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PERSONAL PROFILE: BRUCE MASLIN

After graduating from U.W.A. in 1967 I joined the W.A. Herbarium which at that time was part of the Department of Agriculture under the curatorship of Bob Royce. Six months later I commenced two year's National Service and spent a year in Vietnam working in medical pathology laboratory. It was not until after my discharge from the Army in 1970 that I commenced in earnest what was to become the focus of my professional life, namely, a taxonomic study of the genus Acacia. Bob Royce was a significant influence in these early years, especially by providing the opportunity and resources to undertake this large and difficult task.

In 1977 I was appointed as the Australian Botanical Liaison Officer at Kew, London. Apart from broadening my general botanical experience this position provided me with the second opportunity to examine the wealth of historically important material in European and North American herbaria (Paris, Florence, Prague, Halle, Berlin, Copenhagen, New York, etc. etc.). The information gathered at this period has contributed significantly to my subsequent research on Acacia.

The decision in 1981 to participate in the Flora of Australia treatment of Acacia provided a significant focus and stimulus for me. This project, which is now near completion, has resulted in the description of about 250 new Western Australian taxa of Acacia, bringing the total for the State to 660 taxa.

Around the early 80's I became involved in a number of collaborative projects involving Acacia. These covered diverse subjects including ontogeny, palynology, biochemistry (cyanogenic glycosides) and phytogeography and contributed greatly to my gaining a better understanding of this enormous genus. Some of my former collaborators are now commemorated in Acacia names, for example, Acacia vassalii and Acacia guinetii (after two French colleagues, Jacques Vassal and Philippe Guinet), and Acacia conniana (after Eric Conn, the eminent American biochemist).

At the time of transfer to CALM in 1987 I was the Acting Curator of the W.A. Herbarium. This administrative change for the Herbarium, and the subsequent appointment of Jim Armstrong as head of the organization, led to major changes. In particular, our relevance in conservation research was brought into focus. Jim's arrival enabled me to devote considerable more time to taxonomic research and the Flora project, both activities having been slowed considerably for the previous 18 months.

In recent years I have become increasingly interested in aspects of the utilization of Acacia. This shift in

attitude has been prompted from a desire to be more closely associated with using the results of taxonomic research in practical and useful ways. Thus, I am currently working with a group of subtropical species (including Acacia colei) that is showing great promise as a human food resource, particularly sub-Saharan Africa.

In deciding to apply for the position of head of Species Resource Section necessitated my making decisions concerning the relative proportions of time I wished to devote to technical vs managerial matters. Having attained the position I now wish to ensure that systematics continues to make major contributions to the conservation strategies of this Department. To this end my immediate concerns are to promote an environment in which staff are motivated to produce sound, relevant science.

