

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

23 April 2024

Charlie the AI soldier enlists with State Library

An AI-generated soldier, launched by State Library of Queensland on Anzac Day (25 April), will help Queenslanders learn more about their World War I history.

Charlie, the Virtual Veteran, will answer questions about the war via a chatbot on the Anzac Square Memorial Galleries website.

The Virtual Veteran's answers will be sourced from original wartime letters and diaries from State Library, Trove newspapers and the First World War Official Histories from the Australian War Memorial.

It is the first time a State Library in Australia has used generative AI in this way.

The new experience will bring history to life, especially for Queensland school children interested in the real-life experiences of soldiers. Charlie's answers will be drawn from databases containing over 4 million words.

Example question: *Charlie, tell me about trench foot*

Example answer: *Trench foot, also known as immersion foot syndrome, is a serious condition that can occur if the feet are wet for too long. It's caused by prolonged exposure to damp, cold, unsanitary conditions, like those in the trenches. Symptoms include numbness, swelling, pain, and sores. If not treated, it can lead to gangrene and amputation. It was a common problem for soldiers in the trenches during World War I.*

The answer will also display the letters, diaries and other resources used to create the response. Transcripts of conversations with Charlie can also be downloaded.

The Virtual Veteran can be accessed here: anzacsquare.qld.gov.au/virtual-veterans

Commemorating Anzac Day with State Library:

- Place a free virtual poppy: anzacsquare.qld.gov.au/place-a-poppy
- Visit Anzac Square anzacsquare.qld.gov.au/visit
- Explore Anzac Square website for experiences of those who served anzacsquare.qld.gov.au/stories

Anzac Square Memorial Galleries are curated by State Library of Queensland, supported by the Queensland Veterans' Council and the Queensland Government.

Quotes from Minister Leeanne Enoch



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(07) 3840 7897

Interviews are available upon request.

“The State Library’s Charlie the virtual soldier harnesses the miracle of modern technology to share the real-life stories and experiences of Queensland service personnel from more than a century ago.

“With the innovative use of AI technology, State Library of Queensland is bringing to life its precious and extensive digitised archive of World War I records for current and future generations.

“The Miles Government’s support for State Library means preserving and promoting Queensland records and stories and encouraging further research and learning to grow a greater understanding of our war-time heritage.”

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“Charlie our Virtual Veteran is creating great excitement in the cultural sector as it is the first time AI has been used by an Australian State Library in this way.

“With AI quickly becoming part of our daily lives, State Library of Queensland is using the technology to share only trusted sources of information on World War I.

“It is a great way to engage students, researchers and anyone who is interested in Queensland’s contribution to the war effort.

“The experience also encourages Queenslanders to explore State Library’s extensive digitised collections from World War I.”

Virtual Veteran
Online from 25 April
Anzac Square Memorial Galleries
anzacsquare.qld.gov.au



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