



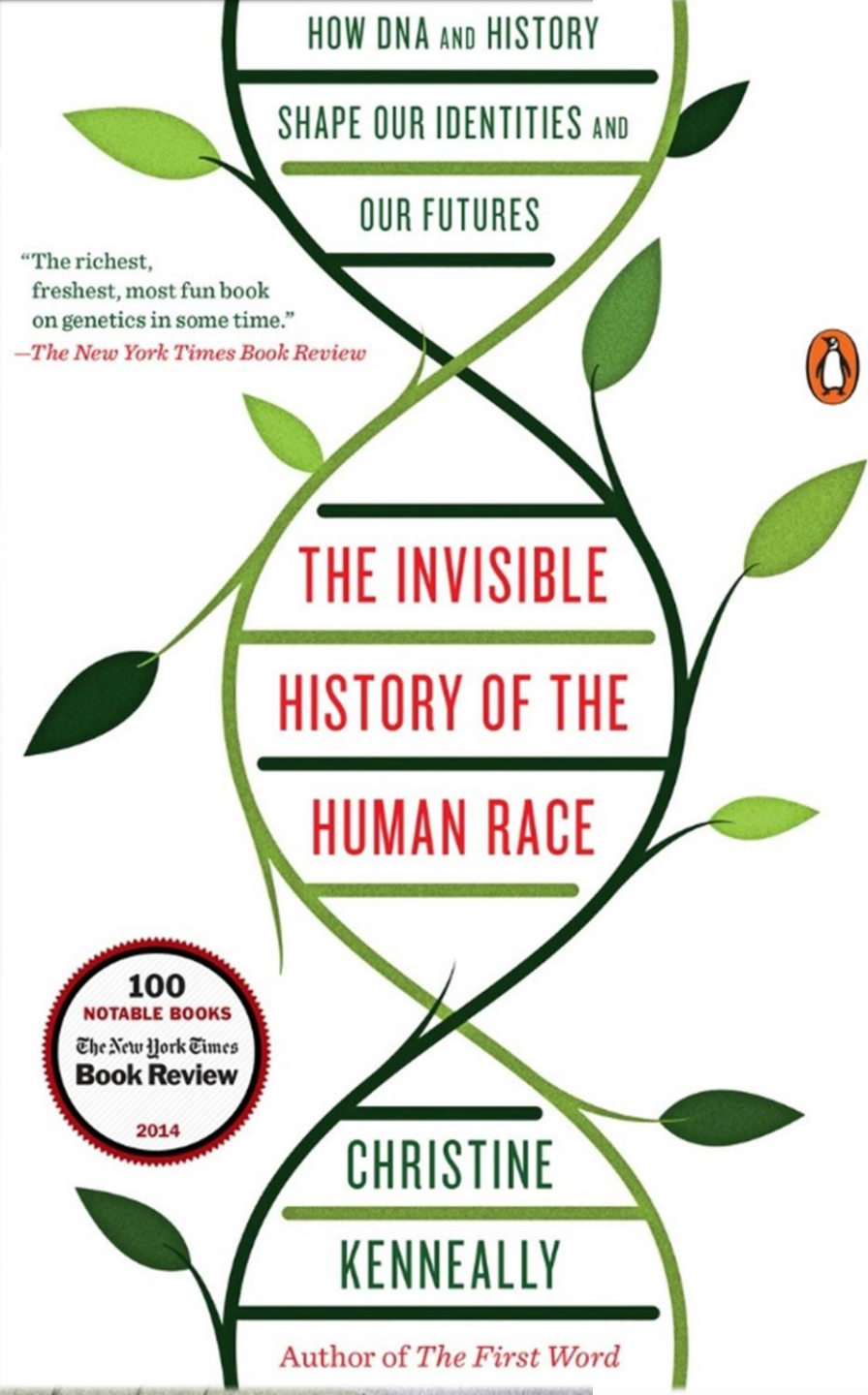
Data, the Creation of History and its Impact on Real Lives

Christine Kenneally

14th International Digital Curation Conference

5 February 2019





History and Real Lives



- How does history shape us?
- How do we know what we know?

HOW WHAT WE KNOW SHAPES WHO WE THINK WE ARE

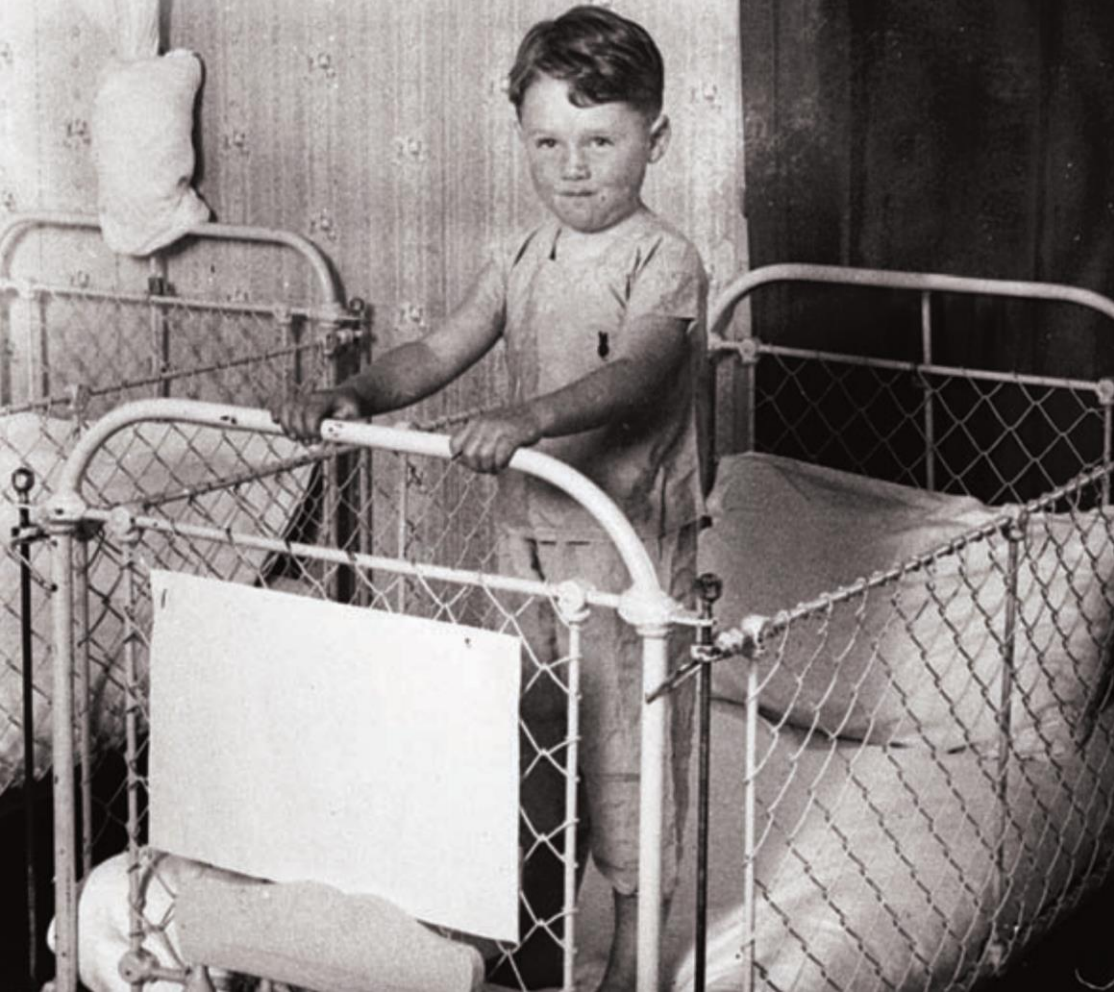


A case where even today there is an devastating absence of personal information

The Forgotten Ones

Half a million Australians lost their childhoods to institutions. Many still don't know why they were there, or who they are.

BY CHRISTINE KENNEALLY



Plight of orphans seeking information from the government

2012 International Congress on Archives
(Brisbane)

“The Forgotten Ones”

The Monthly, August 2012

“We Saw Nuns Kill Children: The Ghosts of St. Joseph’s Catholic Orphanage”

Buzzfeed News, August 2018



Case study: US, Australia

Commonalities and Differences

- Data curators
- Powerful individuals
- Justice (transitional, legal)
- Journalism, scholarship



The critical significance of data curation in a democracy

1. The very great importance of truth to individuals
2. Institutions, even in open, democratic societies, can destroy and rewrite important truths
3. Data curators are frontline guardians to the bedrock of society



The world of orphanages

- Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland, Ireland, Canada, US
- 19th century, religious, state run
- Numbers are hard to quantify
 - Australia: ½ million children in over 2,000 institutions
 - US: Over 5 million children in over 3,000 institutions
 - Numbers peaked in the 1930's, and declined from the 1960's
- By the 1980's few remained



The world of orphanages

- Significant economic and social entities
- Used as flagship institutions for charity drives and fund raising, bequests
- Recipients of governmental funding
- A source of unpaid labor
- A source of victims for predators



This world virtually disappeared

- Effectively replaced by foster care, other

HOW?

How does an entire system shaping millions of lives disappear from history?

WHY?



HOW: Forces against preservation of history

- Children are the victims
 - Lack resources to validate experience
 - Negative experience with orphanage creates distrust in other institutions
 - Disbelief in own experience
 - Disbelief by adults
- Abuse: traumatizing, stigmatizing, physically damaging, and memory impairing
- Withholding of information by institutions




Other forces against the preservation of history

- Staff, public reactions
- Creation of records
- Storage and preservation of records
- Withholding of records



Types of care-leaver records

- Birth records
- Care-leavers' case/other files (correspondence, social worker reports, other documentation)
- School reports
- Medical records
- Photographs (individual, family, group)
- Accurate historical accounts about the institutions themselves



1990's: Waking up, two different paths

- Individuals start to act
- Police interest
- People start to ask for their own records
- Activist groups form
- Beginnings of scholarship, journalism
- Beginnings of legal action

Commonalities and Differences

- Data curators
- Powerful individuals
- Justice (transitional, legal)
- Journalism

"I NEVER SAW A NUN LIFT A HAND TO A CHILD"

Byline: Sam Hemingway
Sam Hemingway

Patricia Dague of Burlington said she is mystified by the claims of people who say they were abused at the former St. Joseph's Orphanage.

US story

- Individuals start to act
- Police interest
- People start to ask for their own records
- Activist groups form
- Beginnings of scholarship, journalism
- Beginnings of legal action

Joey Barquin

Little response, highly redacted

Relatively uncritical, limited in scope, news reporting

Civil, criminal, statute of limitations

Australian story

- Individuals start to act
- Police interest
- People start to ask for their own records
- Activist groups form
- Beginnings of scholarship, journalism
- Beginnings of legal action

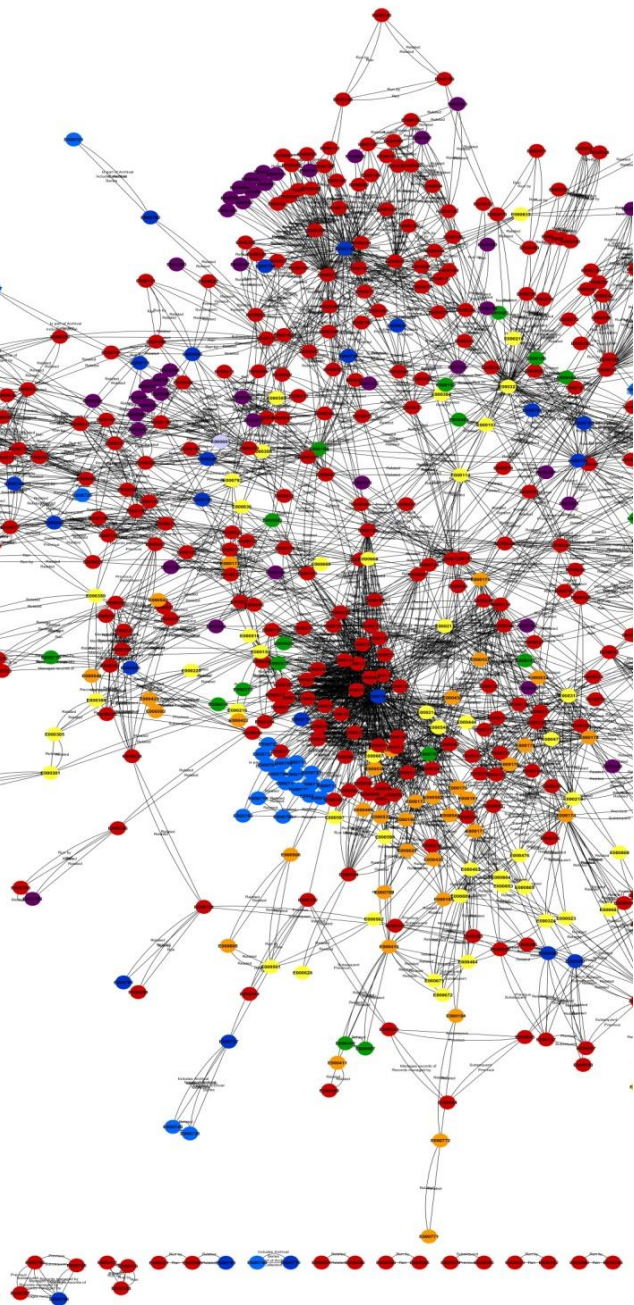
*Leonie Sheedy,
Frank Golding*

CLAN

Relatively uncritical, limited in scope, news reporting, "Orphans of the Empire"

Civil, criminal, statute of limitations, state and federal inquiries





Find and Connect

“...a national web resource...”

“...the largest non-military public history project in Australia”

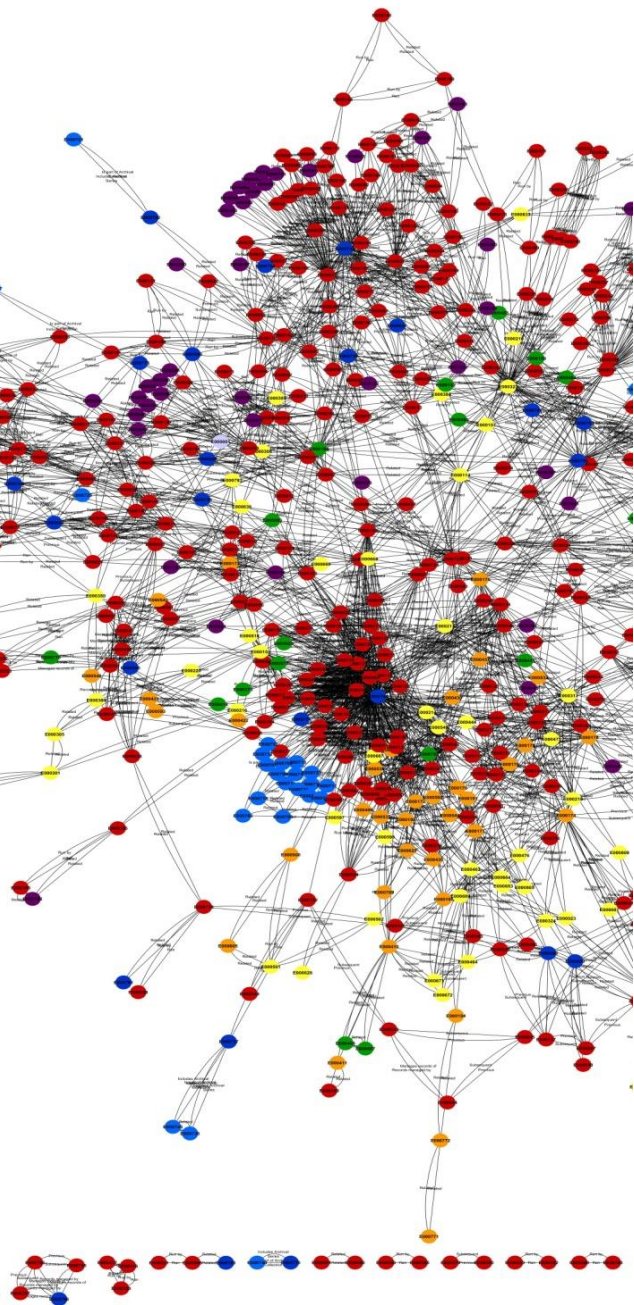
“...a major experiment in writing history in the digital domain”

“...living and responsive.”

Shurlee Swain

Historian, Emeritus Professor at Australian Catholic University

Stakeholders as Subjects: The Role of Historians in the Development of Australia's Find & Connect Web Resource, *The Public Historian*, Vol 36, Nov. 4, Nov 2014

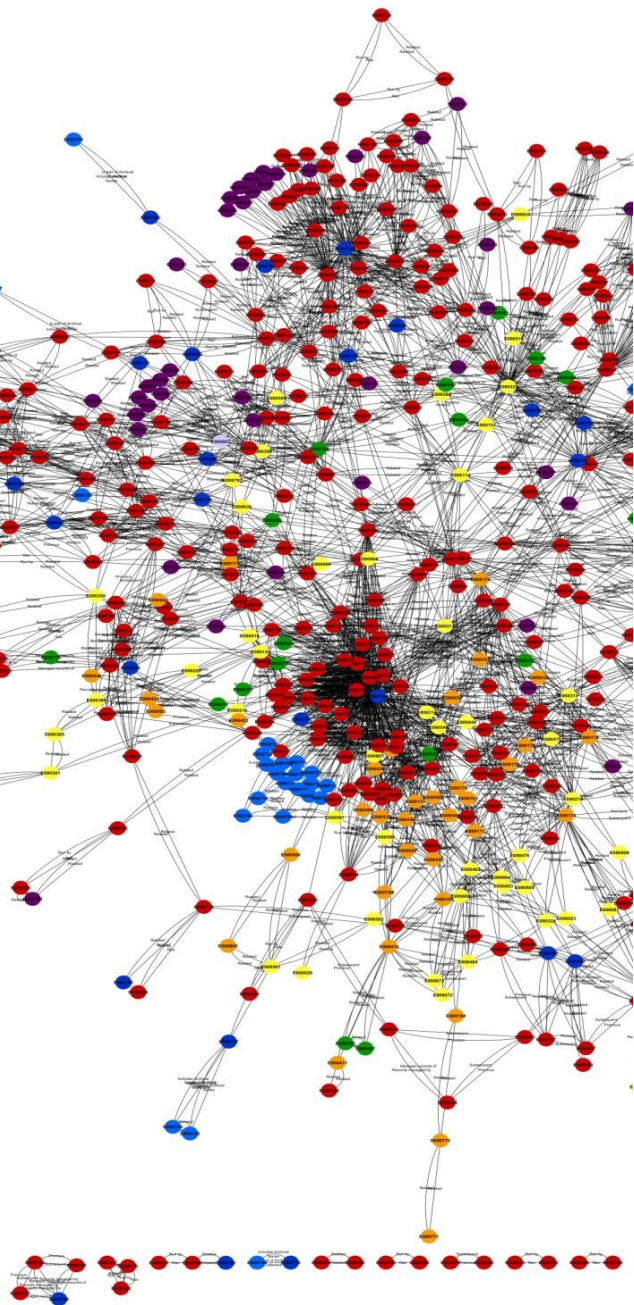


Find and Connect

“ ... a completely novel information provider, evidence-base, and story repository.”

Gavan McCarthy

*Associate Professor, Director eScholarship Research Centre,
University of Melbourne*

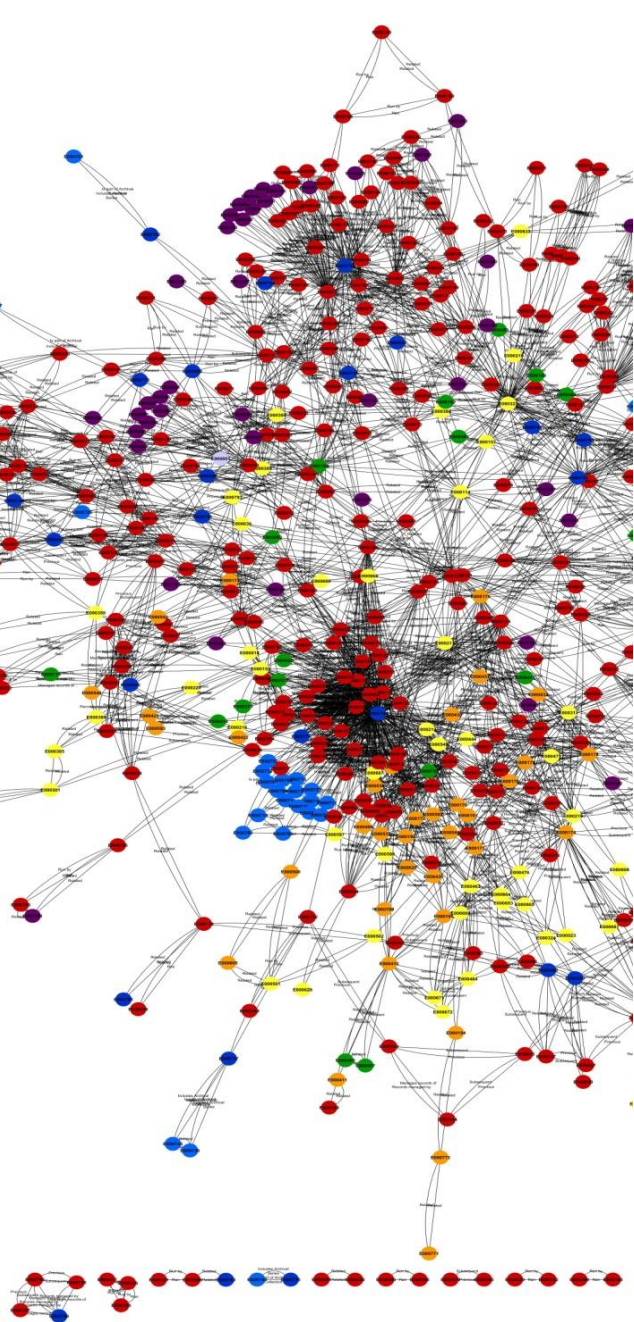


Find and Connect

“CLAN was the first Find & Connect.”

Leonie Sheedy

*Co-founder and Executive Officer of Care Leavers Australasia
Network CLAN, OAM, St. Catherine's Orphanage, Geelong 1957-
1971*

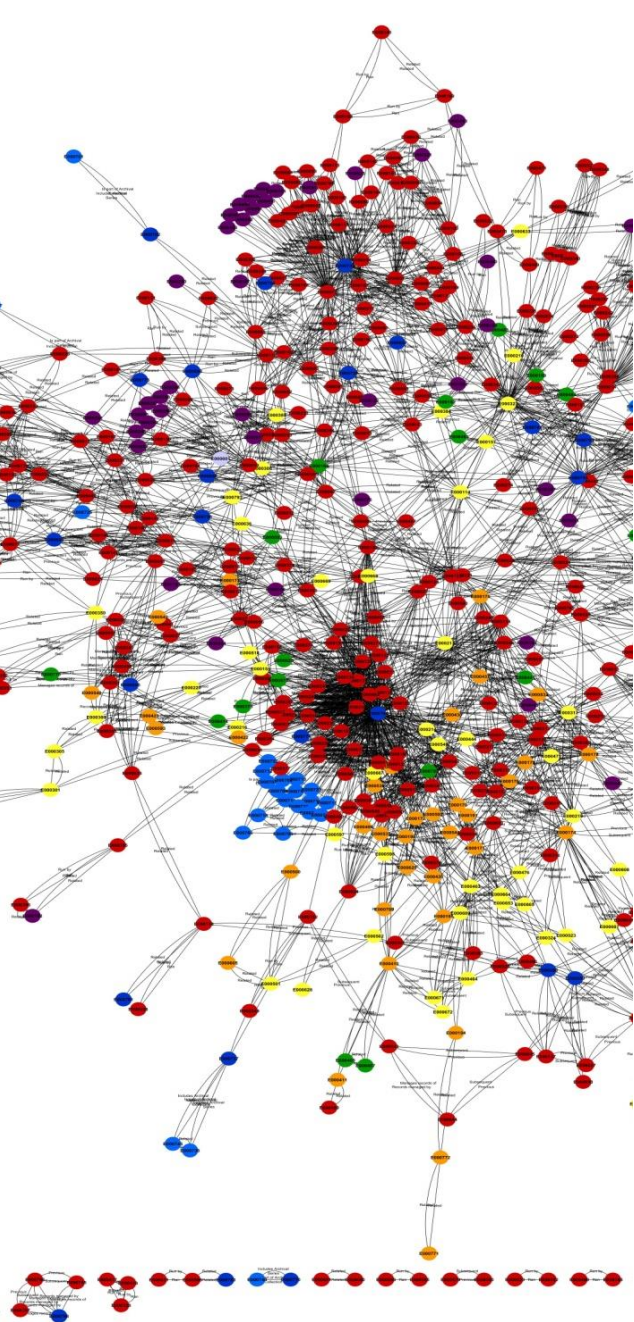


Find and Connect

“In essence, we want to know why what happened to us as children happened. The archived records represent a warehouse of hope where we will find answers to these questions that have nagged away at us, all the years of our adulthood.”

Frank Golding

Author, Historian, OAM, Ballarat Orphanage 1943-1953

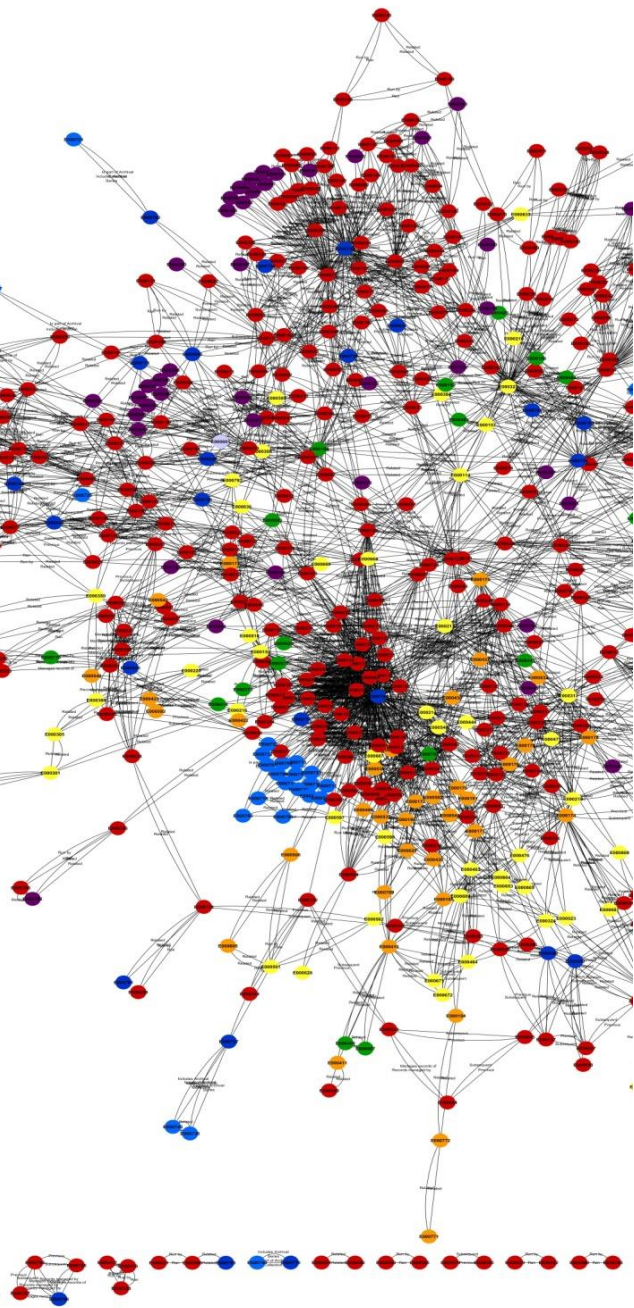


Find and Connect

“The Find & Connect web resource is dynamic, highly curated, challenging and rewarding; and grapples with fundamental questions about knowledge and information. The Find & Connect web resource is just one element within larger networks and conversations taking place in Australia and internationally.”

Kirsten Wright

*Program Manager, Find & Connect web resource, eScholarship
Research Centre*



Find and Connect

- Responsivity
- Evolution
 - Needs
 - Processes



ABOUT
Find & Connect

Look for
HOMES

Look for
PHOTOS

Information about
RECORDS

SEARCH
this Site

CONTACT
Support Services



Send message to
Find & Connect
support service

- [Where to Start](#)
- [Family Tracing](#)
- [Former Child Migrants](#)
- **[What to Expect when Accessing Records about You](#)**
- [Historical Background about Child Welfare](#)
- [Searching for Records of a Parent or Grandparent](#)
- [Applying for Records: Your Rights and the Law](#)
- [Disability Homes](#)
- [Salvation Army Homes](#)
- [Adoptions](#)

Some people may find content on this website distressing. [Read more](#)

What to Expect when Accessing Records about You

Download a [printable version of What to Expect when Accessing Records about You](#) (1.2 MB PDF)

- [Starting the journey](#)
- [What to expect when accessing records](#)
- [How will I feel when I look at my file?](#)
- [Getting help to find records about you](#)
- [Past attitudes to recordkeeping](#)
- [What if there is no file about me?](#)
- [Other important records](#)
- [The Law and access to records about me and others](#)

Starting the journey



[HOME](#)

[FINAL REPORT](#)

[RESEARCH & RESOURCES](#)

[PRIVATE SESSIONS](#)



Final report

The Royal Commission's final report has been released.

[Read the report](#)



Fast facts

42,041

Calls handled

25,964

Letters & emails received

8,013

Private sessions held

2,575

Referrals to authorities
(including police)

James Kevin Moffatt, born 28 June 54, was discharged from wardship on 28 June 72. His address was care of Post Office, Bemboka. At that time he was living with Mrs. K. Inskip but it is not, of course, known whether the lad is still with this lady. A copy of this report, has, therefore been forwarded to R.D.O. Bega for enquiries as to James' whereabouts and as to his thoughts about meeting with Michael.

MI 24

GOVERNMENT PRINTER.

DATE	PARTICULARS
2.11.61.	[REDACTED]
	James b. 28.6.54, were committed to S.C., also at M.C.C., on 22.2.60., as neglected, N.F.P.A.

The family came under notice of the Dept. in 1957, when the father was taken into custody and the mother was granted a Sec. 27 allowance. The family were then living in one room and conditions were not entirely satisfactory. However, the father was released on bail. Home conditions improved considerably and in February 1958 there was no further need for supervision of the family by the Dept. In 1959 further complaints were received about the family.

The father had not been in constant employment, had spent much of his time in jail. However, home conditions were reasonably satisfactory and the father had managed to keep his latest job for some months.

no action appeared warranted at this stage. On 27.1.60. the family were finally evicted and for non payment of rent and they went to stay with the P.O.M., Mrs. Moffatt Snr. in her small flat. The landlady, however, objected to the family's presence and threatened to turn them all out, including the G.M. The parents stated they had been looking for suitable accommodation for a long time, but all their efforts failed, and mainly due to their inability to pay the high rents asked. They left the G.M.'s home then, spent one night in a friend's car and after this claimed they had nowhere to go and no prospects for the children's placement elsewhere. The 4 younger children were then brought before the Court and on the parents' request were committed to S.C. on 22.2.60.

How does it feel to receive your records?

Specialist District Officer
Miss Adams the Director
result of enquiries conducted
24/11/1975

R.D.O. Bega

We Saw Nuns Kill Children: The Ghosts of St. Joseph's Catholic Orphanage



Christine Kenneally
BuzzFeed, Senior
Contributor

Posted on August 27, 2018, at 6:40 a.m. ET

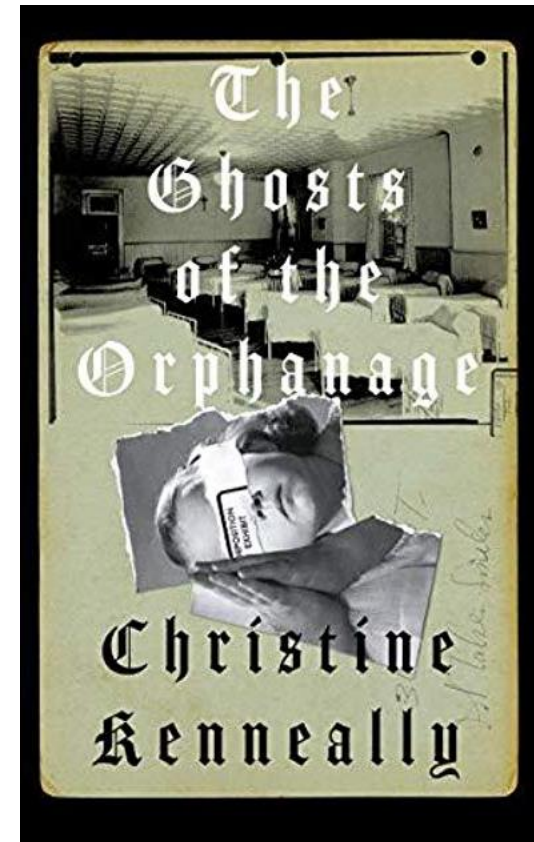
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It was a late summer afternoon, Sally Dale recalled, when the boy was thrown through the fourth-floor window.

“He kind of hit, and— ” she placed both hands palm-down before her. Her right hand slapped down on the left, rebounded up a little, then landed again.



THANK YOU
