

# Generating civic memory and civic pride in 1920s Adelaide

The Adelaide City Archives is about half way through a project of putting their collection of almost [two thousand magic lantern slides online](#). As archivists Rob Thornton and Jane Ratcliff explained to Lead CI Martyn Jolly when he visited, a keen Town Clerk, Alec Morrison began to assemble the collection in the 1920s. We are all familiar with today's municipal 'memory markers', where old street views are engraved on monuments and signs to give current residents a sense of the history of their city. Morrison was a pioneer of this use of photography to create a sense of municipal belonging. As Rob explained, Morrison spent many Saturday afternoons copying archival photographs in the State Library of South Australia, as well as sourcing contemporary photographs of Adelaide from local photographers and the government tourist bureau. By 1928, after acquiring a handsome Terpuoscope magic lantern, and a twelve-foot square screen, he was ready to use the banqueting room of the Town Hall to take the citizens of 'modern' Adelaide on a trip through Adelaide's ['infancy, adolescence, and growing manhood'](#). Up to four hundred people a night brought tickets to the sellout screenings of up to 250 slides. Many of them 'unconsciously gave voice to 'Ohs' as an old landmark was flashed on the screen', or so the *Adelaide Register* claimed. Currently 867 of the collection, which also includes slides of overseas cities in Europe and America, are online, with another 800 or so to go. The archive preserves Morrison's original lantern, and the original screen so, as Rob says: 'technically all the ingredients are there to recreate the lantern lecture slide shows of the 1920s and 30s.'



Archivists, Rob Thornton and Jane Ratcliff with Adelaide Town Clerk, Alec Morrison's early twentieth-century magic lantern



L-R: 'Adelaide Oval – College Football', lantern slide, Adelaide City Council Archives Collection; 'Victoria Square from the GPO', Adelaide City Council Archives Collection.