

## DIANNE REILLY

# Memories of a fortunate career: State Library of Victoria, 1959–2008

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From glancing at Amazon's online list of published memoirs on the market, it seems that in 'this confessional age, in which memoirs and personal revelations tumble out in unprecedented abundance', now 'the flood feels like a tsunami'.<sup>1</sup>

I would not dare describe the following reminiscences as a memoir. Nor would I describe it as strictly autobiographical. These are random snippets about life as a staff member over nearly half a century at the State Library of Victoria, one of Australia's major cultural institutions, rather than a life story. It is a reflection, a series of memories about people and events that occurred over a certain long stretch of time in a beloved institution where I spent a very large part of my life. While it does sound like a great deal of talking about myself, what I aim to do is to document information and impressions that might otherwise go unrecorded.

### The start

My introduction to the then Public Library of Victoria<sup>2</sup> was a terrifying experience. At the suggestion of the revered Ursula O'Connor, Chief Cataloguer and a school friend of my aunt and mother, I had applied in late 1958 for a position as Cadet Attendant in the historic Lending Library. This department of the Public Library had opened on 8 August 1892 with a separate collection of 6000 volumes in temporary quarters in the centrally located area that was later to become the Newspaper Room, and is now the reference centre.<sup>3</sup> The Lending

Peter Churcher, artist, *Portrait of Dr Dianne Reilly AM*, oil on linen, c. 2008, Pictures Collection, H2008.95



Library occupied various temporary locations until 1908 when it was moved to the Buvelot Gallery on the corner of Russell and Little Lonsdale Streets. It was not until 1946 that it was relocated, now with about 100,000 books, to its final home in the north-west wing on the corner of Swanston and La Trobe streets.<sup>4</sup>

In due course, I was called to an interview with the Chief Librarian, Colin McCallum. I was greeted on arrival by his secretary, Margaret Taylor, an efficient woman with a penetrating voice who much later was to marry Vincent Scully, Chairman of the Victorian Public Service Board. On entering Mr McCallum's huge office, the distance between the door and the chair awaiting me in front of his desk seemed to this unsophisticated schoolgirl absolutely vast. Gentleman that he was, he tried to set me at ease by asking me why I wanted to work at the Library. I don't remember my reply – I was so tongue-tied – but before I left, he had offered me the job, which I tremulously accepted.

I began work in the Lending Library a short while later on 10 March 1959. The Cadet Attendant's role was typically occupied by young, totally unqualified people, which I certainly was, to carry out the most basic of daily duties. This was 'at a time when women were paid 75% of the male working wage, were required to resign from the workforce on marriage and were not generally expected to forge careers'.<sup>5</sup> At 16 years of age, I was the youngest member of quite a large staff of librarians, mostly women, who took this timid and inexperienced youngster under their wings. These kind mentors included Joy Storie, who was later to join the staff of the State Library of New South Wales; Helen Hughes (Almanzi), a talented reference librarian; Joan Maslen, later a reference librarian in the La Trobe Library where her knowledge of the theatre collections was unparalleled; and Joyce McGrath, who went on to a long career as the Library's Arts Librarian.

Two days after my arrival, another new recruit, John Stanley-Rogers,<sup>6</sup> joined Rosemary Griffiths, Don Grant, and Norma McDonald (Herman) on the Lending Library's reference desk where they dealt with the numerous enquiries for information from a diverse clientele. John and I attended the opera and ballet together over many years and were to become lifelong friends. John always had varied interests in the arts, ranging from collecting fine editions and exquisite pieces of china to music and the theatre. Noted for his impeccable handwriting and an admirable attention to detail, he was a cataloguer during the years 1963 to 2014, and worked part-time on the main reference library desk and on the Arts Library enquiry desk with Joyce McGrath and Michael Watson, before his retirement in 2014.

The first task I was assigned was to reshelf what seemed a mountain of books returned by the many borrowers of this busy library. The personalities with whom I worked included Mrs Constance Harrison who ran the circulation



Kay Morrison, cartoonist, '1959's Roundup of P.L.V.'s Lovely Librarians', black ink on paper.  
Collection of the late John Stanley-Rogers and reproduced with permission of the artist

desk and the young staff assigned there, and her good-natured desk partner, Mick Kelly, who spent equally as much time on his betting system as attending to the users. The Lending Librarian position, the third-most senior position in the whole Library, was occupied by Martin Benedict Ryan. He had enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in May 1917 at age 18 years 8 months, having been a senior cadet for the previous four years. He served on the Western Front from August 1918 until the war's end. After his return to Australia, he completed a BA before joining the Library staff.

In my day, Mr Ryan ruled the Lending Library with an iron rod. We young ones never expected him to acknowledge us, and received any snippets of information from his lovely and devoted secretary, Miss Julia Brady, who, after her retirement, became a nun. Typically, Mr Ryan, 'Marty' to the juniors, held court before the Library opened with morning tea on one of the large tables in the Reading Room where he was frequently joined by various friends from Melbourne's literary world. These included James Florance, a former teacher at Caulfield Grammar School, publisher and father of renowned actress Sheila Florance; the journalist and biographer Cyril Pearl and his glamorous second wife and research assistant, Patricia 'Paddy' Donohoe; and Frank Scully, the DLP member of the Victorian Parliament from 1955 to 1958.

As Cadet Attendant, my daily duties besides reshelfing books included serving on the circulation desk, and book processing under the redoubtable Miss Veronica Anderson, 'Handy Andy' to the disrespectful young people under her direction. Miss Anderson, a book-binder by profession, had been seconded on a permanent basis to the Library from the Government Printing Office. She had quite a number of beginners in her charge, all wearing unflattering beetroot-coloured smocks, including Kay Morrison (Scott), a talented cartoonist who moonlighted as a fashion model between desk shifts; Anna Hamilton (Griffiths), a fine arts graduate whose daughter is actor Rachel Griffiths; Annette Donovan (Culley) and Judy Warner (Timms), who were devoted to the Library's country borrowers; Bernice Donnellan, who worked in both the Country Section and on the Reference desk and, later, progressed to the Victorian Parliamentary Library for a number of years before joining the staff of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library; and Minnie Greenwood, who went on to a successful career in municipal libraries in New South Wales.

It was Minnie who presented me with a dachshund pup for my 17th birthday. In order to put this very young animal out of harm's way, I placed him in my locker until the end of the day when I could take him home on the tram. His whimpering attracted the attention of Mr Ryan who tracked down the tiny culprit and demanded an explanation. Shaking in terror and fully expecting instant dismissal, I haltingly explained that it was my birthday, and that the dog was a gift. To my amazement, Marty smiled and said: 'In that case, I think you should take the rest of the day off!'

It was during my time in the Lending Library that some more experienced hands took me on a tour behind the scenes of the Library building. Up in the dizzy heights of the Dome annulus above the book stacks, there was a small locked door that led onto an outside ledge – part of the architectural structure of the Dome. On the walls of the landing just in front of this door were scrawled a hundred or so signatures, mostly of staff members, some who rose to high places. These included the then-young Barrett Reid, who signed himself 'Barrie Reid 1952 – Ern's Pater-Mater' (referring to the Ern Malley hoax of 1944 when intentionally poor poetry was submitted under a fictitious name to a literary journal, and gained publication),<sup>7</sup> and Walter Boyd, later Chief Cataloguer. Some of these graffiti artists added pointed but quite mysterious messages below their signatures – a notable one being a tragic 'Betrayed,' which had the effect of making my demure signature and the date (1959) seem altogether too positive!

The most alarming duty that I and a few other young colleagues were required to perform was serving afternoon tea to the members of the Library



Adrian Flint, photographer, Dome annulus near roof, graffiti found on the ceiling at the top of the spiral staircase, including names of staff, some dated from the 1920s to the 1960s, c. 1990–95, Pictures Collection, H2008.129/3

Trustees at their monthly meetings. Among them were Alfred McMicken, founder of the Library Association of Victoria, Frank Crean MLA, and John Rossiter, then MLA for Brighton and Assistant Minister of Education. The Chairman at that time was Rev. C Irving Benson, first appointed a Trustee of the Public Library, National Gallery and National Museums of Victoria in 1942, and rising to Chairman in 1946, a position he held until 1965. Knighted in 1963, Sir Irving ('Swirling Benson' to the irreverent among us!) gave outstanding service to the development of the State Library and municipal libraries across Victoria. In honour of his long and valuable promotion of libraries, the exhibition hall in the new La Trobe Library, which was opened in 1965, was named the Irving Benson Hall in 1967.

#### Country Borrowers' Service

After six years in the Lending Library, my ambition was to work in the Country Borrowers' Service, managed by the capable Joan Winduss, and later by the elegant and highly regarded Rennie Jones (Lyne-Brown). Rennie was later to become Director of the Women's Bureau in the Federal Department of Labour and National Service. A precursor of the Country Borrower's Service were the Travelling Libraries – 'itinerating libraries'<sup>8</sup> to circulate books to 'inhabitants of inland towns' – and the Melbourne Public Library was the first in the world to inaugurate such a system.<sup>9</sup> Books were housed on shelves in specially made oak

cases with sliding doors and brass corners, and sent by rail to central organisations such as mechanics' institutes, literary groups and even lighthouses and, later, to municipal branch libraries in small towns. From these central locations, the books were borrowed by local people and those from outlying properties. The Travelling Libraries, in my time run by Geoff Dunn, continued operating until their disbandment as one of the recommendations of the Jungwirth Board of Inquiry into Library Services in Victoria in 1964.<sup>10</sup>

The Country Borrowers' Service had been established in 1920 as a service to individual Victorians who lived more than 10 miles (16 kilometres) from the Melbourne General Post Office. Before the widespread development of public libraries in rural areas, the service provided the only access to books for many country people. Members would submit reading lists of titles or subjects of interest from which staff would make suitable selections, and parcels of books, carefully wrapped by long-time staff member Gerald Connell, were sent free of charge by rail or post. Appreciative letters from all parts of the state were regularly received by the staff and often there were glimpses of local colour, describing how the lambing was going, harrowing details of a drought or, perhaps, more personal notes about the borrowers themselves. Every Christmas was marked by the arrival of a case or two of oranges from members in the Riverina, and boxes of chocolates for the staff to share.

A part of Victoria's history came to an end when the Country Borrowers' Service closed on 30 June 1981 after 61 years of long and useful service to Victorian residents.<sup>11</sup> Operated as part of the new External Services Section since 1971, there were only 70 country borrowers at the time it ceased operation in 1981, in contrast to its peak in 1965/66 of 7000 members borrowing 61,377 books in that year. The service had become uneconomic and redundant with more than 99 per cent of Victorians served by municipal libraries. It was considered that staff time would be better spent providing a back-up service to municipal libraries, which had expanded rapidly. Despite the fact that people were receiving much better service from their local public libraries, it was certainly the passing of an era.

### Promotions

### Serials

For three years after my foray into the Country Borrowers' Service, I was deputy to Ray Cowling, the Serials Librarian, and also working as a Library Officer in the Inquiry Room of the Reference Library. Those were the days when I frequently ran up and down the spiral staircase to the stacks in my stiletto heels and short skirts to retrieve particular books to help users. At that time, I thought



Leone Mills, photographer, John Feely, Patricia Reynolds and Rev. Sir Irving Benson at the opening of the La Trobe Library, in the foyer near the entrance to the ground floor reading room, 29 March 1965, Pictures Collection, H27871

nothing of scaling the heights of the rickety ladders in the Reading Room to locate books for users who were too afraid to go up so high. In later years, the height of the bookshelves was reduced to a more reachable altitude.

I was seconded in 1970 for ten weeks as Officer-in-Charge of the Country Borrowers' Service. I was then appointed as deputy to the Lending Librarian, the scholarly PVL Garrett. Philip Garrett was a distinguished reference librarian with an incredible memory for facts and sources who had previously headed the Research Department with great success for a number of years.

#### Lending Library

The Lending Library was on the corner of La Trobe and Swanston streets, and Mr Garrett's office overlooked the intersection through big beautiful windows that are now a feature of the Mr Tulk cafe. In those days, the Travellers' Arms Hotel was on the south-west corner of the intersection and, despite the fact

that he brought his lunch from home every day and kept it safely in the top drawer of his enormous antique desk, Phil Garrett adjourned to 'The Travellers' at noon each day. On more than one occasion, I had to retrieve him from the bar for his next appointment – signalling to him from the doorway, since at that time, women were not permitted in public bars. Always with a smile on his face, he was never adversely affected by his 'liquid lunch'. Among his many visitors were a number of well-known authors and journalists who depended on him for the countless bibliographies, snippets of relevant information and, I suspect, even draft chapters for their next publications.

It was through Phil Garrett that one of the State Library's greatest treasures had come to the collection in 1954 in a serendipitous way, as often the best gems do. He had been idly rummaging among the dusty shelves of the secondhand bookshop of H Evans & Co. in Swanston Street, and had stumbled upon a volume of early unidentified photographs between faded covers, wrapped in brown paper, and tied up with an old piece of string. The parcel had intrigued him, so he had bought it for ten guineas, suspecting that it might be of more interest than was obvious at a casual glance. It turned out to be Antoine Fauchery and Richard Daintree's exceptionally rare volume of early photographs of Melbourne and its eminent residents, and of the goldfields in 1858. The remarkable fact about this album is that the Fauchery–Daintree collaboration produced such high-quality photographs so early in the history of photography, providing a rare and invaluable record of life in Victoria in the late 1850s.

With Phil Garrett's retirement in November 1970, I was Acting Lending Librarian. At that stage, the Lending Library was in the process of being wound down after a long and honorable history of 79 years. The main reason for its closure and, 10 years later, the winding up of the Country Borrowers' Service, was the increasingly wide coverage of Victoria by municipal public and regional libraries. Nevertheless, it was with a deep feeling of sadness that I had to close for the last time the huge green double doors onto La Trobe Street of the State Lending Library on 27 February 1971. The stock itself had its swansong with a huge public book sale held in the Irving Benson Hall and the north-east courtyard in the early 1990s. I well remember the long queue of eager book buyers who carried off with them treasures from the old Lending Library.

### Study

#### The Library Training School

Working as I did with such a bright and talented group of staff in the Lending Library, many of whom had university degrees or library qualifications, it soon dawned on me that I should follow their lead. I began a long course of

part-time study by enrolling at George Taylor and Staff, later Taylors College, which offered specialised programs in university preparation at premises in the Causeway, off Bourke Street, Melbourne.

On completing my Matriculation Certificate at Taylors, I enrolled in 1963 at the Library Training School at the State Library. This small academy had been founded in 1948, with Frank Perry – later Victorian Parliamentary Librarian – as inaugural principal, to instruct students, mostly from the State Library and from public libraries in preparation for professional library work in a variety of different libraries across the state.

The principal of the Library Training School when I began my course was Miss Ursula O'Connor who had begun her long career in the Lending Library in 1927. She was Head Cataloguer from 1947 until 1960 when she was appointed principal of the Library Training School, a position she held until her retirement in 1970.

Miss O'Connor enjoyed the company of young people, and was a wise mentor for so many of us new to the library profession. Her gentle appearance belied a strong resolution to accept nothing but the highest standards for librarianship, and a firm commitment to equal opportunity for women in the library profession.

I recall that Miss O'Connor taught us cataloguing, Barrett Reid from the Free Library Service Board (later Public Libraries Division), usually with cigarette in hand, lectured inspiring on Library Administration, and Joan McMicken from the Library staff took us through the history of libraries. Among the specialist guest lecturers from time to time were Gordon Kirby from the State Library's reference staff, later to join the staff of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology for the undergraduate librarianship degree, whose approach to reference work was amusing and enlightening, Beatrice Mattei of the long red-painted fingernails who worked in the Library's Cataloguing Department, and Margaret Ingham, a children's books guru who personally established the famed Children's Research Collection in the State Library.

I felt really very fortunate to study within the State Library with all its resources, and to have such dedicated professionals as guides. What amounted to a librarianship degree qualification took usually three years to complete, equipping students with firstly, the Library Association of Australia's Preliminary Certificate, which led, with an advanced course, to its Registration Certification. I qualified as an associate of the Library Association of Australia with the Registration Certificate in 1967 a year late, funnily enough having failed first time round and having to repeat the Library Administration subject, which was taught so brilliantly by Barrie Reid.

### Monash

After the Library Registration training course, my next venture into education began at Monash University. Once enrolled for an arts degree in 1969 with French and English majors, I was given time off to attend lectures and tutorials at far-off Clayton. Public transport to the campus being woefully inadequate, I was permitted to park my black Morris Minor in one of the Library's four courtyards so as to travel there and back and still play my part on reference-desk rosters. My aunt had sold me the car for one dollar to make my life that much easier. If it had not been for that little Morris, I don't think I would have lasted the distance! I completed the BA in 1973, just as I assumed the role of External Services Librarian.

### External Services Section

The role of the State Library's External Services Section, comprising a Municipal Support Service and the Country Borrowers' Service, was to give both back-up in the form of loans and information to public libraries, and to continue the direct loans to country residents without local library facilities.

The External Services Section had been brought into being in 1971 as the result of a recommendation of the Jungwirth Report into library services in Victoria: that 'The State Lending Branch should be incorporated into the Extension and Circulation Division' of a proposed Victorian Library Authority or, in effect, the Library Council of Victoria.<sup>12</sup> Sally Newman from the City of Essendon Public Library was appointed External Services Librarian, and I was nominated her deputy. The function of the External Services Section's Municipal Support Service was to provide specialised books from the State Library collection, as well as bibliographical and information services to public libraries. With Sally's extensive experience in the public library world, the service developed and was of great advantage in supporting the limited resources of municipal libraries. On her departure in 1973, I took on the role of External Services Librarian.

I spent nine tremendously happy years in this position. I had rather a rocky start, when I was advised by the Principal Librarian, Miss Margery Ramsay, that the External Services Section was to move from the north-west wing to the Dome basement. She took me to view the space, which bore a strong resemblance to the black hole of Calcutta! It had no natural light, no floor covering and no furniture. Despite my usually fairly stoic personality, I burst into tears and said that it should not be an option. Miss Ramsay must have taken pity on me, for she immediately said that I could have the budget to have this dungeon painted, replace an obscured wall onto the Dome moat with clear



Left: Photographer unknown, Dianne Reilly in the External Services Section, 1977,  
Private collection

Right: Photographer unknown, External Services Section office, Dome basement,  
State Library of Victoria, 1977, Pictures Collection, H2013.383/1

windows, my choice of carpet, and all the necessary help to move the 20 or so staff and furniture to the new quarters. Once proper lighting and a lovely green carpet, potted plants and a few carefully chosen framed posters were installed, all our spirits lifted, and the External Services staff were to enjoy a subterranean life for many years.

There was a wonderfully enthusiastic group of librarians in the section, headed by the dedicated and efficient Susan Bray, and by Samia Gamali, Bernice Voo and Heather Evans. We offered regular staff training to municipal librarians in the finer points of inter-library loans, and numbers of the staff toured the state with me in the Library's car, visiting every public library in Victoria several times over the years to promote the Library's services. Those were really exhilarating and informative times for us city librarians. The services that the External Services staff offered to public and government department libraries were of the first order and greatly appreciated by our colleagues in other libraries needing the support of the State Library collections.

It was during this time that I discovered in a corner of the Dome basement, hidden under building detritus, a very dirty marble statuette. As it transpired, it

was a sculpture of *Rebecca at the Well*, possibly a product of one of the flourishing Italian sculpture studios of the 19th century. Unbeknown to me at this time, the work had been acquired in 1876 for the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria. With the division of the Gallery and Library collections in 1946, it was one of the items that had remained with the Library. She had pride of place in my office in the External Services Section, and shared my office for the period of my tenure as La Trobe Librarian. *Rebecca* is now safely housed in the Library's Pictures Collection.

I vividly recall one occasion when I unwittingly incurred the great displeasure of the Acquisitions Librarian, Peg Anthony. One of my duties was to purchase new books to meet the needs of the External Services users, and I visited quite a number of booksellers on a more-or-less regular basis. Among other subjects, I had ordered a book on belly dancing to cater for a current surge of interest in the community. Miss Anthony was not at all pleased, and was sorry that she had to remind me that it was the State Library collection for which I was buying books, and I would do well to remember that I was spending public funds. I had to eat humble pie, but these days, the art form is well represented in the Library's collection.

#### Barrett Reid

Perhaps the strongest influence on my professional development was my friendship with Barrett Reid, charismatic librarian, poet and long-time poetry editor (and from 1988 to 1995, editor) of the literary journal *Overland*. He had begun his career at the State Library of Victoria in 1952, gaining experience in most departments of the Library, including the Free Library Service Board where he was Field Officer from 1957. I first encountered him when he gave lectures at the Library Training School.

After a period as Chief Cataloguer from 1961 to 1966, he became first Executive Officer of the State Library's Public Libraries Division from 1967 until his retirement due to ill health in 1982. He was a strong advocate and very successful in his aim for universal public library services across the state, and when he left the Library, 98 per cent of Victoria's 211 local councils provided public library services.<sup>13</sup>

It was Barrie who encouraged me and others on the staff to attend the Library Association of Australia's biennial conference in Canberra in 1965. Not only was I exposed to the forward thinking of so many eminent library professionals, but Barrie included me and Christine Ingamells, the young librarian with whom I attended the conference, in dinners and social gatherings mostly *not* associated with the conference. We met so many writers and actors,

all friends and acquaintances of Barrie, who politely showed an interest in these two unsophisticated girls. Our eyes were really opened – to us, they were all so elegant, so urbane and great company – and we enjoyed it all.

In the mid-1970s, while I was External Services Librarian, Barrie was concerned that any experience I might have had with public libraries was city-based. He arranged for me to spend a week at the Glenelg Regional Library in Hamilton, and drove me there himself to introduce me to the Regional Librarian, Miss Katherine Robertson. I stayed for the week in the Botanical Motel, adjacent to the historic Hamilton Botanic Gardens developed to a plan by William Guilfoyle, the curator of Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens. As it happened, the Western District was in the middle of a heatwave, with temperatures every day I was there above 35 degrees Celsius. The motel was not air-conditioned in this era, and I had brought with me only unsuitable dresses and high heels – not really the garb for my first venture on a bookmobile. At one stopping place in Coleraine, a kindly farmer, who had just collected his new supply of books, invited this wilting damsel in distress to the Coleraine pub for a gratefully accepted shandy. It was a real act of mercy!

Miss Robertson and I were kindly invited for drinks one evening to Murndal, the historic home of the Winter Cooke pastoral family, about 30 kilometres north-west of Hamilton. It was a glorious evening, and I remember that we took our drinks outside, through the formal gardens and past the Gallipoli oak, and down to the coolness of the Wannon River. The historian Margaret Kiddie had earlier studied the archive of this property and the generations of Winter Cookes who had lived there.<sup>14</sup> Some years later the family presented this treasure trove of Western District history to the La Trobe Library.

Barrie Reid was awarded an honorary doctorate of laws by the University of Melbourne in 1995, and part of the citation really summed up his distinguished impact on the life of so many:

Barrett Reid's breadth of interests, taste and activities has affirmed the values of an accessible culture of the highest standards. He has sought to make books and ideas and works of artistic creativity available for the widest audience. His support for young artists, writers and librarians is legendary. Selflessly and often unobtrusively, he has ... enriched the life of all Australians.

### French exchange

In 1977, I was awarded a French Government scholarship to work in libraries in Paris (I had been prompted to apply by Barrett Reid). I spent my time working with the collections and services of both the Bibliothèque Nationale and the

library within the newly constructed Centre Pompidou, as well as gaining experience in various outlying public libraries. Just before I was to leave, Miss Reynolds, the La Trobe Librarian, asked me to search archives there to find out whatever I could about a Frenchman named Antoine Fauchery whose 1858 album of photographs of Melbourne and regional districts is, as I have previously noted, in the Library collection. During my months in Paris, I discovered what an important photographer Fauchery was, and a great deal about his firsthand accounts of Melbourne and life on the Victorian goldfields, and later, his experiences in China with the French forces during the second Opium War.

On my return in 1978, I enrolled for an MA in Australian Studies at Monash University to study Fauchery further. A by-product of all this was my first book, in collaboration with a colleague, Jennifer Carew, called *Sun Pictures of Victoria – the Fauchery-Daintree Collection 1858*. This was really my debut in historical research on my own account, as opposed to my years as a librarian researching diverse subjects for the Library's clientele.

### At the Library in the 1970s

#### State Archives

The State Archives department was first established within the Public Library of Victoria in 1955. It was not until 1973, following years of government lobbying by the Senior Archivist Harry Nunn, that the *Public Records Act* established the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) independent of the Library Council. After temporary accommodation at Laverton, the PROV collections had moved by 2004 to a new purpose-built repository in North Melbourne for storage of more than 100 kilometres of records dating from the mid-1830s to the present day. Prior to the departure of the government records from the Library site, staff worked on the files, retrieving them for researchers from the Verdon basement just off the Dome basement. The talented archivists who passed the door of the External Services Section, including Andrew Lemon, Judy Cordingley, Doug Bishop and Bill Russell, all went on to outstanding success in diverse fields.

#### Patricia Reynolds and her staff

Miss Reynolds had overseen the establishment of the separate La Trobe Library collection, creating it from the State Library holdings of published and unique material relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. In March 1965 shortly before the new library opened to the public, she was appointed Deputy La Trobe Librarian to manage the La Trobe Library – the Chief Librarian holding the official title of La Trobe Librarian. Pat Reynolds was particularly committed to the training of the La Trobe staff, explained by



Leone Mills, Library photographer, Ground floor of the La Trobe Library taken from the first floor mezzanine, 1975. Photograph for the 1976 Victorian Year Book. Pictures Collection, H37143

her earlier role as assistant in the Research Department to that celebrated librarian Phil Garrett.

Many who worked with Pat Reynolds went on to make major contributions to the development of other Australian library collections and to archival management. Those whom I knew well included writer and historian Dr John Thompson who was Manuscripts Librarian during the 1970s before joining the staff of the National Library of Australia where he held a number of senior positions until 1999; Ross Gibbs who succeeded John Thompson as Manuscripts Librarian, before going on to become the Keeper of Public Records and Director of the Public Record Office Victoria from 1991 until early 2003, and subsequently, Director General, National Archives of Australia from 2003 to 2011; John Arnold who worked at the La Trobe Library from 1975 and 1980, and then returned as Deputy La Trobe Librarian in late 1983. In 1989, he joined the new National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University, becoming Director and retiring as Associate Professor in 2014;

Tony Marshall, Manuscripts Librarian, who later became Senior Librarian, Heritage Collections, State Library of Tasmania.

On Pat Reynolds' retirement in 1979, Miss Kathleen Young, former La Trobe Research Librarian, was Acting La Trobe Librarian for ten months until April 1980 when she was formally appointed La Trobe Librarian until her retirement in June 1981.

### La Trobe Librarian

Warren Horton's arrival in 1981 as State Librarian of Victoria had signalled a new era for the organisation. His tenure began with a major restructure of senior staffing into renamed divisions, with directors recruited from across Australia.

Towards the end of 1981, he suggested to me that I should apply for the vacant position of La Trobe Librarian. Although I had great qualms about my lack of any history qualifications, I was encouraged to take the position, the State Librarian telling me that I didn't really need to know too much about Victoria's history – I should just surround myself with people who did – and 'get on with the job of running the La Trobe Library!' I had had the benefit of a three-month placement some time earlier as an assistant to Patricia Reynolds. This was in 1966, and she had asked me to continue in the La Trobe Library. However, having just accepted the position of Deputy Serials Librarian, I felt obliged to decline, much to my regret at the time. It was one of those missed opportunities!

After deep deliberation, I decided to put in an application. I was then managing a service that supported the libraries of government departments and the more-than-100 public libraries around the state with books and information services. It was a job I loved! I had worked from the age of 16 in every department of this great Library, and had studied part-time to gather my qualifications. But could I step into such a role that had been made her own by Pat Reynolds, an outstanding librarian? Did I really want to move away from the area I knew so well?

I made the decision to apply, and was appointed as La Trobe Librarian in February 1982. This role had me placed fairly and squarely as the manager of one of the three most important collections of Australiana in the country – the others being the National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library in Sydney. At that time, the La Trobe Library occupied a separate purpose-built building within the State Library complex, and had 54 staff. I must say that, from the very beginning, the La Trobe staff were wonderfully supportive. Paul Macpherson, a fine reference and research librarian who had been acting in the



Photographer unknown, Reference and Information Centre, Dome ground floor, State Library of Victoria, 1980, Pictures Collection, H2013.383/7

position, was a kind and generous friend who later went on to a career at the Australian War Memorial before going to Tasmania as a freelance consultant. He then became Records Manager at the University of New South Wales.

John Arnold had returned to the Library as Deputy La Trobe Librarian in late 1983. As a result of a reclassification of staff positions in late 1985, his role was redesignated La Trobe Research Librarian, although still with the responsibilities of deputy La Trobe Librarian. He and I worked very well together.

One of the best outcomes at this time for the base-grade professional staff was the creation of ten Team Leader positions across the Library. These gave a career path for the many talented younger librarians. Amongst those who became Team Leaders in La Trobe with enhanced responsibility and more status were Richard Overell (afterwards Rare Books Librarian at Monash University), Deirdre Wilmott (subsequently Newspaper Librarian), Mandy Bede (later to become a lawyer), Kirsty McRobert (now Digital Collection Access Team Leader), Des Cowley (now the Library's History of the Book Manager), Marg McCormack (later Australian History and Literature Librarian) and Alannah Kelly. They all contributed to the strong collegiality and commitment that was a feature of the La Trobe staff.

Marg McCormack followed John Arnold as the La Trobe Research Librarian for some years, before taking on the role as the astute and efficient Australian History and Literature Librarian. Among other valued members of the research team were Shona Dewar, who was to join the staff of the Australian Manuscripts Collection; Anne Glover, whose book *Victorian Treasures* did much to publicise the La Trobe collection; Alannah Kelly, who represented the State Library as a partner of the *Argus* Indexing Project, liaising with La Trobe University and efficiently organising the indexing team under the Chief Editor Geraldine Suter; Giovanna D'Abaco, who later became the Library's Events Manager following experience at Tourism Victoria; and Judy Macdonald, diligent research librarian and indexer *extraordinaire* who did so much as part of the indexing team.

There had been a period of stringency at the Library for a few years from the late 1970s. In that period, collection development slowed greatly, especially in the areas of pictures, manuscripts and rare printed materials. Thankfully, this was not a permanent malaise, and I had timed my arrival in the La Trobe to when their importance to Victorian historical research was reinstated, with Warren Horton's considerable support, as a central budget focus of the State Library's collection.

There had been a hiatus too in exhibitions, for which the La Trobe Library had been justly famous under Pat Reynolds, with more than 20 displays held in the Irving Benson Hall showcasing the collection. Exhibitions were reintroduced on a regular basis from 1982 after Warren Horton and the then Minister for the Arts, Norman Lacy, had bid successfully for the Port Phillip Association Papers at an auction in Sydney. The Port Phillip Association was a small syndicate of investors in Hobart who, in 1835, had hoped to develop pastoral activities across Bass Strait in the Port Phillip District of New South Wales. John Batman was sent to investigate prospects there. He found the land excellent for grazing, and when he met a group of the Woi wurrung people, he persuaded them to sign an agreement, the Batman treaty, with which he claimed to have purchased 600,000 acres (240,000 hectares) for the syndicate.

To showcase these important foundation documents to the Victorian people, the Library's first major exhibition in 1982 was 'Trespassers and Intruders: the Port Phillip Association and the Founding of Melbourne'. This exhibition was curated by two staff from the Research team, Richard Overell, who was appointed Rare Books Librarian at Monash University in 1988, and Gillian Hoysted, who later became a senior Victorian public servant. It was at the launch of this exhibition that I learned a salutary lesson in the art of serving drinks. The President of the Library Council at this time was the rather gruff Sir John Starke, a Supreme Court Judge and staunch opponent of the death penalty,

who had been legally bound to sentence Ronald Ryan to death in 1966. Sir John, a strong supporter of free libraries in Victoria for more than thirty years, drank only scotch at such functions. When I served him one, accompanied by a rather large water jug, the only one available, he set me straight: 'Listen girlie, next time you serve scotch make sure you offer the water from a whisky jug, not from a vase meant for flowers!' Although mortified at the time, I have not made the same mistake again.

### Friends

As the new La Trobe Librarian, I was required to attend *ex officio* the committee meetings of the Friends of the La Trobe Library. This group had been formed in 1966 by a number of Melburnians with academic interests 'to publicise the Library, to attract financial support for it, to help to fill gaps in the book-collection, and to encourage the donation of manuscript and other material'. From 1968 onwards, the Friends produced the scholarly *La Trobe Library Journal* (*The La Trobe Journal* from 1998) with Dr Geoffrey Serle as first editor.

The committee I met at my first meeting included Professor AGL Shaw, President, Dr Geoffrey Serle, Vice-President, SRC Wood, Treasurer, and the retired bookseller John Holroyd, Secretary. The literary historian Dr Lurline Stuart was elected President in 1982, a post she held with distinction until she retired from the committee in 1990. Her great enthusiasm for the State Library where she had carried out much research gave her a great understanding and sympathy for the needs of the organisation. Under her presidency, the Friends expanded in 1983 to become the Friends of the State Library of Victoria. She also oversaw the instigation of an annual Friends' dinner. The first was a period costume function at William Angliss College to mark Victoria's 150th celebrations in 1985. The dinners soon became an annual fixture at the Melbourne Savage Club and, for more than 20 years, were an important part of the Friends' fund-raising activities.

In 1992, the Renaissance Appeal, designed to focus on raising capital funds to support projects relevant to the Library's building redevelopment, was founded by Mary Baillieu with the assistance of an active committee. This committee operated alongside the Friends, and in 1994 with a seeding grant from the state government, developed into the State Library Foundation, with Andrea Coote as Executive Director, followed in the position by Jack Moshakis. The Foundation had the special role of securing contributions from the corporate and private sectors to assist in the development of the collections. With the success of this body, the Friends voted in 1997 to be absorbed within the Foundation, which took over responsibility for publishing *The La Trobe Journal*.

### Readers' tickets

At the time I arrived in the La Trobe Library, permanent readers' tickets had been issued since mid-1970 by invitation to a small number of long-term users. From varied points of view, they served very little purpose beyond identifying those reliable people, mainly academics and known authors, to whom access would always be granted to early newspapers, manuscripts, historical pictures and rare books in the First-floor Reading Room. Among those holding readers' tickets were well-known regular Library users Weston Bate, Les Blake, Margaret Carnegie, Keith Dunstan, Kenneth Hince, Wallace Kirsop, Rabbi John Levi, Stephen Murray-Smith, Cyril Pearl, AGL Shaw, Marjorie Tipping, Ian Turner, and SRC Wood. The permanent readers' ticket system came to an end in 1983, being considered of no real value; day passes for use of original materials were substituted for them. The First-floor Reading Room was really a precursor of today's secure Heritage Collections Reading Room, where rare items are consulted under supervision by all researchers who need to use them.

### Collection managers

The colleagues with whom I worked particularly closely when I was La Trobe Librarian were the Heritage Collections managers. Over the years we developed a very strong collegiate relationship, and this achieved wonderful results since we all had the collections and service to users as our primary focus. All were a great pleasure to work with:

Christine Downer was curator of the Pictures Collection from 1981 to 2001. She used her fine arts expertise, knowledge of Victoria's history and her contacts to build the Pictures Collection as the finest historical picture resource in Australia. Her exceptional organisational skills were key to the cataloguing and organisation of the collection, and this carries over to her work in retirement as a volunteer with the Library's book plates' collection.

In 2002, Madeleine Say succeeded Christine as Pictures Librarian, using her previous valuable experience in a photographic library, her personable approach to users and her knowledge of Australian history to develop the collection.

Jock Murphy was Manuscripts Librarian for 17 years from 1991. In this role, he was responsible for acquiring and managing for the Library a number of nationally significant heritage archival collections, bringing into play his great diplomatic skills and encouragement to donors. Acquiring and organising storage and cataloguing for the Coles-Myer retailing archive of more than 30,000 items, requiring one linear kilometre of shelving, was perhaps his greatest challenge and achievement.

Des Cowley, Rare Printed Collections Manager until a recent title change,

has had more than 20 years' experience working with rare books and other rare printed collections at the State Library. He has an extraordinary knowledge of the history of the book and he is unfailingly generous in sharing it with others. Des is co-curator of the State Library's permanent exhibition *Mirror of the World: Books and Ideas* (now called *World of the Book*) and co-author with Clare Williamson of *The World of the Book*, published by the Miegunyah Press in 2007.

The Heritage Collections managers and I were strongly supported by Shane Carmody after he came to the State Library from the National Archives of Australia in 2001, as the new Director of Collections and Access. His arrival was a like a breath of fresh air, and it signalled a new era in building the La Trobe heritage collections. His passion for developing them was immediately apparent, and his great knowledge of holdings was legendary. He was supportive of every well-researched proposal put to him for the purchase of fine pictures, manuscripts and rare books, and I cannot remember a time when funding for acquisitions was a problem for him. His significant achievements were many. He secured funding for the building at Ballarat of the first purpose-built off-site store for library collections, and he masterminded *Love and Devotion*, the largest exhibition of Persian manuscripts in Australian history. *For this, he was able to bring to the State Library in 2012 more than 60 beautiful examples of handmade illustrated Persian books from the collections of the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford.* Shane has published widely on the history of collections and various aspects of art and history, and continues to do so in his current role as Senior Development Manager for the University of Melbourne Library.

For many years, the Genealogy collection, managed in the La Trobe by Frances Brown's exemplary proficiency in the subject, delivered excellent service, mostly to family historians, before becoming a stand-alone service point. During my time, Deirdre Wilmott was Newspaper Librarian administering the vast Newspaper collection of more than 3000 titles, a remarkable resource for researchers.

#### **Field historians**

When I took up my role in February 1982, Patsy Adam-Smith, an energetic, vivacious and focused historian, was on the La Trobe staff as the Manuscripts Field Officer. Her role was to collect historical material related to Victoria on the tours she made on behalf of the Library around the state. Patsy had had an interesting career before coming to the Library, having enlisted as a Voluntary Aid Detachment during World War II and, later, she was the first woman to be articled as a radio officer when working on an Australian merchant ship from 1954 until 1960. Her many adventures are well documented in her numerous

books. Patsy built on Margaret Kiddle's earlier work in bringing to the Library records of pastoral properties, especially from the Western District, and also laid the foundation for the strong holdings of servicemen's and women's papers. She resigned as Field Officer in 1982, due to ill health.

Adam-Smith's successors were Patsy Hardy,<sup>15</sup> whose interests lay more in politics and urban social history; Tom Griffiths, later a distinguished writer and Professor of History in the Research School of Social Sciences, and Director of the Centre for Environmental History at the Australian National University, who developed the collection of material from non-Anglo-Saxon groups in the community, worked with amateur sporting bodies and, especially, developed important links with historical and other societies in country areas; Jenny Keating, who built on the work that had begun in the 1970s of collecting records of welfare and social action bodies; and Dermot McCaul, who worked briefly but invaluabley on collecting the records of theatrical and musical groups before taking up the position of Arts Librarian. They were followed in the role by historians Sue Hodges and Dr Frances Thiele, who actively sought original source material about Victoria and Victorians, and extended the collections in multiple directions, especially veterans' history and relations with Aboriginal Victorians.

From the mid-1990s, the Koori Oral History Program, managed first by Dr Wayne Atkinson, and then by John 'Sandy' Atkinson, was based at the State Library under the direction of the La Trobe Librarian. Recollections of many Elders were recorded, and were later transferred to the Koorie Heritage Trust, which acted as a 'Keeping Place' for the Koori community, preserving and protecting Koori culture and heritage for years to come.

### Scholars

Among the most interesting people I encountered in the course of my work were many eminent historians, including Geoffrey Serle, whom I met when he was President of the Friends of the La Trobe Library at the time he was writing his biography of Sir John Monash (published in 1982); AGL (Alan) Shaw, always known fondly as 'AGL', a foundation committee member of the Friends group, and first President, and a generous benefactor of the State Library; Manning Clark – I met him, complete with goatee beard and impressive black Akubra, as he worked in the Secure Reading Room on the sixth volume of his renowned *A History of Australia*. Geoffrey Blainey was a frequent user of the La Trobe, as was Michael Cannon, while he was researching his excellent series of books on Victoria's social history. Lloyd Robson, Tasmanian history specialist, was often to be found researching in the reading rooms, as were Weston Bate, Graeme Davison, Barry Jones, Davis McCaughey and Stephen Murray-Smith who all

called the Library a home away from home. Germaine Greer was a familiar sight in the reading rooms when researching her book *Daddy, we hardly knew you* (1989) and one or two other titles.

### Highs and a (few) lows

I am very lucky in that I had many more highs than lows during my long career at the State Library and, in fact, the lows often had a positive side to them.

By far the best thing to happen was that, on 23 February 1983, I met John Drury, the man who was, five years later, to become my husband, during one of his research forays into the La Trobe. He was hoping to find out something about the artist Berthe Mouchette, whose large portrait of his step-great-grandmother Lucinda Gullett he had recently acquired. He did discover some details about the artist who, among other achievements, had founded the Alliance Française in Australia, and about the painting's subject, Lucinda Gullett, the first woman journalist in Australia who wrote under the pseudonym of 'Humming Bee'. The painting now hangs in the Red Rotunda at the Library. As far as John and I were concerned, as they say: 'The rest is history!'

A highlight for me was the management of the State Library's Creative Fellowships Program. From its inception in 2003, I worked closely, up until my retirement, with a wide variety of scholars with diverse interests. I got to know all 'my' fellows very well. They included, among the many, historians Robyn Annear, Caroline Clemente, Genevieve Grieves, Michael McKernan, Ross McMullin and Carolyn Rasmussen; artists Juan Davila, Kate Daw, Judy Horacek, Bruno Leti, Peter Lyssiotis and John Wolseley; musicians Richard Divall and Marshall McGuire; playwrights and actors Jack Hibberd, Lally Katz, Brian Lipson and John Romeril; and writers Chloe Hooper, Kirsty Murray, Kristin Otto and Arnold Zable. I must say it was a most stimulating and enjoyable role for me, and the Creative Fellowships Program continues to be the envy of artists' development programs elsewhere.

### La Trobe Archive

A collection of papers and other memorabilia described as The La Trobe Archive was offered to the State Library in 1990 by Bernard Quaritch Ltd, antiquarian dealers in London, for \$200,000. I viewed the material on one occasion while I was in London, and I realised it was of impeccable provenance, coming as it did from the Baronne de Blonay's grandson, La Trobe's direct descendant. From my point of view, it went without saying that it belonged in the La Trobe Library. All that was needed was the cash! A degree of networking went on, the players including Andrew Lemon, then President of the Friends' group, businessmen

Nigel Morgan and Alan Scott, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, Professor AGL Shaw and a number of generous Melburnians. Over a period of two years of fund-raising, we were still short of the required amount. I received weekly phone calls from London, with the Quaritch representative enquiring how the campaign was progressing. With other important things to do with my time, I responded to one of these calls saying that we had raised \$180,000 – would that be acceptable? The answer was an immediate ‘yes’ and the purchase was duly concluded.

To supplement information about La Trobe that the collection already held, it had been for some time the ambition of the Library to add copies of the La Trobe correspondence held at the Archives de l’Etat in Neuchâtel. After I had persistently sought permission to copy the manuscript material, in 1999 the Neuchâtel Archivist agreed to the request. My husband John and I extended a holiday with a visit to Switzerland to photocopy over 2000 letters of extended La Trobe family correspondence and to bring it back to the State Library. Before this could take place, I was able to raise enough sponsorship from Fuji-Xerox for a new photocopier for the Neuchâtel Archives, and from Credit Suisse, then under Managing Director John Wylie, now President of the Library Board of Victoria, for accommodation while we spent a week copying the material. Having completed this laborious task, I felt we could not run the risk of being parted from it. All 34 kilograms of copying was placed in a newly purchased suitcase, and John convinced the Gulf Air authorities who agreed that they would be pleased to transport it free of charge to Melbourne.

#### **Closure of the entrance to the La Trobe Library**

A major shock was in store for the La Trobe staff on 6 September 1990. I had been given official sanction to organise a banner to be erected over the La Trobe Street entrance to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of Victoria’s premier Australiana collection. I remember the excitement among the staff that this milestone had been reached. It was all the more painful that, on the day before, I had been called to the State Librarian’s office to be told that, for reasons of economy, the La Trobe Street entrance was to be closed from that day forward. La Trobe Library users were now to enter via the main State Library entrance in Swanston Street. A celebratory afternoon tea had been organised for staff and regular users, and this in fact went ahead, despite the severe blow of what was considered permanent closure of the La Trobe entrance. It was reported in the press that: ‘The La Trobe wing of the State Library, housing Victoria’s most glittering treasury of Australian history, has

closed its La Trobe Street entrance indefinitely because of financial restraints. Ironically, a banner was hoisted above the entrance yesterday to proclaim the La Trobe's 25th anniversary today'.<sup>16</sup>

### **Redundancy**

The worst time for me was in 1997, when the State Library staff structure was to undergo a radical reorganisation. Part of the plan was to greatly reduce the specialist nature of the La Trobe Library, and absorb its function back into the greater State Library. In other words, the State Library was to become a large public library, as opposed to the research library it has traditionally been. I was advised by the State Librarian that my position was to be abolished, and I would be placed on the government's 'redeployment list', hopefully to find a position elsewhere in the Victorian Public Service within three months, and the La Trobe staff would be slotted into the Library's various departments. Once the news was public, all hell broke loose: the staff were distraught, and there was uproar from the Friends of the State Library and from academics in the history departments at Melbourne, Monash and La Trobe universities. Editorials and many 'letters to the editor' from numerous academic and other users of the La Trobe appeared in the *Age*; there was a high-powered deputation to the Premier, Jeff Kennett, protesting this demolition of the Australiana research focus of the State Library and the departure of the La Trobe Librarian.

Wondering what on earth I was to do with my time in enforced redundancy, and at the suggestion of friends in the History Department at the University of Melbourne, I enrolled as a PhD candidate, where I had the great good fortune to have Professor Peter McPhee and Professor Don Garden as my supervisors. The obvious topic for me was Charles Joseph La Trobe, whose archives I had brought into the Library at great expense a few years earlier. In the meantime, sanity prevailed. The proposed restructure of the La Trobe was aborted, and I continued as La Trobe Librarian.

The Library's physical redevelopment marked the move of the La Trobe service point from the discrete building in La Trobe Street to the north-west courtyard as the La Trobe (Australiana) Information Centre. There it remained until, under the leadership of a new State Librarian, Fran Awcock, the La Trobe desk and collection moved to their most recent home under the Dome, renamed the La Trobe Reading Room, on 8 July 2003.

Instead of enjoying some full-time study for the first time in my life, I was once again a part-time student, taking seven years to complete my work on the making of a governor. I often say that these hectic years were the best in my life. John felt that there was another man living in our house but, secretly, I think he

enjoyed the PhD process as much as I did!

Those years researching and writing about La Trobe have certainly focused my attention on the historical character and the man, and luckily, the attention of a number of others. Apart from the publication in 2006 of my thesis by Melbourne University Press, I had been inspired to work on two further books: *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches* in 1999, and his *Australian Notes* in 2006. Fortunately for me, the publication of these two works was sponsored by businessman Bruce Nixon, who was as passionate about La Trobe as I am myself. In fact, Bruce and I first met at an exhibition opening at the Old Treasury Building where we were both, quite independently, studying one of La Trobe's watercolours from the State Library collection while sipping champagne.

Bruce remarked to me: 'You know – La Trobe's sketches are so important that they should be published so that they can be seen by all Victorians'. I answered: 'Oh, I agree – but you probably don't realise that it would be a very expensive exercise!' He replied: 'As a matter of fact, I do realise because I own a publishing company, and you and I should do something about it'. About a year later in 1999, *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Landscapes and Sketches* was published with my introductory essay and launched at Government House by the Governor, Sir James Gobbo. This publication was followed in 2006 by a companion volume, *Charles Joseph La Trobe: Australian Notes 1839–1854*, for which I had transcribed La Trobe's diaries, with his appalling handwriting, and provided the introduction. This was also launched at Government House by the then-Governor, Professor David de Kretser.

In 2001, John Drury and I, together with Bruce Nixon and Richard Heathcote, the Director of Carrick Hill historic house and garden in South Australia, founded the La Trobe Society under the patronage of Victorian Governor of the time, John Landy. The idea was to promote understanding and appreciation in the community of the life, work and times of La Trobe, who had so much to do with the development of Victoria. Among his accomplishments, he and Sir Redmond Barry worked together to establish the Public Library in Melbourne. In 2006, the La Trobe Society commissioned from the Melbourne sculptor Peter Corlett a bronze statue of La Trobe, which was erected on the Library's forecourt.

#### State Librarians and Chief Executives

Extraordinary as it may seem, during my time at the State Library of Victoria, I had the experience of working under the direction of ten State Librarians or Chief Executive Officers. My retirement on 11 March 2008 as La Trobe Librarian and a member of the Senior Management Team was exactly 49 years and 1 day

since I had started in 1959. Remarkable as they were, each in a different way, I had little or much to do with all ten directors:

**Colin A McCallum** held the position of Chief Librarian from 1945 until he retired in 1960. From my experience, he was a courteous and rather formal man, and from our first meeting in 1958, he always remembered that I was 'Miss Reilly'. A major part of his role before his retirement was to have much to do with the completion of plans for the new La Trobe Library wing, in consultation with the Public Works Department of the Victorian Government.

**John A Feely** became Chief Librarian in 1960, taking over the onerous duties of seeing the La Trobe Library project through. We young staff thought he was somewhat gruff but, on closer acquaintance, he was really a charming, scholarly gentleman who walked with a cane, and was friendly to us all. His great claim to fame was his laboriously compiled set of five volumes of indexes to the *Argus* newspaper from its beginnings in 1846 to April 1859, thus creating a resource of ongoing benefit to so many researchers of Victorian colonial history. Sadly he died suddenly in June 1965, just three months before the official opening of the La Trobe Library.

**Thomas Kealy** acted as his successor for two years from 1965. Mr Kealy was a kind and concerned manager who kept the organisation on an even keel until the arrival of the State Librarian in 1966. He retired from his substantive position of Principal Librarian in 1967.

**KAR (Ken) Horn** was appointed first State Librarian of Victoria in 1966, occupying the position until his retirement in 1981. A New Zealander, he had moved to Monash University as Acquisitions Librarian. His appointment to the State Library resulted from the Victorian Government's implementation of the major recommendation of the Jungwirth Report for development of the State Library and for government support for Victorian public libraries. Mr Horn's years at the State Library were marked by the major development of Victorian public libraries. In this period, Margery Ramsay as Principal Librarian oversaw the day-to-day running of the State Library, with Mary Carey as her deputy, managing the recruitment of staff. Although he was an impressive State Librarian, to some staff Mr Horn seemed rather remote. But he was tremendously supportive of staff development for junior librarians. On one occasion, he insisted that I add an extra week to a holiday I had planned in

England to gain some experience of a number of impressive public libraries, and he took a personal hand in making my arrangements.

**Warren Horton's** arrival in 1981 as State Librarian of Victoria signalled a new era for the organisation. He had begun his career in libraries at the State Library of New South Wales, rising through the ranks to become Deputy State Librarian in 1975. He was a larger-than-life character and a gifted off-the-cuff speaker, who had an encyclopaedic knowledge of many subjects, including American history, Australian politics and cricket. His tenure as State Librarian began with an early restructure of senior staffing, and led to the appointment of a number of personalities to management roles. These Directors were Moira McKinnon, Fran Awcock, Susan Acutt and Chris Hannan. It was not always easy to get on with Warren Horton, since he had quite a volatile personality, and did not suffer fools gladly. There were a number of memorable occasions when I (as did others) found myself on the wrong side of him. He was appointed Director-General of the National Library of Australia in 1985, holding the position there for 14 years until 1999.

**Jane La Scala** came to the role of State Librarian in 1986 from a career in public libraries, followed by a period working with Barrett Reid in the Free Library Service Board, later the Public Libraries Division. She retired in 1989.

**Leah Mann** held the position of Director and Chief Executive Officer from 1989 until 1993. I was impressed by her interest in the Library as a 'university for every man and woman'. This philosophy of equality of opportunity was based on her background in social work, her chosen field of study. During her years at the State Library, Leah was responsible to the Library Board chaired by two eminent figures: James Strong (1989–92) and Leigh Masel (1992–95) who brought new business strategies to its operations. It was Leah's role, drawing on her managerial experience, to interpret these strategies to staff, and she did this with great care and sensitivity.

**Helen Tait**, a librarian from New Zealand, was appointed State Librarian in 1993. She remained in the role for four years before returning to her home country. While she was a good public speaker, I reflected that her position must have been a difficult one for her, since she had a very limited network of colleagues and advisers in Melbourne. With the comprehensive staffing restructure she proposed in 1996, she encountered strong opposition to her plans for the La Trobe Library.

**Fran Awcock** was Chief Executive Officer and State Librarian from 1997 until 2002. She had been State Librarian of South Australia from 1991 to 1997, and earlier held the position of Director of Technical Services for five years at the State Library of Victoria. Her primary focus was the management of the \$200-million restoration and redevelopment of the State Library buildings, one of the most exciting periods in its history, and this was a role she carried out with great dedication and aplomb. Under her direction, and with my persistence, the famed Domed Reading Room at the heart of the Library housing the Australian book collection was renamed the La Trobe Reading Room on 8 July 2003.

**Anne-Marie Schwirtlich** was Chief Executive Officer and State Librarian from 2003 until her appointment as Director-General of the National Library of Australia in Canberra in 2011. Under her leadership, the State Library was transformed. Visitor numbers increased enormously, but it was her work in securing the collections and increasing access to them that really defines her tenure as CEO. The staff of the Heritage Collections and I were thrilled when thousands of items, more than 50 per cent of the Library's unique Victorian collections, were made available electronically to anyone anywhere at any time. Another feature of Anne-Marie Schwirtlich's administration was the installation of two outstanding permanent exhibitions – *The Changing Face of Victoria* and *Mirror of the World: Books and Ideas* – both showcasing the richness and importance of the Library's collections.

### Finale

It was always a pleasure for me to come to work. I had begun as the youngest person on the staff as a cadet in 1959, and all my education was part-time. I found it so stimulating to be involved in the different departments of the Library and being part of their growth and development. But my great love was my work as La Trobe Librarian for 26 years. 'Libraries are all about memory'<sup>17</sup>: the State Library of Victoria more than most, with its huge, in-depth collections. The strength of the La Trobe collections, the specialist knowledge of the staff and the sheer enthusiasm for every aspect of Australia's history and heritage on the part of the Library's clientele have given it the status of the centre for Australiana research in this state, and the international centre for studies related to Victoria. Now, reflecting on these nearly 50 years, I realise that I have had the honour of being attached to this great institution for nearly a third of its life. How privileged was I to be part of it!



**Behind the scenes 1950s ...** Mark Strizic, photographer, from a collection of images of staff and public at the (then) Public Library of Victoria, including the Library school classroom, a woman with a roneo machine producing catalogue cards, newly arrived parcels of acquisitions, and the reference area c. 1950–60, Pictures Collection, H2008.11/279, 272, 323, 308, 313, 334, 309 (clockwise from top left)



**Behind the scenes 1990s ...** Adrian Flint, photographer, from a collection of images taken during a refurbishment of the State Library of Victoria Dome. Before the refurbishment, what is now exhibition space was used to house the Library's serials collections including bound serials, c. 1990–95, Pictures Collection, H2008.129/45, 65, 41, 80, 82, 30, 74 (clockwise from top left)