

# ENTWINED

string games across cultures

04.11.2023

Ira Raymond Exhibition Room  
Barr Smith Library

28.03.2024

The University of Adelaide, Kaurna Yerta  
10am-4pm, Monday-Friday



# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

04 November 2023  
28 March 2024



## Have you ever played string games, or Cat's Cradle?

It is no surprise if you did, such games have an almost universal appeal across human cultures. Playing string games needs nothing but a loop of string and a sequence of finger movements to create many different shapes; they require good dexterity, communication and perseverance to master.

Bringing together string games from Pacific, European, Asian and American cultures, this exhibition showcases how these fascinating figures were used for entertainment, education, and cultural purposes. As a playful medium through which traditional stories are passed on, string games connect people from generation to generation and create a shared cultural understanding.

They have also facilitated significant cross-cultural understanding. One of the most important studies of Pacific Island string games was conducted by an Australian woman called Honor Maude. Her collection is held at the University of Adelaide. Her amazing work recording the string games published in her books, alongside the other international works in this collection, inspired a worldwide interest in this old but enduring aspect of culture.

This exhibition explores these threads, old and new, near and far, to celebrate the lasting importance of string games in our world.

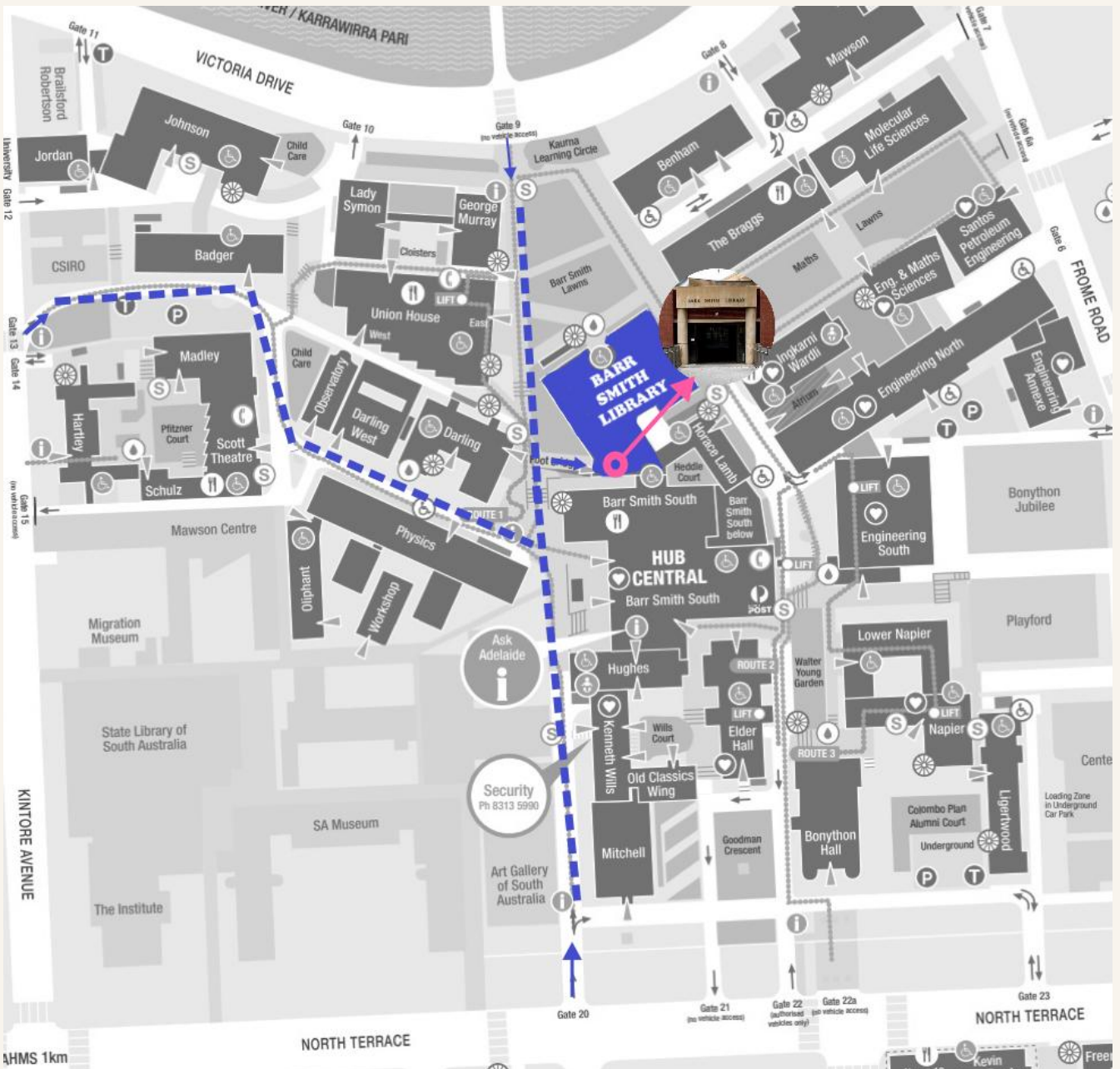


# GETTING HERE

04 November 2023  
28 March 2024



## The University of Adelaide North Terrace Campus



### By bus

Numerous bus routes [routes 97, 98, 99, 170, 171, 172, 174, 176, 178, 281, 286, 287, 288, 613, 626, 630] run on North Terrace.

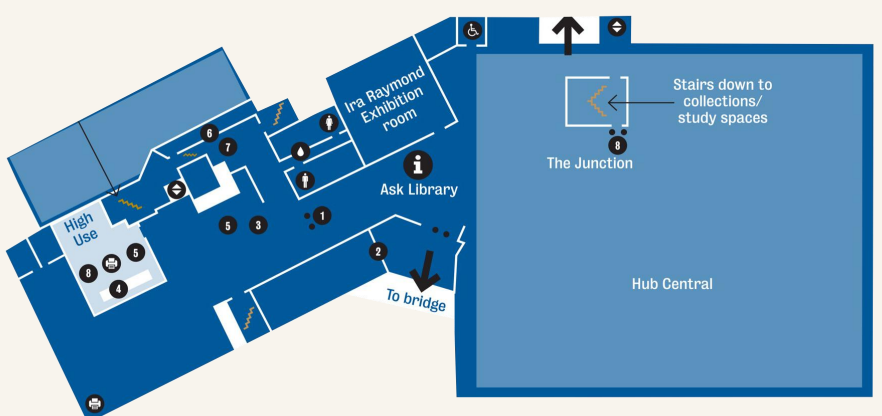
### By tram

Alight at either Art Gallery or University of Adelaide stops and walk 125 metres.

### By car

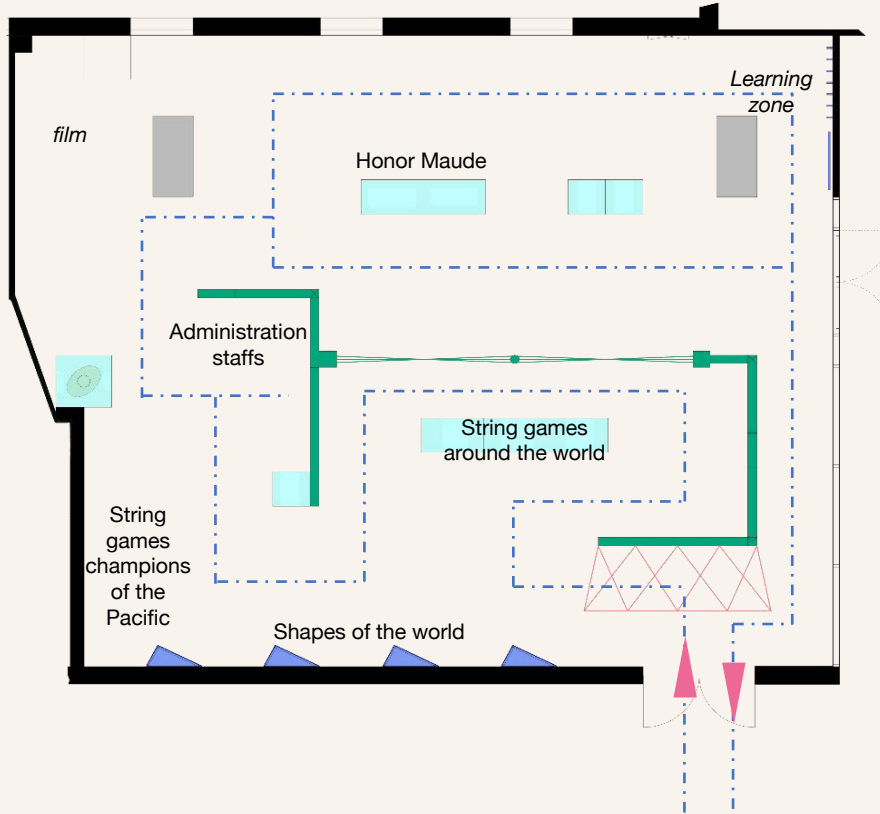
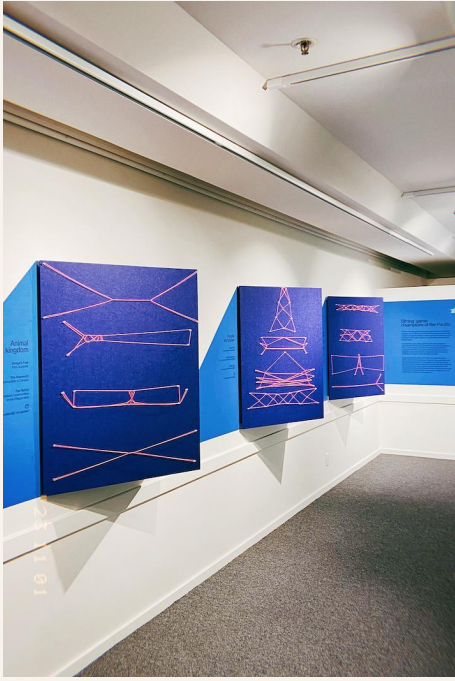
On-street parking and numerous commercial off-street car parks are available nearby.

The Ira Raymond Exhibition Room is located on Level 3 of the [Barr Smith Library](#), directly opposite the bridge entrance to the Library and Hub Central.



# WHAT'S ON

04 November 2023  
28 March 2024



## Around the World

Games played with string exist in every populated region on earth, occurring in many spheres of life. What links them is the enjoyable challenge of completing the correct steps in order to reveal a figure of an object, place, animal or story.

Storytelling with string figures is prevalent across cultures. The stories told can represent life within the culture, form part of a ritual, or even help with remembering ancestors. The stories and figures are also educational; they can teach about the surrounding environment, recognising patterns, and moral lessons.

It's unknown when string games were first played but they continue to thrive through appealing to each new generation.

## Pacific Islands

The art of string games has great significance in the Pacific islands. It is a skilled art form and a means to communicate traditional legends, historic events, and cultural lifeways. The smallest island nation, Nauru, is particularly entwined with this practice.

For the Nauruans, string games were also a source of entertainment and passed down through generations. Nauru has a long history of foreign occupations which interrupted cultural practices. However, string games have persisted despite that

## Honor Maude

Honor Maude first discovered string games in 1929 while moving far away from her family and friends in the United Kingdom to start a new life in the Pacific Islands. Maude's husband, Harry, was employed on the Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati) and string games quickly turned from a personal interest into a common language that she would share with her friends and teachers in the Pacific.

This unique form of communication became Maude's scholarly fixation and during the next 20 years she travelled to many different islands, including Nauru, to document the local string traditions.

Maude dedicated her life to the research and teaching of string games and her work has not only been influential within scholarship. Through use of her documentation, groups of people in the Pacific have been able to re-learn certain figures and ensure those traditions continue on into the present day.

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXHIBITION

04 November 2023  
28 March 2024



1



Young Women Playing Cat's Cradle (Ayatori)

2



Fanta Yoyo (top)  
Coca-Cola Yoyo (bottom)

3



Map of Pacific Islands

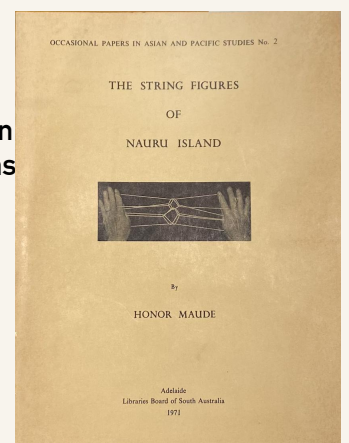
"When it comes to making string figures, the Nauruans are world champs."

4



1988 String Figures (4)  
Nauru MUH Stamps

Nauru Postage Stamp Designs can be found in editions 1 and 2 of *The String Figures of Nauru Island* by Honor Maude



The String Figures of Nauru Island By Honor Maude

5

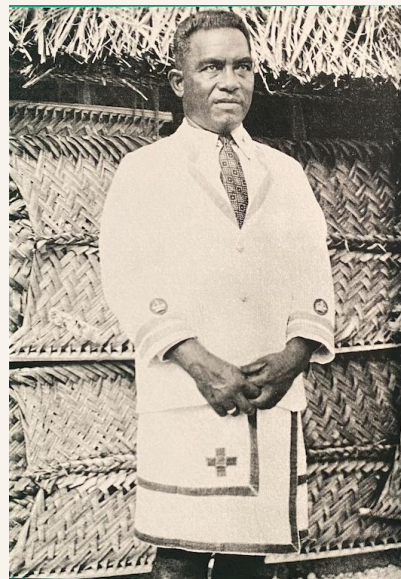
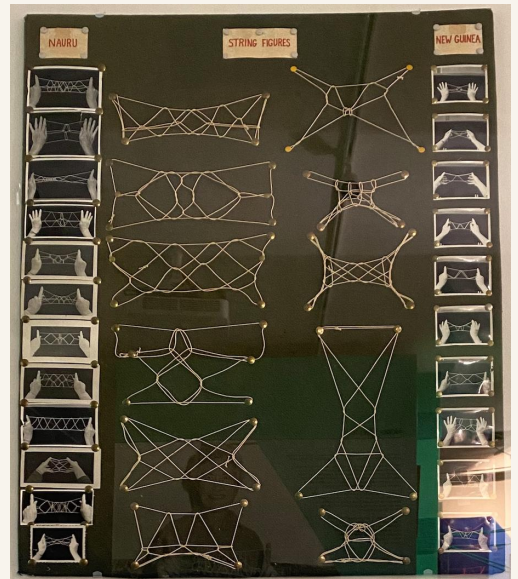


Photo of Simon Quanjio  
Simon Quanjio and Ijauwe were two innovators in Nauruan string figure creation.

6

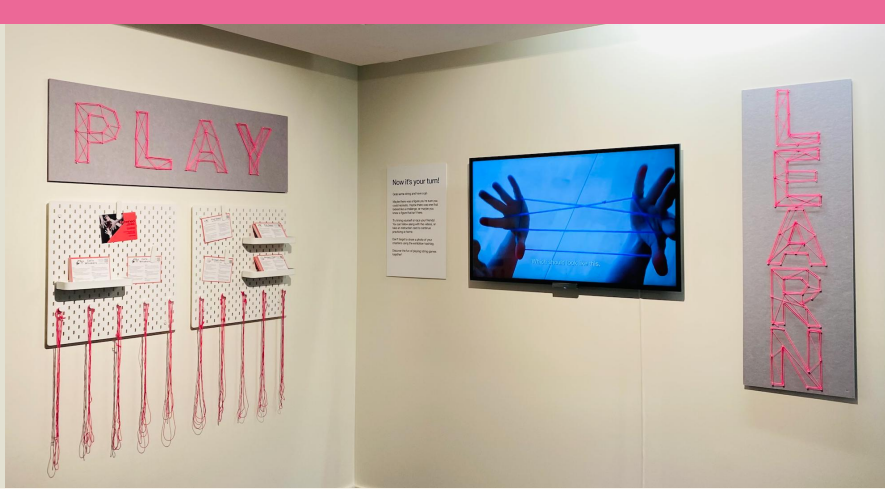


An Impressive Display of Talent

Find out more about the Maude collection  
Please visit [Harry Evans and Honor Maude Digital Archive](https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/79833)  
<https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/79833>

# EVENTS CALENDER

04 November 2023  
28 March 2024



## EVENTS

### 01. GUEST TALK

**Dr. Robyn McKenzie**  
Research Fellow  
Australian National University

Advanced Studies in the  
Humanities Fellow  
University of Adelaide

**A Pattern of Islands: Honor  
Maude and Pacific String  
Figures**

**DATE:** Tuesday, 05 March 2024  
**TIME:** 1PM  
**DURATION:** 60 mins  
**LOCATION:** Exhibition room

## EXHIBITION INTERACTIVES

### 02. GUESS MY NAME!



Can you guess the name of the string game by looking at its shape? It's harder than you think! This game will get you thinking about string figures from around the world.

**LOCATION:** Shapes of the World  
Exhibition Room  
**DATE:** 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday

### 02. LEARNING ZONE



A creative space to enjoy making your own string games. Watch a video tutorial or take home an instruction card – discover the fun of playing string games together.

**LOCATION:** Learning Zone  
Exhibition Room  
**DATE:** 10am-4pm, Monday-Friday

## FOR CHILDREN

### 03. CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY



This exhibition welcomes Children's University passport holders to add a new learning experience to their passport. Students can explore the exhibition and complete a worksheet or engage with additional take-home activities.

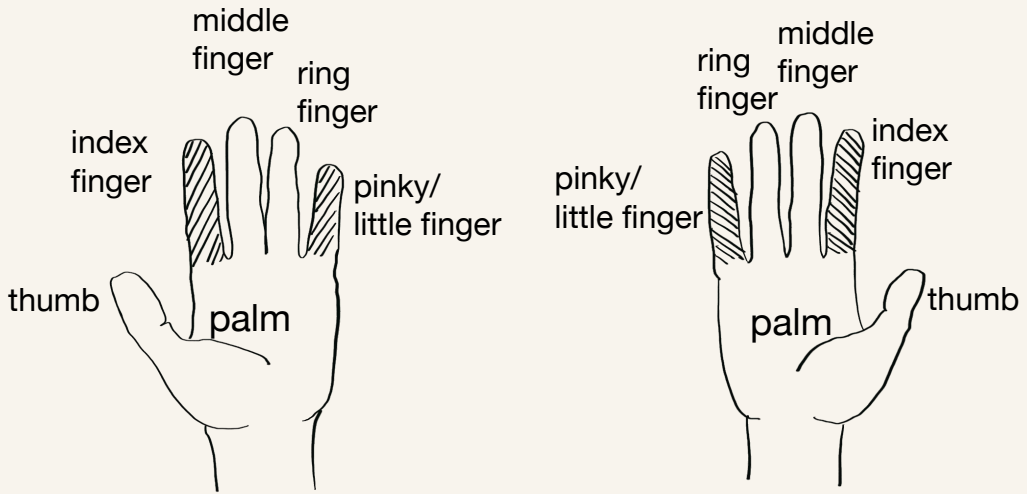
**LOCATION:** Exhibition Room  
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# BROLGA'S FEET

This is probably one of the most widely known string figures. It is found in many countries and done in many different ways.

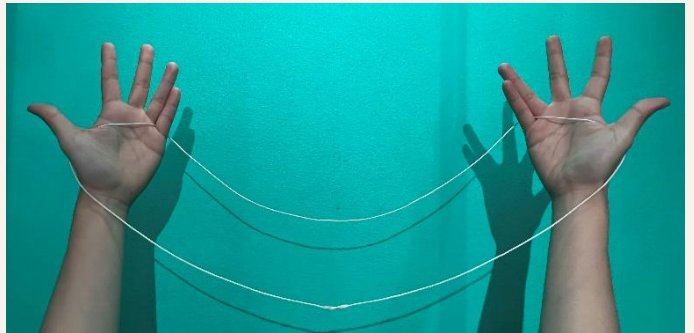


Let's try to make it!



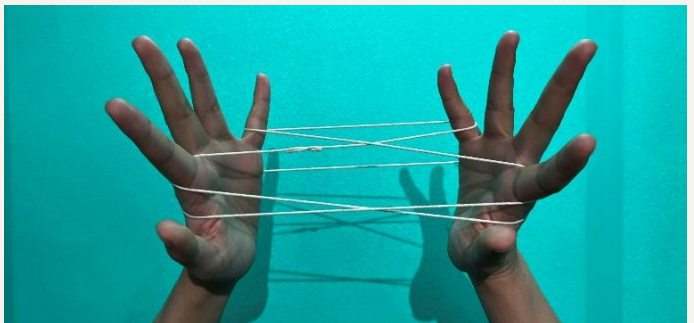
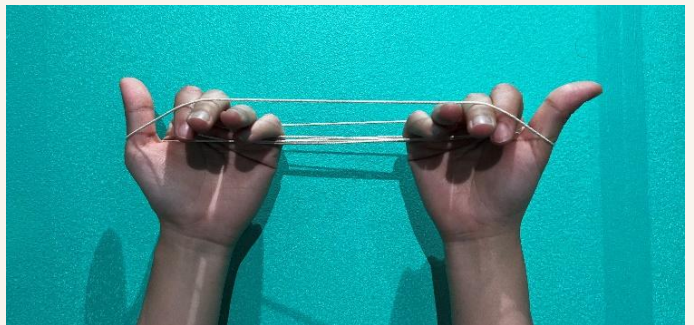
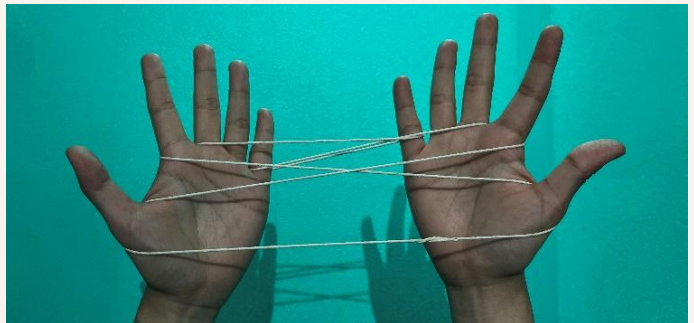
## STEP ONE

Start off with it in the normal position over both of your palms. Then pick it up with your pointer on each hand



## STEP TWO

Turn your palms face you, and the very front string, slip over the back of your hands, including your thumbs. Then turn your palms facing each other again



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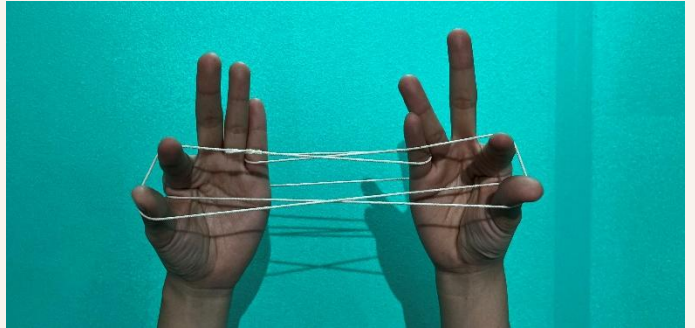
Let's try to make it!

## STEP THREE

Transfer the strings that are around your pointer onto your thumb.

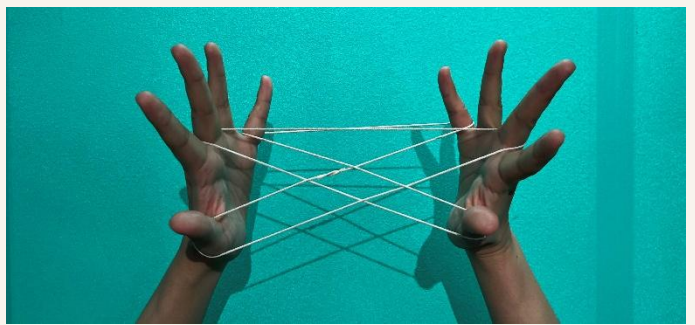
Take the string that's on the back of your hand and transfer it around your middle finger

*Tips: be careful not to lose any of your other strings.*



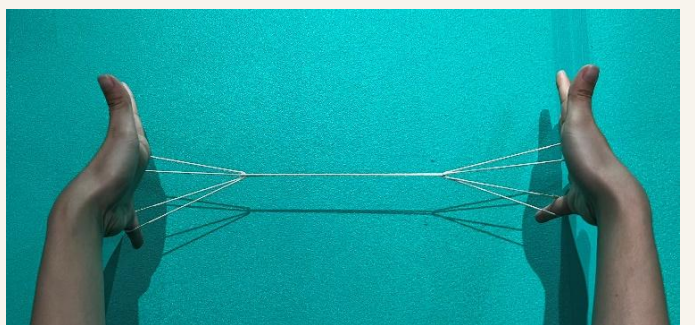
## STEP FOUR

Bend your pinky towards you and over the far index string. Hook your pinky over the far index string and pull it back over the near pinky string. Your pinky should be bent double.



## STEP FIVE

Now bring your pinky towards you, under the near pinky string, keeping this string on the backs of the pinky, straighten these fingers to normal position.

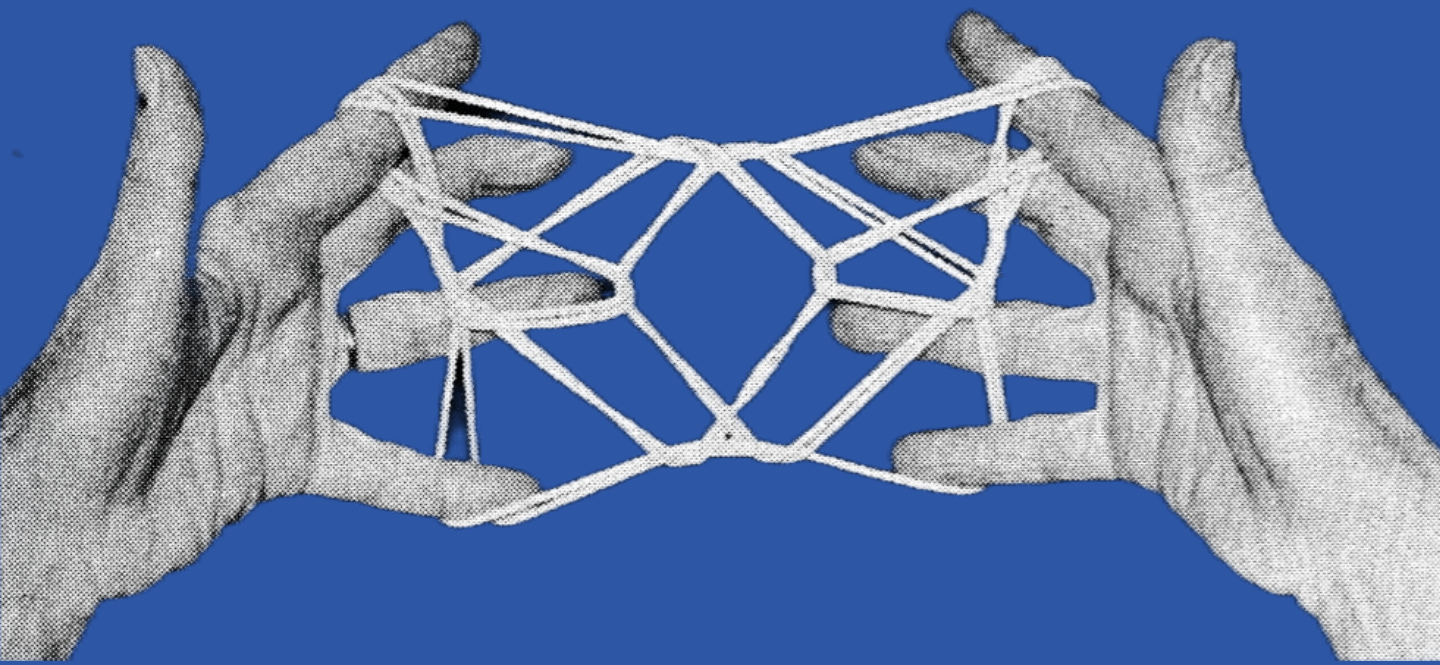


## STEP SIX

Release the thumb loops and extend your hands, and now you have grolga's feet.







## **CURATORIAL CONSULTANTS**

Amy Dale  
Associate Professor Christine Winter  
Jeremy Green  
Professor John Carty  
Dr Robyn Makenzie  
University of Adelaide School of Humanities  
Special Collections

## **CURATORIAL TEAM**

Abby Pampa  
Andrea Carolina Morón Girado  
Christina Moore  
Echo Mak Ka Yin  
Jae Bain  
Jaquie Hagan  
John B. Craig  
Kansas Bird  
Katherine Brand  
Katerina Frangos  
Kelly Cusack  
Mengheng Ding  
Nicola Butler  
Sara Kennewell  
Yi Hu



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