The European intellectual movement of the 17th and 18th centuries known as the Enlightenment had a profound effect on the aims and objectives of European exploratory voyages to Terra Australis or Terres Australes. The era affirmed the ascendancy of Europe over the rest of the world and marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of oceanic exploration. Journeys were undertaken with clearly defined political, economic and scientific goals, political powers taking a hand in the organization and financing of the expeditions. A serious voyage was no longer conceivable without a group of scholars, specialists in diverse disciplines such as astronomy, mathematics, physics, natural sciences and so on.

This talk will focus on the journeys of 18th and 19th century French explorers, adventurers and scientists who undertook the first expansive studies of flora and fauna of Terra Australis or Terres Australes, and in particular Western Australia. The journeys will be placed in the context of the Age of Enlightenment with its emphasis on the study of the natural sciences and humanism, as well as the creation of the new sciences of ecology and anthropology. It will also seek to show how the political turmoil in France from the pre-revolution, revolution, Empire and return to the Republic impacted on these expeditions and the fate of the collections they took back.

Lecture Details

Date: Thursday, 11 June 2009
Time: 6-7pm
Venue: Webb Lecture Theatre, UWA (formerly Geography Lecture Theatre 1)

This lecture is free and open to the public, no RSVP required

This lecture is part of a symposium jointly sponsored by the ARC Network for Early European Research, the Perth Medieval and Renaissance Group, the UWA Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and the Woodside Valley Estate.