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To Europeans, Australia was once a “Terra Incognita,” and for many of today’s professionals large tracts of its library history still are. Fortunately, however, there is a small but industrious band of professional librarians, predominantly amateur (in the positive sense) historians, who are steadily documenting the highly varied patterns of library services which have evolved in the various Australian States and Territories since white settlement in 1788. When Maxine Rochester surveyed the field a decade ago, there was ample material for fifteen-page article in *Libraries and Culture*, which she rounded off with a bibliography of over one hundred items, mostly post-1970 (Rochester, 1990). It was a healthy enough crop. In the intervening years, the yield has been sustained. There is now a substantial body of historical research, with major and minor dissertations on historical topics now in the hundreds, a regular but varied diet of articles (a few in international library journals), and the occasional monograph of library biography or autobiography, institutional history, the odd festschrift, an astonishing compilation of travel diaries and observations (Rayward, 1995), and an encyclopaedia with a definite historical bias (Bryan, 1988-1991). Library history is alive and kicking at several Australian schools of librarianship, and will also figure strongly in the forthcoming mammoth publication, *The History of the Book in Australia*, for which the various editors are currently exercising their stockwhips.

Perhaps the most tangible evidence of the health and diversity of the study and dissemination of library history in Australia is the series of forums held at roughly two-year intervals at various schools of librarianship. The series began in 1984 at Monash University with a “Forum on Australian Colonial Library History” (the “colonial” tag was soon dropped, and the later forums have dealt

with Australian libraries from the earliest times through Federation, when the former Australian colonies became States within the Commonwealth of Australia, to relatively recent history). The sixth forum in 1995 was also held at Monash University, in the Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records (a name which is itself now history, having recently become the School of Information Management and Systems).

The twelve papers presented at the forum and published in full in this volume have the theme, typically loose, of “Instruction and amusement.” They form what is probably the most eclectic and novel collection of papers since the forums began—eclectic because their subjects range from prison libraries to library school curricula, from mechanics’ institutes to Congregational Church libraries, and novel because many of the institutions and figures discussed were hitherto mere footnotes to history, neglected in the discourse on the “important” figures, institutions and movements.

Take the mechanics’ institutes, for example. Established in Britain in the early nineteenth century “to educate the industrial workforce in the principles of the industrial arts” (p. 3), they were transplanted as a concept into Australian soil with consequences as varied as the character of each locality. In their establishment, flowering and eventual decline all around Australia, they reflected the fortunes and the vicissitudes of their localities, the virtues and the vices of their proponents, users and non-users. Three separate studies are offered, two from Victoria and one from Western Australia, presenting a series of microcosms of Australian history. The Swan River Mechanics Institute discussed by Jan Partridge began with great optimism in Perth, Western Australia, in

1851, with classes for the working classes to better themselves, a library and reading room, lectures and discussion groups. The Institute enjoyed considerable success: Partridge adduces evidence of lively discussions and debates, of religious tolerance at a time of denominational antipathy, but little success in enlisting “the idle and profligate working classes” (p. 15). Her thorough analysis of the early membership of the Institute—identifying the established businessmen, landowners, commissioned officers on a tour of duty and other worthies—shows that ultimately “membership extended only to the well-read, literate, respectable and successful tradesmen and mechanics” (p. 15). Partridge does not pursue the Swan River Mechanics Institute into the twentieth century. It was surprisingly longeval, surviving the depressions of the 1890s and 1930s. It remained a subscription library, with the name Perth Literary Institute, until 1957, when its assets were transferred to the Perth City Council and a free public library opened in its stead.

Only a little less venerable was the nonagenarian Mechanics’ Institute and Free Library established in the gold-rush district at Sandhurst (now Bendigo) in Victoria on the opposite side of the continent in 1856. As Donald Barker describes it, the Institute opened with all the fervour and sub rosa paternalism of its counterparts, attempting to combat “the disgrace of ignorance” (p. 42), but achieving success not with lectures and classes but with its library. Within a few years, its committee had decided to concentrate on building its library collection, opening a free reading room for the public, and extending opening hours. The 1870s and 1880s were boom years, culminating for the Institute in an imposing new building, but Barker traces its relentless fall thereafter, starved of government subsidies, largely deserted by its members, with an aging bookstock, hanging on semi-comatose until finally closing its doors in 1946, on the eve of the establishment of free public libraries in Victoria. Barker’s is a very thorough account, and we can get a real feeling of the good or lean years through which this Institute persisted.

Decline and fall is chronicled too in Ian Morrison’s paper on the mechanics’ institute at Kyneton, an agricultural centre in Victoria which prospered by supplying the gold rush towns and survived even when the gold ran out. Morrison points out that institutes were important as a social and recreational centres—in the 1930s, for example, Kyneton’s provided a venue for public meetings, boxing matches, dances, film shows—and libraries played “only a minor part in their role” (p. 56). So when Ralph Munn and Ernest Pitt undertook the Carnegie Corpora-

tion survey of Australian libraries in 1934, they found the institutes to have outlived their usefulness as providers of libraries, but their other community activities ensured for some of them a continuing role, which lasted in some cases for a further thirty or forty years (p. 69).

Education for librarianship in Australia has followed a fascinatingly varied pattern since the early on-the-job training in the state libraries, formal in-house training programmes and departmental examinations, through the period of examinations set by the Australian Institute of Librarians (later the Library Association of Australia) to the establishment of Australia’s first school of librarianship at the University of New South Wales in 1960. In her paper on library education in South Australia from 1944 to 1994, Maureen Keane presents a life-cycle analysis of developments, documenting growth and changes against the backdrop of contemporary policy and education and attempting to assess student demand for courses and the jobs market place. Adaptation to market forces and the external environment are themes too of Maxine Rochester’s analysis of the curriculum in library schools in the 1970s and 1980s, in response to the demands of the emerging information society. “Library automation” in all its manifestations moved from elective to core curriculum, and remarkably quickly too, paralleling, and in some cases perhaps anticipating or facilitating, the rapid uptake of information technology in Australian libraries.

With Peter Mansfield’s paper which follows, we take a leap backwards to the issue of fiction in Australian public libraries in the nineteenth century. We revisit the issue of libraries as “places of public improvement, not entertainment.” There are supporting examples of the didactic flavour of such institutions in Britain, the United States and Australia, many flying in the face of popular demand for sometimes lighter fare, as in Brisbane in 1898: “more than three quarters of the books borrowed were fiction, ranging from the standard novels to sugary romances and flimsy melodramas to livid and bloodcurdling tales” (p. 112). Mansfield traces the ebb and flow of the debate over fiction across three continents and a hundred years. Was there ever a winner? Not in that century, nor well into the twentieth, at least not until the growth of free public libraries in most states after World War II. Before that the purists would acknowledge the need to collect literature in the research libraries; but fiction—never!

Three significant figures in Australian library development are the focus of a bracket of biographical papers. Jim Badger casts light on one of the lay champi-

ons of libraries who were, he argues, essential allies in the movement for free public library services which came into being not long after the publication of the Munn-Pitt Report in 1935. Badger has had the advantage and the disadvantage of very close association with his subject—his own father, Colin Badger. This is an interesting picture of the background and development of Badger pere, sacked from a Baptist bookshop for reading on the job, inspired by the grandeur of the Public Library in Adelaide, studying for the ministry, lecturing for the Workers' Educational Association, and for twenty-four years heading adult education in Victoria. He was a sympathetic ally for the Free Library Movement, and one of the "reasonable men" who stimulated what has been called "middle class reformism" in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s (Alomes, 1979). But although Badger establishes his subject as one of the intellectuals of potential influence, and tells us that he was active in the Library Board in Victoria, "largely responsible" for drafting a report on the state of public libraries in that State in the 1940s (p. 118) and urging that local government should provide most public library funding (p. 130), he tantalisingly leaves us dangling. What happened to the report? How did Badger relate to the Free Library Movement in Victoria? How did his influence impact on the development of free public libraries in Victoria? We look forward to further installments.

Lucy Edwards presents a portrait of part of the remarkable twenty-eight-year incumbency of Leigh Scott as University Librarian of the University of Melbourne (the longevity of some senior librarians in Australia in earlier times is almost incomprehensible to younger members of the profession, who often see senior positions as revolving doors—Ifould was head of the Public Library of New South Wales for thirty years; Battye headed the Public (i.e. State) Library in Western Australia for sixty!). Scott received his grounding in librarianship at the Public Library of Victoria (PLV), in the company of such prominent library names as Brazier, Boys, Morris Miller, E.R. Pitt and Foxcroft, into all of whom Lucy Edwards gives us some fascinating insights. In 1926, Scott left the slow but probable succession to the PLV throne (with promotion by seniority, those who remained seeming to Ralph Munn to perform a relentless goosestep into the top job and retirement shortly thereafter) to become the librarian of the University of Melbourne, a position for which the restless John Metcalfe had earlier applied. Scott was the perfect choice: sensitive to university politics, a collection builder, a pioneer of reference services, active in the library's professional organisations, and a

person of ideas—it is he who is credited with suggesting that the Carnegie Corporation conduct a survey of Australian libraries, which eventuated in the watershed Munn-Pitt Report. In the space available, Edwards can only telescope some of the seminal activities during the formative years of Scott at the University of Melbourne. Our appetite is whetted for fuller accounts in due course.

Scott's successor but one at the University of Melbourne (there was a brief sojourn by Harold Holdsworth) was Axel Lodewycks ("it rhymes with motor bikes," he once explained to me), a brilliant, determined, stubborn librarian who had also received his library grounding at the Public Library of Victoria. In James Kilpatrick's assessment of some of the stormiest years of Lodewycks's incumbency, we receive some remarkable insights into the world of university politics, dispassionately supplementing the account which Lodewycks provided in his own *The Funding of Wisdom* (1982). Lodewycks's most notable achievement—and it was considerable—was his part in the planning and design of the Baillieu Library building at the University. But this was overshadowed by a precipitous rift between him and the University hierarchy in the form of the professorial board, the library committee and the Vice Chancellor himself, to whom Lodewycks said in 1972, one year before his resignation, "I have already been destroyed by a clique of influential politicians" (p. 153). "A politically competent incumbent would have achieved much better results with far less effort by reconciling his professionalism with the realities of the political situation," he concluded in 1982 (Lodewycks, 1982, p. 352). He was no Man for All Seasons, and Kilpatrick paints a realistic picture of the trials and tribulations of this intense and earnest librarian who might truly have flourished in an environment to which he was more attuned.

The three remaining papers deal with institutions upon which scant light has hitherto been shed: the library of a Congregational training college in Victoria, a central library for Catholic self-education groups which developed in Adelaide, and prison libraries in the early days of Melbourne. The 115-year span of the Congregational College of Victoria is outlined with characteristic thoroughness by Coralie Jenkin, from its optimistic and enthusiastic beginnings, with gifts of cash and in kind, and energetic promoters and champions like Alexander Morison. Upon Morison's death in 1887 (not 1877 as the abstract in a rare slip has it) (cf. pages 159 and 167), the "best years were over, and there was little to interrupt its slow downhill run over the next 70 years" (p. 167). Less able and willing people succeeded him, thefts dimin-

ished the collections, the librarian's position disappeared, students found what they needed in other collections, and the library as an asset—duly recorded on the balance sheets each year—withered, rallied, withered again and gave up the ghost, being dispersed and leaving its final resting place—“a sad little room”—in 1977.

A somewhat healthier outcome, at least up to the mid-1940s, was in store for library resources to support the array of Catholic adult education organisations in South Australia. Dorothy Rooney provides a detailed account of the various self-help, debating, and literary societies which were established to “raise the educational standard and status of Catholics within the South Australian community” (p. 173), and of the library services which developed to serve them, culminating in the Central Catholic Library which was both “Catholic” and “catholic,” with monographs on morals as well as murder mysteries and a clientele of which an erstwhile mechanics’ institute committee would have been sinfully envious. Appetisingly, Rooney leaves the page open at 1947, with no hint of what the succeeding half century may have wrought. Again, that is a story for another time.

Norm Turncross provides an introductory international perspective to his paper on prison libraries, from the recommendation of English prison reformer John Howard in the 1770s that prisoners have access to works of an improving nature. Acceptance of such a principle was patchy. On the one hand, a few lucky inmates would have been able to peruse enlightening works such as *The Evil Consequences of Attending the Race Course*, whereas in Melbourne in 1839 one jail could not even rustle up a Bible for its prisoners. Again, the impetus for progressive corrections and belief in the reforming power of literacy and education depended upon the enthusiasm of individuals: enlightened administrators, leaders of benevolent institutions, and philanthropists. Turncross’ story ends in the mid nineteenth century, and I look forward to the continuation of the story of this neglected library type.

I also look forward to proceedings of further Forums, which, like this work, will continue to delineate and colour in the often penumbral history of librarianship and libraries in Australia. The organisers and contributors to this Forum are to be congratulated on this mix of stimulating and accomplished papers, not one of which is a lightweight. I emerged from absorbing these proceedings more knowledgeable and greatly stimulated, or as the editor might have put it, both “instructed” and “amused.”

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