land *Yidaki; Didjeridu and the sound of Australia* represented a new way of working for the museum. Using video, sound and select pieces from the South Australian Museum's didjeridu collection this exhibition provided a platform for Yolngu people and specifically Djalu Gurruwiwi and his family to teach visitors about the Yidaki, the Yolngu word for didjeridu.

An important component of the sound design for the exhibition was to play didjeridu from the collection. Contemporary Yidaki being actively played have a high moisture content and will often be submerged in water in order to maintain their tone. On the other hand, in order to ensure their long term preservation didjeridu stored at the South Australian Museum had been kept in stable environmental conditions and not played allowing them to reach equilibrium with their storage environment.

As a result, staff at the South Australian Museum and Artlab Australia in collaboration with Yolgnu community members developed a method to safely re hydrate seven didjeridus from the collection. This paper will discuss the methods used and results of this project.

BIOGRAPHIES

Alice Beale is the Senior Collection Manager of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum, where she has worked for the past 4 years. Prior to the South Australian Museum Alice worked as an Assistant Curator at the Western Australian Museum.

Tom Pyrzakowski is a Design Officer at the South Australian Museum. Tom studied Industrial Design with a specific interest in automation as well as the development and exploration of technical outcomes.

Renita Ryan is the Principal Conservator of Objects at Artlab Australia, where she has worked for the past 17 years. She is also a Professional member of the AICCM.