

## LEIGH SCOTT

# Mainly from memory

Edited with an introduction by Philip G Kent

### Introduction: revisiting the memory

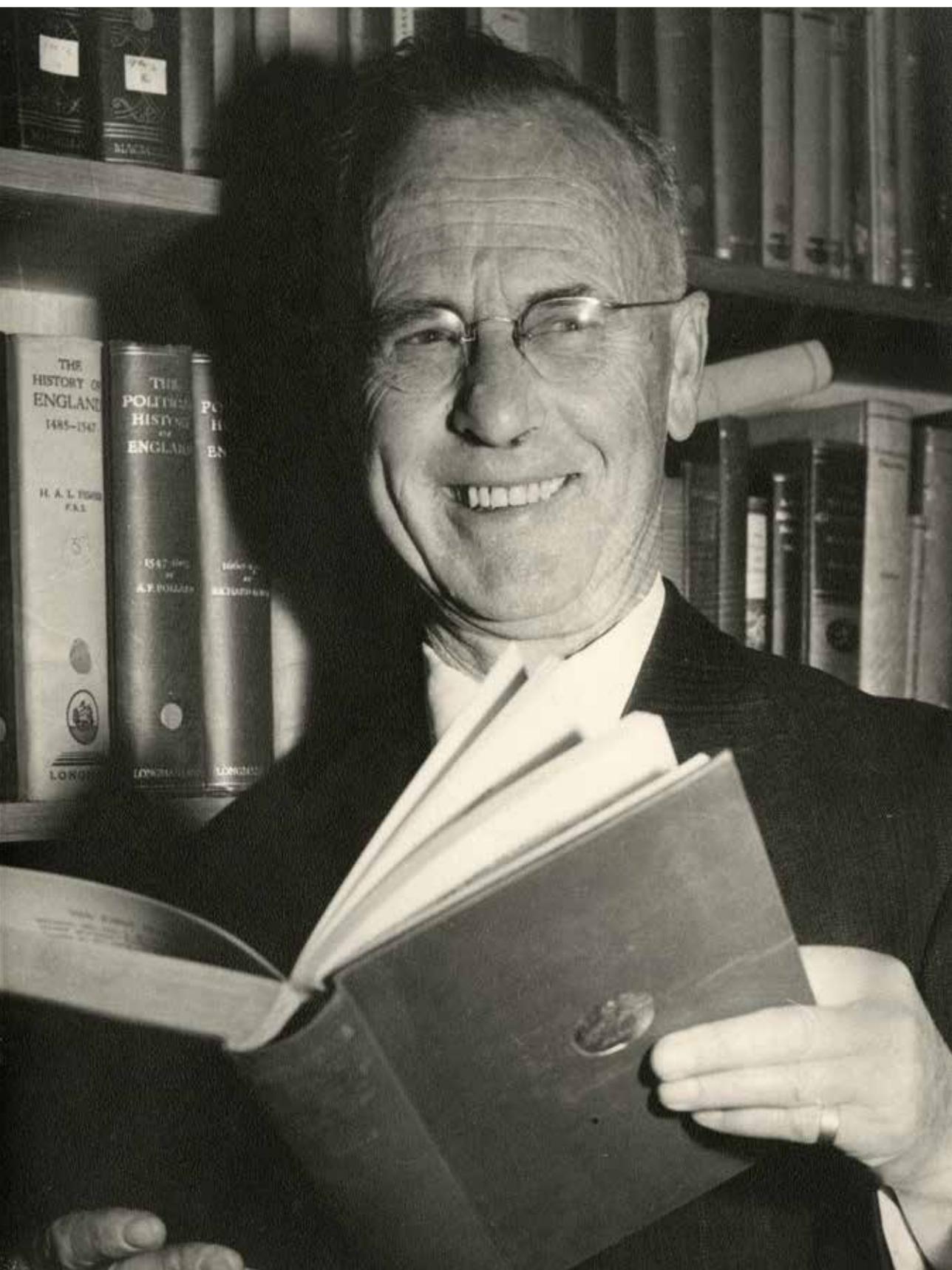
The Public Library of Victoria and the University of Melbourne were significant institutions in the life of librarian Leigh Scott (1888–1963). Scott's early career included various roles at the Public Library during 17 years of service. Concurrently he completed his Bachelor of Arts part time from 1910 to 1915 and subsequently graduated Master of Arts in philosophy at the university. He was also a qualified accountant.

Scott's time as University Librarian over 28 years at Melbourne saw considerable improvements in the practice of librarianship. His observations of the early days at the Public Library, contrasted with his own leadership at the University, demonstrate the growing maturity of the discipline. Nevertheless some universal problems persisted and the influence of key individuals prevailed.

Through the lens of Scott's memory, we revisit his experience and assessment of key actors at the Public Library, one of the finest libraries in the early Australian landscape. His 'Mainly from memory', written in 1960, documents the facilities, practices, resources and individuals during the early years.<sup>1</sup>

Scott's career as university librarian, the transformation of his university library and his contribution to the profession and community is documented in other significant work.<sup>2</sup> Scott's obituary concluded that he was a 'quiet, gentle man, with a whimsical smile, a twinkle in his eye and a sense of humour. He was very approachable and many librarians are grateful for his sane and sound

Photographer unknown, Leigh Scott about the time he retired as Librarian at the University of Melbourne, 1953. Image courtesy of University of Melbourne Archives



advice'.<sup>3</sup> This contrasts with his 1960 recollection of key individuals at the Public Library: E La Touche Armstrong, AW Brazier and RD Boys. Although Scott exposes the weaknesses, limitations and shortcomings of these three senior librarians, we detect his own humanity and concession. Although they enjoyed cordial working relationships, Scott observed that Armstrong and Brazier were 'rather aloof'. A precursor to 'Mainly from memory' was a letter dated September 1954 from Scott to Colin McCallum, Chief Librarian of the Public Library from 1945 to 1960.<sup>4</sup> Scott observed that while Armstrong was 'never surly' he exhibited unfairness and 'want of contact' with staff.

In contrast, Scott's letter and actions demonstrated his own approachability with junior staff. A former university library staff member recalled being startled when caught browsing a book. Scott smiled and encouraged her to be a proud reader of books! It is no surprise that Scott also encouraged staff in their education and professional development. One colleague recalled Scott's contribution to evening talks and lectures for staff sitting for Library Association registration exams.

Scott's career included many professional roles and affiliations.<sup>5</sup> He chaired the first conference of representatives of Australian University Libraries held at the University of Melbourne in August 1928 (the fledgling group of six universities has grown to the present Council of Australian University Librarians with 39 members). The beneficiary of a Carnegie award, he travelled to the United States and the UK to observe and learn from new library developments.

Scott pondered changes in the library profession. He noted that Armstrong did little to publicise the Public Library and that he promulgated the 'storehouse of knowledge' concept rather than the increasing role of the 'disseminator'. A sign erected by Boys discouraged interaction between Library visitors and staff until Scott eased it out of view. Later at the university, Scott encouraged the concept of service and developed the library workforce beyond the custodian role. Scott decried the 'ridiculous censorship system' as a barrier to critical judgment by students and made banned books available.<sup>6</sup> A scholar, Scott enjoyed writing prize-winning essays. 'Mainly from memory' is peppered with Latin and French expressions and Shakespearean quotes. His opinions on diverse topics such as the need for trained librarians were quoted in the newspapers and his 'enlightened acquisition policies' developed the university library collections threefold.

Scott noted the superior intellect and scholarship of one of his earliest colleagues, AB Foxcroft. Coincidentally university employment records document the offer of the librarianship at the university firstly to Foxcroft, who accepted and subsequently withdrew, creating the opportunity for Scott.<sup>7</sup>

Scott detailed the many inadequacies and shortcomings of the physical infrastructure of the Public Library, attributing much of the blame to Armstrong's poor planning and misdirected priorities. Staff amenity was non-existent. Inadequate library accommodation plagued the Library at the university throughout Scott's librarianship. Despite promises from senior management that a new library would be built, other projects eclipsed the Library. Scott's lobbying and planning did not bear fruit until the Baillieu Library opened at the University of Melbourne nearly five years after his retirement.

Scott also recorded a longer typewritten recollection of the first 40 years of Melbourne University Press.<sup>8</sup> While holding an *ex-officio* seat on the Board of Directors, Scott was appointed in 1931 to the additional responsibility of Secretary of the Press. One of the largest and 'most imposing' MUP publications around that time was Morris Miller's two-volume *Australian Literature*.<sup>9</sup> Miller and Scott were contemporaries at the Public Library from 1908 to 1912.

Leigh Scott made a significant contribution to the development and modernisation of the University of Melbourne Library. His leadership was celebrated by the naming of the Leigh Scott Room in the Baillieu Library, which features his desk. Scott never forgot his early experience and the colourful characters at the Public Library. Through his memories and retirement jottings we are able to revisit the formative history of two significant libraries.

*Philip G Kent*

### Mainly from memory

Any attempt to put on record, mainly from memory, circumstances and events dating back fifty and more years ago, during the time from October 1908 to March 1926 when I was on the staff of the Public Library of Victoria, must face a number of difficulties.

Memory is entirely personal and not altogether reliable ... Perhaps this applies to events rather than to circumstances, in so far as events of one year or month are likely to be mixed up in the mind with earlier or later events. But chronological correctness is not of primary importance. Events may be wrongly dated: certain circumstances and influences were present during the whole of my time at the Library, or so it seems to me ... Possibly my experiences during those years are coloured by later experiences in another library.

Therefore it is perhaps unlikely that 'I will a round unvarnished tale deliver'.<sup>10</sup> Maybe it will be fairly 'round': it is not likely to be completely 'unvarnished'. It will not be history but perhaps will contain something not completely valueless to the historian.

### Entirely personal

My acquaintance, a very slight one, with the Library dates from 1903, when, as a boarder at the University High School, at that time a co-educational private school, with Otto Krome as principal, housed in the horticultural society's hall in Victoria Street opposite the Trades Hall, I was an occasional borrower from the Lending Library in La Trobe Street.<sup>11</sup>

... Towards the end of 1906, having passed the special competitive examination for admission to the Public Service, high enough on the list to warrant appointment, I was appointed a junior clerk in the Audit Office. It was then that I became a regular borrower from the Lending Library and began to make some use of the Reference Library. Transfer to the Public Library staff came in October 1908. The junior immediately ahead of me was AB Foxcroft. He had been a junior attendant in the library before the examination, and for such as he the examination was not competitive, it was merely necessary for junior attendants to pass the examination to qualify for appointment to a clerical position in the service. No one who remembers Foxcroft will doubt that his mental capabilities secured him a pass with very high marks. He was appointed as a fifth class clerk to the Education Department, but immediately sought a transfer to the Library ...

It is necessary to stress this because appointment to the Library needed special qualifications laid down in the Public Service regulations. They provided that the appointee must have passed the matriculation examination, and to have included in his subjects Greek and Latin and a modern foreign language. Owing to this to this restriction several appointments to the Library staff had, in 1900, been made from outside the service, on the certificate of the Public Service Commissioner that no one in the service was qualified. It was on such certification that ER Pitt, TF Cooke and E Morris Miller gained their places on the staff. They were not appointed as professional officers but as fifth class clerks qualifying later for the professional division ...

I [began], necessarily on probation, because, though I had passed the matriculation examination in Greek and Latin, I lacked a pass in any modern foreign language. However with the help of a good coach I succeeded, in December 1909, in passing the Junior Public examination in French. Thereupon the appointment to the Public Library as a fifth class clerk was confirmed.

To have held me there without the prescribed qualifications proved that for some reason or other I was an acceptable member of the staff. Was this a feather in my cap? Or was there no one else seeking appointment in this kind of back-wash of the Public Service? Perhaps it is worth noting that a matriculation pass in English was not prescribed in the regulations. At least I don't think it

was. Foxcroft was a real student. He studied by himself and sailed through the Arts course at the University without any setback and in the final examination in the Philosophy School took first class honours. He was very short-sighted and possibly his necessary 'close' reading was no disadvantage. He was slightly ahead of me at the University and discussions with him benefited me very considerably. For succinct expression of his ideas, especially on philosophical subjects, it would have been difficult for anyone to excel him. Late in 1909 he, for the first time, took to wearing glasses, shortly before his marriage. His outlook on the external world must have been greatly changed.

It is interesting to pay tribute to a man of outstanding intellectual qualities. His work in the Public Library was of the greatest value, mostly behind the scenes on the cataloguing staff. Let me make a digression here. It is probable that many people enter library work with the mistaken idea that it will be a comfortable – a cushy – job. Such people are due for a shock: perhaps it is comfortable: it is not cushy. About the end of my second year in the Public Library I had a rather serious breakdown due to the very strenuous year in 1910 when accessions numbered over 10,000 items all handled by me.

### **Library conditions**

The main features of the Library, in 1908, are easy to describe, for though the buildings are now the Museum of Applied Science, their general structure has not been altered. There was the Queen's Hall running roughly north and south, with the Barry Hall at right angles running west to east. There were galleries over both halls, that round the Queen's Hall being known as the west gallery and the Barry Hall gallery the east. The west gallery was badly ventilated, if at all, and so was stuffy. The entrance to Queen's Hall was as it is now, though the wooden stairways leading to the landing were somewhat differently placed. At the foot there had been turnstiles so that the number of visitors to the Library was recorded automatically. These turnstiles had been removed some years before my time; but a check of visitors later gave an estimated number of some 350,000 visitors per annum.

The Chief Librarian's room was at the west end of the Barry Hall with the trustees' room immediately below, where it still is. At the east end of the Barry Hall was a room similar to the Chief Librarian's, and just outside it but within the Barry Hall was the unbound periodical department. The two rooms mentioned were the only ones with fireplaces: for heat in other parts of the library there were a few radiators, but, for the most part, the staff had to depend on natural body heat. It was not enough in winter. In 1908 there were some thirty members of staff, perhaps twenty-four or twenty-five in the Reference Library.

It is hard to recall more than two respectable staff rooms and there was no place for meetings of staff members. Such meetings were evidently considered unnecessary. Near and behind the catalogue opposite the entrance were two rooms occupied by the sub-librarian and another member of the staff: other members were scattered at the desk considered necessary to be manned. There was a senior man in the east gallery, over the Barry Hall, where the medical and fine arts books were accommodated. Entrance to this gallery was by permit, except to members of staff. Such permits were obtainable from the enquiry window carefully concealed between two big cabinets of catalogue cards. Medical students and arts students easily obtained permits. It was the duty of the officer in the gallery to be sure that no unauthorised person made use of the gallery.

To speak of amenities for staff would be fatuous; there were none. Indeed ordinary conveniences were scarcely thought of. At the end of the Barry Hall there was a small narrow room with several washhand basins. In this space senior members of staff took their lunch bringing up a pot of tea from some underground room where water could be boiled. This underground room was well used by general division staff as a lunch room. For less senior members of staff a thermos flask was almost a necessity.

The senior attendants were issued with rubber soled shoes. They were required, the attendants that is, to move about the rooms replacing books and watching for breaches of regulations. Therefore they moved quietly. These attendants wore uniforms renewed at yearly intervals. It was quite a ceremony to be measured, in due order. The uniforms were not shop made but tailored by a firm in Fitzroy. With care they lasted more than a year and in some cases provided all the suitings their owners needed. It was possible for some members of the professional staff to 'wangle' shoes. They did not ask for uniforms ...

The Queen's Hall had long tables, seating perhaps sixteen to twenty readers, down the centre of the hall. In addition there were tables in the bays, such bays being formed by shelves jutting into the room, with books on three sides surrounding even the window in each bay. The Barry Hall was filled with bays too but there were no tables in these. The tables were placed here at right angles to the outside wall. This Barry Hall had good natural south light for reading.

Roughly the books were arranged as follows, remembering that they were all on fixed location. On the northern end of the west side of the Queen's Hall were the long runs of periodicals such as the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Contemporary* etc, then at the north end came theological works, followed by philosophy, then language and literature along the east side, and continued into the Barry Hall; science was at the southerly end of the west



Charles Rudd, photographer, The 'Barry Hall', Melbourne Public Library, c. 1892–1900, Pictures Collection, H39357/114

side. As already mentioned the Barry Hall gallery or east gallery contained the medical and fine arts books and the gallery over the Queen's Hall, (the west gallery), was taken up for the most part by the social sciences, or Dewey class 3 ...

In the years about this date, 1908/9 the Reference Library contained some 180,000 volumes. It reached to [the] 200,000 mark somewhat later. Movement for a bigger building had just begun, perhaps a little earlier, at the date of the fiftieth anniversary in 1906. It is certain that the book stock had outgrown the shelving capacity of the library. This also housed the lending library and some of the technological museum exhibits. Books were stored also in the basements under the National Gallery and what is now Palmer Hall was used as a storeroom. This space was crammed: the entrance was down a narrow stairway from Queen's Hall.

A small excrescence at the top of the stairs just outside the Queen's Hall was the accessions room. It was compulsory to keep it locked when unoccupied. Some few months after my appointment the stairs were shifted slightly to the south, altering the main entrance. A kind of hoarding was erected round the old entrance, thus providing some additional space for staff: the accessions

department was removed to the east end of the Barry Hall, just outside the room where the senior general division officer had his quarters, and next to the unbound periodical department. These moves and temporary arrangements were necessary when the new building was started after the demolition of the rotunda. It was at this stage that at what is now the Palmer Hall came into use as a store or stack room. Also at this time the Chief Librarian vacated his residence off La Trobe Street. Some of the space vacated by him was later turned into tea-rooms and some into a residence for the caretaker, in charge of the staff of the museums and galleries.

The shift of the accessions led to incidents. In the small locked room vacated, new books were locked away and did not leave the room until processed and ready for cataloguing. After the shift they were kept in the room occupied by the chief of the general staff (FS Bryant) and were accessible to all the staff almost as soon as they arrived. Then the thefts of new books occurred. They were taken by junior staff and sold to a secondhand bookseller. It would be wrong to give the names of the staff members concerned. Actually the thefts and the culprits were soon discovered; but it may be reasonably held that the chief offender was the man who bought these new and sometimes valuable books. He was in Cole's secondhand department on the first floor of the famous arcade above the Bourke Street entrance and opposite the monkey room overlooking the street. He must have known that the vendors had not come by the books honestly and the court case showed that he paid very low prices.

### **Staff**

It is difficult to remember the details of staff arrangements in 1908. The Chief Librarian, E La T Armstrong, was away on leave, due to some extended ill health. At the same time he was inspecting overseas libraries having in mind the proposed new building. The acting Chief was AW Brazier with RD Boys next in seniority. There was little difference in the age of these three. Brazier was older by about two years than Armstrong and Boys two years younger. On leave about the same time was E Morris Miller. It seems likely that his leave had been opposed by the Chief; but Miller had enough influence, through his secretaryship of the Imperial Federation League and consequent friendship with Alfred Deakin, Sir John Quick and others to have the veto of his leave cancelled. Consequently he was not exactly popular with the Chief Librarian and the Trustees.

On Armstrong's return, Brazier reverted to his normal position as Sub-Librarian and took charge of the library at night, coming on duty each day at 3.45 p.m. and being responsible until closing at 10 o'clock.

As I was only a junior at this time it is impossible to say much of the occurrences during the next few months as they affected the senior staff. It is certain that there was the relegation of Brazier to the Lending Library and the appointment of Boys as Sub-Librarian. Brazier was a scholarly man, stern and at times rather unreasonable. On one occasion he sent for me after he came on duty at 3.45. I had left the library at the time he sent for me and so could not go to him until the next afternoon when I came on duty at the same time as he did. He blew me up for the day's delay quite fiercely and did not readily listen to my reason – and it was reason not an excuse. He lived in a house in Barry Street, Carlton, and was a lonely man, without any close or intimate contacts with the library staff ...

It is pretty certain that he was not 'persona grata' with the library trustees and the Chief Librarian. All books coming to the library passed through his hands after they had been catalogued. He was responsible for 'placing' them under the then fixed notation, – case number at the top of the spine, shelf number about the centre and book number on the shelf at the tail. Knowing the lay-out of the shelves he was able to keep the books in their correct sections. As aids he had his shelf lists in book form and the 'bay' catalogues written up regularly by a senior general division officer. Thus there were three catalogues or lists – the main catalogue on cards, the shelf lists in book form and 'bay' catalogues in book form too showing in reasonably close alphabetical order the books in various bays.

Brazier was not in favour of the re-classification of the library on the Dewey system and wrote against it in his *Libraries and Librarianship, by a Mere Librarian*, published<sup>12</sup> when the reclassification was almost completed. He fought against the change, and ostensibly this was the reason for his transfer to the Lending Library. Though his book was published anonymously there was never any doubt about the authorship.

Brazier's case settled one point. The trustees tried to maintain that they should have some control over the disposition of the staff: Brazier opposed this. The library was a branch of the public service and the responsibility for staff did not belong to the trustees but to the public service authorities. Though the point was settled in Brazier's favour, he gained nothing. The Under Secretary, as permanent head of the department, supported, as he was bound to do, the recommendation of the Chief Librarian, and Brazier and Boys changed places. It is not impossible that some of the influential trustees had an influence. Brazier remained in charge of the Lending Library for about twelve years until his retirement in 1922, after forty years' service in the library. There is no intention to malign him; but I think it likely that during those twelve years he did very

little but read books and attend to his own affairs. For most of the time he left the management of the Lending Library to the senior professional assistant, in the first years to FG Kirby, and later to the very outspoken yet diplomatic WC Baud, who became Chief Librarian in 1944.

The Brazier incident caused little turmoil. He had his supporters on the staff but they had no real influence. The most notable of these was Morris Miller. He and Brazier were friends, but his friendship with Brazier may have been due to his lack of friendship with Armstrong and Boys. Within a couple of years of the settlement of the dispute, Miller went to Hobart as a lecturer in the University of Tasmania where he later occupied the Chair of Philosophy. He was a first class final honour scholar in philosophy in Melbourne, and later worked for years on compiling the bibliography, which was published in two volumes in the early 'forties' as *Australian Literature*.<sup>13</sup> Miller was a scholar with important friends. It was rather a pity that he left one with the impression that he was supercilious.

Armstrong and Brazier were both men of distinguished appearance, tall and straight, Armstrong with dark curly hair and Brazier gray. To attempt any comparison of their abilities would be useless. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that Armstrong held the big end of the stick and had the support of Boys who succeeded in supplanting Brazier.

Armstrong was Chief Librarian for twenty-nine years and so had seen the place grow ... Among the staff, FS Bryant, chief of the general division, merits special mention. 'Freddy' always had a chip on his shoulder. He maintained that he had been eligible for appointment to a clerical position in the public service but had been deliberately jockeyed out of it. He didn't mix with other members of the general staff considering himself above their class. Boys and he were pretty close. Bryant came to the library from the government printing office and took charge of the binding, done at that time by William Detmold Ltd. It is interesting to consider the type of binding before the 1914-18 war. Most of it was in leather with marble end papers and marbled edges to match. It was craftsman's work of good standard not matched by the ordinary work done in later years. 'Freddy' kept his binding records in his own peculiar way, with cards in groups, and it was rather an aggravation when they had to be consulted, as was often the case, by other members of the staff. His hobby was gardening. In this he was very knowledgeable, writing the gardening notes each month for the *Australian Journal*. He had a fine garden ... He was never without a considerable roll of notes, always good for a loan. And never clamorous for its return. It is likely that he had lent money at various times to most members of the staff, possibly even to his seniors.



Sears' Studios, photographer, Lending Library in the Swinburne Hall, Melbourne Public Library, c. 1910, Pictures Collection, H4712

### **Classification of library on Dewey system**

The decision to use the Dewey system must have been made in 1909 or 1910 and entrusted to RD Boys with AB Foxcroft as his assistant. Boys had already arranged the Lending Library on the Dewey scheme. The choice of Foxcroft as his assistant now seems obvious. He was the ablest he could have chosen; but yet the choice was challenged by Foxcroft's senior TF Cooke on the grounds that Boys had promised the position to him. Possibly this was wistful thinking; but Cooke certainly maintained a grudge against Foxcroft. As to the abilities of the two men little need be said, simply that Foxcroft was by far the abler.

The change of some 200,000 volumes from fixed notation to the Dewey classification was no doubt a considerable task, especially perhaps when, as one remembers, it was not done as a whole-time job, but in the intervals of the necessary routine work of the library.

However, it would be easy to magnify the work unduly. Remember that in a collection of 200,000 volumes, there are long runs of bound periodicals, big sets of works, and many bound volumes of pamphlets. It is difficult to estimate how many separate titles had to be classified; but it is certain not nearly 200,000. And then it can be estimated not too paradoxically that it is easier and quicker

to classify groups of books than it is to classify single books as they come to the classifier in his or her daily work.

However that may be, Boys and Foxcroft had the whole library classified on the Dewey system long before the new library was ready for occupation. But other processes were also necessary and these were both more tedious and took longer to complete, – first, the old ‘call’ numbers had to be soaked or scraped off the books and the new numbers prepared and pasted on, second all the ‘call’ numbers on the catalogue cards had to be altered. This second task took months and months to complete and was not finished until long after occupation of the new building. The staff was not employed full time on the job: it was the work of the professional staff for about an hour each morning before the library opened to the public at 10. One thing is quite certain – the alteration of the ‘call’ numbers on books and the catalogue cards consumed far more man hours than the assignment of numbers i.e. the classification to the books themselves. Remember that all cards, main ones and added entries had to be handled.

### **Stocktaking**

It will [seem] hard for the library staff of today to believe that before the shift to the new library in 1913, it was the practice to have a complete stocktaking at the beginning of every month. This was carried out by the general staff working in pairs, one sitting with the shelf list in book form and the other calling the book numbers from the shelves. When there were shortages of general staff (and they were not unusual at stocktaking times) clerical and professional officers from junior upward were assigned to the work. Some sections were easy and clean, the long files of periodicals for example: other sections were apt to be mixed, but a few were not clean. Indeed one bay or more in the Queen’s Hall assigned to fiction and frequently occupied by the more or less unwashed readers was to be avoided if possible. The books were expendable and before the shift many were sent to the flames. There are stories about readers in this section, not to be retailed to polite ears ...

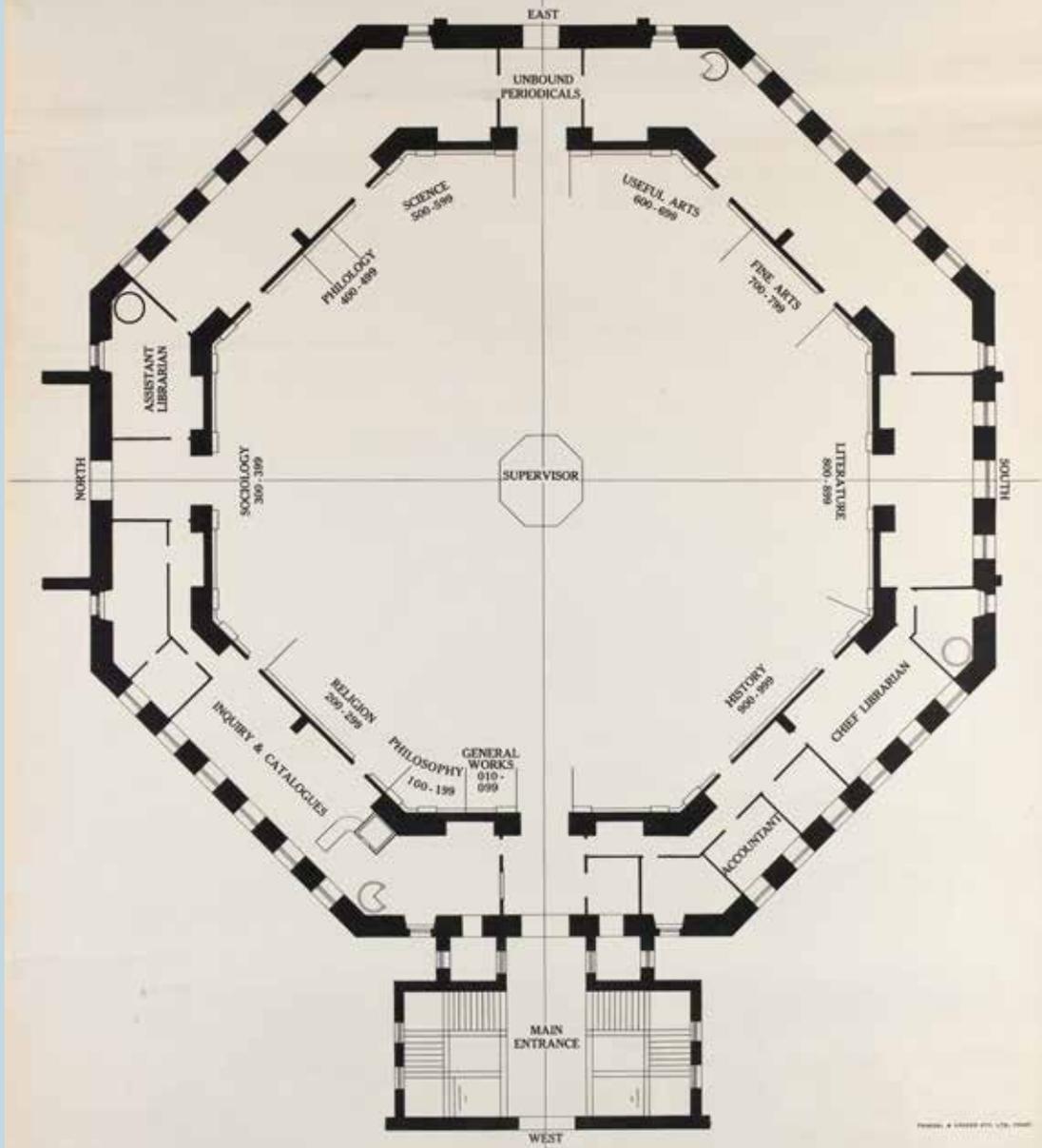
### **Transfer to the new library**

The new library was ready for occupation towards the end of 1913. There is no need to describe this building. The cost of its erection and furnishing was about £89,000 – a ridiculous sum under present conditions. Immediately it became something of a showplace. From its roof it was, – and is, possible to see over the greater part of the city and the nearer suburbs. Visitors were frequently taken to the roof and round it though with rather a squeeze in various parts.

The many faults and shortcomings have long been obvious. It was estimated

# PLAN OF READING ROOM.

SHOWING MAIN CLASSIFICATION OF BOOKS.



Troedel & Cooper, lithographers, with Bates, Peebles & Smart, architects, 'Plan of Reading Room', poster showing the Dewey Decimal classification numbers plan for the Dome, Melbourne Public Library, c. 1913, Architectural drawings collection, H38840/15

that there would be space for fifty years expansion of the book stocks. In his *Melbourne: the biography of a city*, published in 1956, WH Newnham writes of the 'millions of books' in the library, – a gross exaggeration as the library has just reached its first million and is small when compared with the great libraries, many of them, in Europe and the United States ...

It is not for me to attempt to enumerate the many faults of the building: they have become more and more obvious and the many expedients to overcome them have been costly and not too successful. One of the greatest mistakes is the height of the reading room with a consequent waste of possible accommodation.

But this is anticipating! For the staff, in 1913, small as it was, the inconveniences were at once obvious. To blame Armstrong is easy but he was not the sole culprit. The architects should have been aware that reasonable provision for the staff was not made. It is scarcely too much to say that there were no really adequate staff rooms in the building. The Chief Librarian's room could be considered satisfactory but it was, and still is, on the cold side of the building and separated as far as possible from the rest of the staff. It is not too much to say that Armstrong was always rather aloof from his staff. Perhaps he was more interested in his contacts with the trustees, a body of distinguished people, many of them with real scholarly interests and attainment, as the notes on them in the *Book of the Public Library*<sup>14</sup> give ample evidence.

But accommodation for other staff members was haphazard. The sub-librarian's room was a thoroughfare, and the staff was merely put somewhere around the annulus. The building was to be heated by air drawn in by fans on the roof, passed over furnaces and driven into the big reading room. Sometimes the fans or the fires did not work properly and cold air only was provided. Actually the fans were to provide cool air in summer and perhaps did so; but the ventilation system was never entirely satisfactory; and the staff in the annulus did not benefit. In winter the catalogue room was draughty and cold. Radiators were of little value.

Perhaps the greatest lack was a staff room. There was nowhere the staff could meet for discussions. Indeed there was no suggestion of a respectable lunch-room. Senior staff took their lunches in the long narrow room in the north wing of the building. At one end of this was a table perhaps six feet by four [1.8 x 1.2 m] and a small heating appliance, either gas or electric, in the corner. The floor was concrete but with some sort of covering under the table. The heating unit was not always in working order and so it was not always possible to make a cup of tea. Such primitive provision would not have been tolerated in a factory.

The lack of a staff room or meeting place meant that there could be no planned training for members of staff. Indeed it was necessary for them to teach themselves. Cataloguers took their books and from their own experience, or lack of it, wrote the cards, (there was no typing possible) and passed them on to a senior for checking. They were either passed or sent back for alteration or addition. Sometimes there was a consultation. Some strange things occurred. Let me mention an interesting one, sometime about 1910 or 1911. EM Miller was the cataloguer who passed his work on to ER Pitt, his senior, for checking. On one occasion Pitt sent the work back with directions for Miller to make a subject entry Roman philosophy, or Philosophy, Roman. Miller's reaction was immediate: he sent back the cards with what is, from the philosopher's standpoint, the correct comment '*il n'existe pas*' [it does not exist]. Pitt said he felt inclined to send back the short minute '*fiat*' [let it be done]. There was a long bitter exchange of letters between Pitt and Miller, not merely on this one point. The file lengthened, but was closed eventually when it was referred to the Under Secretary, the permanent head of the department. He refused to take any disciplinary action but curtly told the two officers concerned to get on with their work instead of writing letters to each other. It is pleasant to record that in later years Pitt and Miller were on quite friendly terms.

This is a diversion. Cataloguers, as already stated, had to teach themselves. The main guides were the card catalogue itself and Cutter's *Rules for a Dictionary Catalogue*. Cataloguers were made aware of Cutter and some other guides such as the *Eclectic Rules* but there was never any discussions on them. Indeed there was only one copy of Cutter in the library: some members of staff bought their own copies.

... When the rotunda was demolished, the lending branch of the library was removed to the corner of Russell Street and Little Lonsdale Street, the room that is now the Murdoch gallery. Removal to the La Trobe Street site took place many years later.

Shifting the newspaper room to the new building was a major task. Till 1913 it was in a basement under what became the Lending Library. In those days it closed at 5 pm, but on removal its hours became the same as the whole reference library ...

### The Trustees

Perhaps it approaches '*lèse-majesté*' [crime against the crown] for a mere member of staff to say anything about the trustees, a body of prominent citizens honoured by appointment to the board. They met once a month first as committees of the whole body considering the branches of the institution,

– the Library, the National Gallery, the National Museum and the Technological Museum, – and then as the Board of Trustees. This meant there were five minute books. The Chief Librarian was Secretary to the trustees. He prepared agenda in a book, but they were not available to the trustees before the meetings. After the meetings (sometimes they did not finish until late in the day perhaps by 6 o'clock) there would be hurried dispersal of members. Writing up the minutes was one of the tasks of the accountant. He did not attend the meetings but took directions from the Chief Librarian and Secretary and from this and rough notes on the agenda worked out minutes as best he could. I can speak of this with feeling and knowledge of the processes, because for about two years, all told, in 1919 and 1920 and occasionally in later years I was acting accountant ... All the minutes were hand-written.

The trustees had no control over the staff and were for the most part unknown to them except by sight. The President, Henry Gyles Turner held that position from 1896 till his death in 1920. He was well enough known by sight to most of us and I can well remember the appearance of his carriage – a barouche I think – and pair standing outside the iron railing fence in Swanston Street, with a coachman waiting patiently on the box for his master's reappearance from the building. Then he drove back to his home in St Kilda. He was [a] really active and quick moving man even in his old age; but the Chief Librarian and Secretary was the only member of staff to meet him. Of the other trustees I can mention only a few who were known quite well to the staff because they made frequent use of their right to borrow books from the Reference Library. It is doubtful whether these gentlemen knew the names of those who waited on them.

The most frequent borrower was Dr the Rev. WH Fitchett who must have borrowed thousands of books in his time. It was easier to make him a loan than it was to secure its return. Then came Sir Baldwin Spencer, Honorary Director of the National Museum for many years. He was more or less on the spot. The Warden of Trinity College, Dr Alexander Leeper was another who made frequent use of his right to borrow. Later the Hon. Sir George Swinburne made use of the library largely for recreational reading, mainly biographical. It was always a pleasure to meet a request from him because of the feeling that he knew you and had some personal interest in you. The genial Master of Queen's College, the Rev. EH Sudgen was always a welcome visitor and borrower.

The two Treasurers I knew Sir Henry Weedon and Sir John Mackay did not, to my knowledge, make use of the library. Under the regulations it was their duty to countersign all cheques; but unfortunately for the accountant, it was necessary to wait on them to secure signatures. It was not always easy to run

them down but by some means or other they had to be found, or salaries would not have been paid when due ...

Mention of cheques and salaries brings to mind a matter, not connected with the trustees, that may be mentioned here. Cheques were drawn separately for members of the professional and clerical staffs; but for all others one cheque was drawn and cashed by the accountant. Then at some time from about 2.30 onwards general division staff waited on the accountant to be paid in cash. The bank was the Royal at the corner of Collins Street and Elizabeth Street, and the cash was carried to the library by the accountant in a case or handbag of some sort. Thousands and thousands of pounds were carried in this way and there was never a holdup or mishap. Yet it was a risk that should not have been taken. Certainly the accountant usually had a companion but he was hardly a bodyguard ...

#### **Book selection, methods of ordering, etc**

Book selection was in the hands of the Sub-Librarian, RD Boys. He was a good bookman and from his work in classifying the contents of the library on the Dewey system had a sound knowledge of those contents. There is no doubt Boys lived for the library: it was his work and his hobby. He realised that book selection was the most important of his duties and spent much of his library time and of his own time in pouring [sic] over the most important reviewing journals and antiquarian booksellers' catalogues. I can call to mind some of the outstanding purchases in my early years there such as de Quiros' *Terra australis incognita* in English, a fourth folio Shakespeare (1695), later a second folio (1632), Martyn's *Psyche* etc.; and in retrospect must regard the time I spent over the cataloguing of the second folio as largely wasted. The task of listing all errors in pagination, comparing the book with the entry in Jaggard's *Shakespeare Bibliography* seemed to be useless, for a scholar would wish to see the work itself and would not bother merely to examine the numerous cards in the catalogue where errors were set out in detail: he would not allow the catalogue to come between himself and the book.

Such personal experiences as these are not entirely disconnected from book selection. In that very most important duty I had no part. But from the Books Committee, the list of books to be ordered came to me, as the clerk in charge of the accession book. There was then much routine checking work to be done. It was almost a heinous offence to order a duplicate, – an offence that junior officers could not always avoid.

Orders for English books went mainly to George Robertson and Co. or perhaps to Melville and Mullen. Older people will remember that Melville

and Mullen were on the Block in Collins Street. The amalgamation of the two bookshops as Robertson and Mullens came later. Orders for secondhand books went as a rule to the antiquarian bookseller who offered them; sometimes to a bigger [London] firm, Quaritch, or Sotheran, or Edwards or Maggs with an intimation about the vendor.

It will perhaps shock modern day librarians to know that all orders were handwritten in special copying ink and press copied in flimsy record books or rather books of flimsy paper. Sometimes the press copying was not well done and reading the orders was difficult. Many orders for foreign books went to firms such as Karl W. Hiersemann in Leipzig, and dealings with this firm were always completely satisfactory. But the same cannot be said about local dealings. Straightforward orders for books were handled efficiently enough, though charges needed checking. As regards continuations the position was very unsatisfactory. For years the orders to George Robertson and Co or perhaps (though I don't think so) to Robertson and Mullens were handled there by Edgar A Parr,<sup>15</sup> quite a nice man and a bookman who was sometimes sober. Many continuations (e.g. Wytteman's *Genera insectorum*) came through that shop and it might have been months or even years before they were charged for. Parr was eventually compelled to leave and his successor was a man named Harvey. He tried from Parr's records(?) to catch up on charges, – without success. Eventually he was compelled to admit failure and the library supplied a long list of continuations that had not been charged for. I know, this task fell to me. The charges then had to be fixed by the bookseller. The bill was rather a shock and was eventually settled by a compromise. Orders for continuations later went elsewhere, to British or German firms.

The handwritten orders were a burden, but there was only one typewriter in the library and that was for the letters of the Chief Librarian.

### **The new building**

I have already made some comments on the present library building, mainly that it was unsatisfactory from the point of view of the staff. From the public's view point perhaps the greatest fault was the height of the shelves in the reading room. It was absolutely necessary to use ladders to reach perhaps one half of the 30,000 volumes available to the public in that room. This was often a nuisance to the staff who would be called on to assist readers finding the ladders rather an obstacle. They were not always safe. Indeed on one occasion some years after the shift, a visitor came to me one night tendering a humble apology for breaking a ladder. He had fallen through two rungs. I remember the incident clearly perhaps because I spoke of the apology to Sir Harrison Moore then in



Sears' Studios, photographer, Domed Reading Room, Melbourne Public Library, c. 1915, Pictures Collection, H12923

the catalogue room. His dry comment was 'That was very kind of him'.

This incident reminds me of another. As is well known the ceiling of the room is one hundred feet [30 m] or more from the floor. One day a small piece of plaster fell and hit a visitor on the head. From that height the small piece knocked the man unconscious. The Chief Librarian was sent for. By the time he arrived the sufferer had recovered sufficiently to be looking around for the person he thought had bashed him. Armstrong was close at hand to offer sympathy; but the sufferer was looking for revenge rather than sympathy and naturally enough blamed and nearly assaulted the Chief. The piece of plaster was produced and the man placated. It was not the only piece of plaster to fall during the early years and in consequence the inside of the dome was lined with fibrous sheets. As a consequence of the plaster fall and the broken ladder, the trustees took out a public risk policy. There was no action for damages in either case of injury, though surely the man who fell through the ladder had a good case.

#### **Staff organisation**

Before the shift to the new building in 1913, all the staff, with the exception of the Chief Librarian and the Accountant, and possibly a few others, worked the same hours six days a week. General division staff worked from 8 a.m. to 3.45 p.m.; professional and clerical staff from 9 a.m. to 3.45 p.m.; or an afternoon shift from 3.45 till 10. After the shift these hours were altered for some of the senior staff who worked the ordinary hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and on Saturday 9 a.m. to noon. The afternoon staff was reduced to a maximum of eight, except perhaps on holidays and rare occasions. Each member of the afternoon staff had his opposite number on the day staff and it was necessary for the day staff man to remain on duty till his opposite number signed on. Probably this is still the practice.

Those of us working shifts envied the men who had no shift duty. But there were no interchanges. Then too, up until the early 'twenties', the shifts were from day to day: some worked day shift Monday, Wednesday and Friday and afternoon shift on the other days. It was generally possible to arrange a change with one's opposite number for a special occasion, but very seldom did any other member of staff take a share in the shift duty. If one's opposite number was absent for any reason no one was brought in to take his place. If  $x$  and  $y$  were opposite numbers and  $x$  was absent  $y$  came on afternoon shift during such absence and would have a stretch of three weeks on afternoon and night duty. During the 1914–18 war all staff worked one half hour extra each day.

In the early twenties the alternating staffs succeeded, with difficulty, in persuading the Chief Librarian to make an alteration and instead of changing

daily the staffs changed hours each week. Armstrong could see no need for the change. One member of the staff advanced as a reason for the alteration that it was necessary for him under doctor's instruction, to have regular meal times as far as possible, that therefore he bought his main meal three days a week. Armstrong's comment was that surely they could all do that. Almost an echo of Marie Antoinette's famous 'Why don't they eat cake?' However the change was made. As a consequence it was possible if *x* took three weeks leave, including two of afternoon duty, for his opposite number to have six consecutive weeks of afternoon duty. Usually the men worked it to avoid this, but I well remember one occasion when my opposite number TF Cooke forced me onto afternoon duty for six weeks and was taken ill on the day I was due to return to day duty. I duly turned up at 9 but a little later, after it was known that Cooke was in hospital, I was sent home with instructions to come back on afternoon duty.

It seems likely that neither the Chief nor the Sub-Librarian attached much real importance to the duties, worries and even at times dangers of the officers in the enquiry and catalogue room. Perhaps the question of dangers can be dealt with first.

On one occasion the supervisor in the dais reported to me that he thought a man leaving the library was taking a book with him. What was to be done? Actually I almost overtook the suspect but he disappeared down a dark lane behind the hotel on the opposite corner where I did not follow. The only hope was to have caught sight of a policeman and to have persuaded him to question the man. On another occasion the attendant at the front door 'phoned to say there was an obstreperous drunk in the entrance hall. It was my duty to do something so down I went in the hope that he would listen to persuasion. That seemed hopeless for he was standing on his one leg swinging his crutch wildly. Then the police were sent for. A 'phone message to Russell Street brought a police constable to the library within a few minutes. The man was known to the police who described him as a dangerous character. He was removed but appeared again the next night when there was no delay in sending for a policeman.

A third incident not without an amusing touch! One night a well-known sportsman, and a big strong one at that, came into the catalogue room and asked for the works of Cicero. I knew this man well by sight and asked whether he wanted a Latin text or a translation. His reply was twofold, first he said it didn't matter, that a friend of his had just bought a [racehorse] yearling, sired by Cicero, a well-known sire, and had asked him to find a suitable name for it: second he produced a bottle labelled 'sparkling hock' from his hip pocket with the request that I produce two tumblers and share the contents of the bottle with him. When I refused he became somewhat abusive; but he calmed down,

put the bottle back in his pocket and forgetting all about Cicero, ancient and modern, left the library quietly enough ...

In the same, rather light vein, what should have been the response to the enquirer for books on 'a pole string'? I looked hard at him for a few seconds before realising he was interested in upholstering, and the rest was easy enough. There are many stories of strange library enquiries ...

Let me repeat that senior officers at the library did not attach proper value to the enquiry room work. They had no experience of it themselves, and therefore no conception of how arduous and mentally fatiguing it could be, no conception that the repute of the library depended less on the technical processes necessary to most effective arrangement of the books than on the efficiency of the enquiry room officers in answering inquiries and supplying information not available by mere use of the catalogue. It is not necessary to elaborate on this point today.

There was one occasion when RD Boys, then the Sub-Librarian sneaked – and the word is chosen deliberately – on to the top of the catalogue a notice to the effect that visitors were not to talk to the staff. This notice was signed by the Chief so apparently was fully approved by him. I have vivid memories of this notice. It raised a problem and my ire. My ire to such an extent that after a discussion with WC Baud, I pushed the notice behind a row of books at the end of the catalogue where it could not be seen. Nothing was ever said about the notice; and it was removed without any investigation into its concealment.

At that time members of the public were not expected or encouraged to use the catalogue for themselves and how could they receive help without speaking to members of staff?

It was not until the opening of the new building in 1913, that the inquiry room became important. In the old building the catalogue was *in* the Queen's Hall. Inquiries were made at a small glass window where there was usually someone in attendance. It was often necessary to knock at the window. Then it would be opened by a pulley and the visitor would make known his wants.

The shift to the new building coincided pretty close in time with very considerable changes in university methods of work and this increased demands on the Public Library's resources and its staff. It is scarcely too much to say that, up to this date, undergraduates could cope with their work by the use of one or two textbooks in each subject and notes taken from the lecturers. But the time came when independent work was required of them. The library at [Melbourne] university was poorly stocked and badly housed. Moreover that library closed at 5 p.m. except on four nights when it was re-opened from 7 pm. to 9 pm. Actually these conditions continued until 1927; and as a consequence undergraduates



Sears' Studios, photographer, The Queen's Hall, showing the card catalogue and the enquiries window, c. 1910, Pictures Collection, H4716

were compelled to use and frequent the Public Library. They themselves kept the staff at the inquiry room pretty fully occupied, since references were not always correct, and their needs could not be fully satisfied merely by reference to the catalogue. Again there is no need to elaborate. At a much later date, sometime in the 'thirties, students' demands on the Public Library were so great that the University Council paid a subsidy to the library to meet the salary of a part time assistant to attend to students.

But there were always enquiries from other people, and these could cause much work. In those days there was no research division: it was left to staff at the enquiry desk to assist the visitor and very often do the work for him. Usually there was some result on the spot; and, as is well known, one thing leads to another so that once there is a lead it is possible to reach a satisfactory conclusion. The main aim should be to satisfy the enquirer not to put him off. Perhaps it is impossible satisfy him fully but every effort must be made to answer the problems presented or to convince the visitor that every effort has been made.

Every librarian has experienced his big moments and sent away his visitor with complete satisfaction on both sides. I remember several such moments

in my forty-six years in libraries ... One evening a well-known citizen TJ Ryan (often referred to as Tommy), then the proprietor of the *Essendon Gazette*, asked for information about Essendon in England, adding that, if he were in Sydney, his friend Billy Ifould could get him the information he wanted at half a day's notice. (Ifould was then Principal Librarian at the Public Library of New South Wales). Tommy had characteristics apt to be rather annoying; and, being rather piqued I said that if Ifould could give him what he wanted in half a day, we would be able to satisfy him in half an hour. Actually it took less than five minutes. Reference to a gazetteer showed the county Essendon was in (Essex I think); then luck took a turn. I went to the *Victoria History* for the county intending to use the index. That was unnecessary, for when I picked up the volume it dropped open, with the paragraph on Essendon staring at us. Ryan wanted to borrow the book, but perhaps with rather smug satisfaction he was told that a loan could not be granted. In this case there was complete satisfaction, maybe on one side only. In his time Ryan had been a member of three different parliaments, The House of Assembly in South Australia, the legislative Assembly in Victoria and the federal House of Representatives.<sup>16</sup> Not all at once!

Work in the inquiry room is of great interest yet it is often rather frustrating. After satisfying a visitor or putting him on the track to satisfaction one would like to go further for himself but is compelled to turn to the next inquiry on quite a different yet equally interesting topic

From the time of transfer to the new building in November 1913 till my resignation in March 1926, except for the time when I acted as accountant (amounting in all to from twenty-two to twenty-four months) my duties were in the catalogue and inquiry room; and for some years I was in charge of a shift. There was always something to learn, not only how to answer difficult inquiries but how to handle difficult visitors ...

In addition we were all expected to do some cataloguing. Indeed, as already implied, it is likely that cataloguing was regarded as the main task. Diaries were kept and submitted to the Chief Librarian whenever asked for. Whether such records of our cataloguing were taken seriously is hard to say. Some weeks one could have a good run of relatively easy books and few inquiries; very often days could pass without any possibility of cataloguing. Yet our diaries when called for probably showed a fairly uniform output, obviously not without some faking. Actually it was not possible to give undivided attention to cataloguing, except perhaps at night, say from 8 o'clock till closing time, when readers had settled down for the night and there were few inquiries other than elementary or easily answered ones.

In writing of staff organisation something must be said of relations of

members to one another. One instance of disagreement has already been given, but on the whole relations were harmonious. Yet in my time and for years afterwards, to my knowledge, there was no real harmony between the Chief Librarian and the Sub-Librarian. Armstrong and Brazier were incompatible and when Boys took Brazier's place in charge of the Reference Library, it was doubtful whether relations between Armstrong and Boys were entirely satisfactory. On one occasion Boys came into the Chief's room when, as accountant, I was with Armstrong. The tone by him to Boys in front of me, a relatively junior officer, was most embarrassing to me and must have been so to Boys. At least it can be said that the expressions indicated lack of harmony.

Boys became Chief shortly before my resignation; but as I was in close touch with WC Baud, I knew much of library affairs. Boys and the Sub-Librarian, ER Pitt, were not on the best of terms and later ER Pitt and TF Cooke certainly did not make a happy pair. But as the inconveniences of this lack of harmony mostly applied to the years after my employment in the library, it is not for me to comment.

During the months when, as acting accountant, I was in close daily contact with Armstrong, he always showed me the greatest consideration. Yet I felt he was not really in touch with any member of staff. Sometimes no doubt he was liverish and any member of staff approaching him on such occasions was likely to be severely rebuffed. But that was not all. Naturally he was above the staff and in a very superior manner could make officers feel it. But not always. He must have been completely non-plussed on one occasion when he had a relatively junior officer, then on probation, on the carpet, intending a severe reprimand. The interview had lasted only a few minutes when the junior looked at the clock and seeing the hour was 3.45, said 'Excuse me, Mr Armstrong, I'm now off duty'. He turned and left the room. Perhaps it can be imagined that the Chief could only gape. I heard the story years afterwards from the officer concerned. He was then holding a senior position in the Crown Solicitor's Office.

... On another occasion there was considerable dissatisfaction on the staff. Towards the end of 1919 a senior officer, WJ Vogler, died. For months no move was made to fill the vacancy. Filling it involved immediate promotion for one professional officer and consequent promotion for others. Armstrong asked me one morning whether I could account for the dissatisfaction, now sensed by him. Not only as acting accountant, but as an officer likely to be affected, I was able to tell him that delay in filling the vacancy was the cause. He took immediate action. Actually all the necessary documents were written by me, and taken by Armstrong to the Under Secretary, WA Callaway ... To the best of my belief the Public Service Commissioner's certificate[s] for the promotions,

three of them, were all issued on the same day. Perhaps this is unique. Can it be said that the delay was due mainly to Armstrong's feeling that a ghoulis desire to step into a dead man's shoes should be discouraged?

It will be realised that, after the promotion, there was a vacancy for a junior on the staff. This vacancy was filled by Miss IAM Fraser. There was almost turmoil about this. Under present day composition of library staffs it is hard to realise that Miss Fraser, in 1920, was the first woman appointed to the Public Library of Victoria. She was a stenographer and typiste in the Crown Solicitor's office with an Arts degree. The Chief Librarian opposed the appointment strenuously, first and foremost because she was a woman and secondly (with my apologies to Miss Fraser) because she was too old to take up library work.

The first objection was serious, because the entire staff at that time was male and library work was not considered suitable for females. Already I have said that there were few conveniences and no amenities for the male staff. How could a female be fitted in? However the appointment was made and Miss Fraser has continued in library work until very recent years. She has been followed by many other women and girls, until today the proportion of females to males in the library is almost overwhelmingly great and who will dare to say the service has suffered? No matter what the males may think!

Miss Fraser is still in 1960 actively engaged in library work.

#### **The Public Library as a branch of the Public Service**

The Public Library of Victoria has always been a branch of the Chief Secretary's department, and consequently its permanent head is the Under Secretary. One is inclined to think that, more suitably, it should be a branch of the Education Department as in other states. There can however be no certainty that the library would have fared better than it has done, if its control had been under a different head. With the rapid development of libraries in recent years one could almost hope for the establishment of a separate Library department.

In the past library services were starved and there were years in the 'nineties when the Public Library had no money to spend on books. The enforced parsimony of those years can never be remedied.

Librarians of recent years have not been able to live in idleness and luxury: they are people especially trained for the work of supplying information on every subject under the sun; and the work of cataloguing and classifying that goes on behind the scenes is all merely propaedeutic [introductory] to the librarian's main function. Cataloguers should be aware of this, and so it would be good for them to have spells in answering inquiries and not wasting too much time in worrying over subject entries to make for books, – entries that are

likely to be of very little if any use. To waste time worrying over a subject entry when possibly such subject is more adequately treated in an encyclopaedia or major work of reference seems rather futile. This however is branching into a different field than the one I set out to cover so no more will be said.

**Some notes on individual members of the Public Library staff**

I wonder whether in these following remarks it will be possible to be quite fair to the people commented on. Here indeed it is likely that backward opinions are not the same as those held forty to fifty years ago. I say to myself that I shall 'nothing extenuate/Nor set down ought in malice'.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly today no malice is felt; and though it is possible that some slight symptoms of malice may appear, they will not be really malicious and in some cases almost amusing.

**Armstrong, Edmund La Touche** ... He was a bachelor and until the ground for the new building was being prepared lived on the premises of the institution, the entrance to such premises being from La Trobe Street. He was a tall man, not very, but yet of over average height and always bore himself with dignity. As already said I was in close touch with him for nearly two years, once for a period of about nineteen months consecutively, and found him most considerate. Nevertheless he was not, in my opinion, a good man for the staff as a whole. Actually in his position as Chief Librarian and Secretary the library was not his only, perhaps not his main concern. He was not in the public eye and did nothing to publicize the library, his conception of it being that it was a storehouse of knowledge not a disseminator. Ideas have changed since his time. The many faults and weaknesses of the new library are mainly due to him. He made it a showplace but a very inconvenient one to administer.

**Brazier, Amos William** ... was suppressed and humiliated, perhaps because of his personal characteristics. The staff in general, rather held him in awe, though he had some close friends. It is likely that he had a better knowledge of the library than had Armstrong; but after his relegation to the Lending Library had no influence on developments and took no interest. He was never in touch with the public, though he wrote some small pamphlets and gave some public lectures. From the staff, he like Armstrong, was rather aloof. He was married, but lived in lodgings and had no family life.

**Boys, Robert Douglass** ... was in charge of the Reference Library during most of my time. He became Chief Librarian and Secretary in 1925. He lacked the

dignified appearance of Armstrong and Brazier; but he lived for the Public Library ... He was a good bookman and the companion of other bookmen in Melbourne. Boys mixed with the staff, – as was compulsory since his room was a thoroughfare – but had no contacts with the public. His work was behind the scenes. He was not above some rather ‘mean’ actions. One instance I have already given. On another occasion during the 1914–18 war when sectarian feeling ran high and there was even some division in the Catholic Church between the supporters of Archbishop Mannix and other Catholics, Boys carpeted a senior attendant, an ardent supporter of the archbishop and complained of his inefficiency. He stated that I had complained. That was certainly untrue and as soon as I heard of the occurrence, (within a few minutes), I saw Boys, and he was persuaded to adjust matters as between the attendant and me. The attendant was never inefficient and I told Boys my opinion of his dependability. Boys married twice but had no family ...

**Vogler, William James** ... was in charge of the catalogue after the shift, and until his sudden death, after an operation, in 1919. His influence was slight. His habit was to address members of staff as Mr H or Mr S etc. Maybe he was a good checker of transcriptions of title pages, but he had little influence on the cataloguing apart from that, and learnt from, rather than taught us. Vogler was married but without children. I remember an occasion one Monday, after seeing him in the distance at a football match on the Saturday, asking him whether he enjoyed it. ‘Yes’ he said, ‘only I met my wife at half-time’.

**Pitt, Ernest Roland** ... was a senior cataloguer and for several years in charge of a shift first in the old building and then in the new. Later he was in charge of the Lending Library for several years after Brazier’s retirement. He was active in the Public Service Association and, as an outside interest, on the council of the Lawn Tennis Association of Victoria. Thus he had more contacts than any of his seniors in the library. Pitt had a mind for details and could quibble over a small point ‘ad nauseum’, failing often to see the wood for the trees. He was always approachable and round the dinner table or on a train journey a delightful companion. He is remembered today as the editor of the *Catalogue of Scientific and Technical Periodicals in Australian Libraries*, still referred to as Pitt, though the size of the work has been greatly extended since the catalogue was first issued. Pitt had two sons and one daughter: ... At a later date in 1935, in conjunction with Ralph Munn from Pittsburgh, Pitt issued the Mann Pitt report *Australian Libraries*<sup>18</sup>...

**Cooke, Thomas Fleming** ... was baptised Thomas Alfred Reeves Cooke but took his father's name fairly early in life. He is still remembered by many members of the staff but not probably with any great affection. I worked close to Cooke for more than ten years first as a member of his shift and later as his opposite number when in charge of the alternate shift. He was an interesting study, having a great opinion of himself. He took up duty in July 1900 and was only a few days junior to Pitt, – a point he was fond of making and bemoaning. Possibly he had his senior officers 'bluffed'. Cooke's companions in private life were, I think, people who thought his BA degree was the 'ne plus ultra' [ultimate] of achievement; and feasibly this accounted for his general demeanour. He was on the committee of the Carlton Football Club and for a short time its representative at the Victorian Football League, but not for long. It was held that he talked himself out of it. When on night duty he would more often than not disappear about 7 o'clock and be back in time for closing at 10, leaving me in charge. Perhaps that practice led to his expressed belief that it was due to his training and influence that I was appointed as University Librarian in 1926 ... His main fault was to mistake officiousness for efficiency. Cooke was married with one daughter.

**Howard, John** ... was, in my eyes, elderly in 1908. He was rather a drudge and remained in the same position for years: juniors were promoted over him. As a result on one occasion the Under Secretary received an anonymous letter of complaint obviously written by Howard. He compiled some verse and a work on immortality but could not find a publisher. One of his poems began 'One morning as the rising sun/Was starting on his daily run'. He was married but had no children.

**Miller, Edmund Morris** ... was on the staff from 1900 to 1912 when he went to the University of Tasmania. He was not 'persona gratis' to his superiors, except Brazier, and was, rather unfairly, critical especially of Armstrong. He was more scholarly than those superiors and showed it ... He was honorary librarian of the University of Tasmania and worked hard for that institution, being largely instrumental in securing for it competent staff and rendering such staff his full support. He had other important offices in Tasmania not necessary to mention here. Miller is the only senior member of the Public Library when I went there in 1908 still surviving ...

**Foxcroft, Alfred Broadbent** ... was a man whose intellect can scarcely be rated too highly. He was widely read, able to concentrate and to assimilate anything

worth while. Boys and he were always very close to each other and they had an extraordinary knowledge of the contents of the library. He was always a zealous officer, wrapped up in his work, and for years the efficiency of the cataloguing depended largely on him. In 1927 the Calendar of the University of Melbourne listed him as Librarian but he did not take up the appointment. Instead he stuck to the Public Library and in addition to his normal duties gave much time to the Sticht collection, producing the *Catalogue of Fifteenth Century Books and Fragments in the Public Library of Victoria*,<sup>19</sup> a work of great merit, earning high praise from overseas experts who were amazed that such a work could be produced in Australia. Foxcroft died and was buried at sea outside Auckland when returning from an overseas visit to England and America. His outstanding capabilities were a serious loss. Foxcroft was married and left two sons and one daughter. Mention of Foxcroft's share in the establishment of the Australian Institute of Librarians in 1937 might be made but again the date precludes me from saying more than this, – that he has never received proper recognition for the part he took in drafting the constitution.

**Bryant, Frederick Stephen**, was the senior General division officer. He came on duty at 8 a.m. and allotted his staff to various duties and supervised them until 9.50. By that time they had all finished their dusting and cleaning duties and had ten minutes to tidy themselves before the library opened to the public at 10 o'clock. For these two hours Freddy Bryant did nothing but read the papers; and for the rest of the day had no authority over the staff. He was not a hard worker himself but could find time to interrupt others in their work. He was a complex character ready to express opinions on all sorts of subjects of which he knew little, if anything, but chary of talking about bookbinding and gardening, subjects he knew a lot about. In many respects TF Cooke and Bryant would have been interesting psychological studies in that they both had very high, though unwarranted, opinions of themselves.

**Clerical officers.** Three of these may be mentioned, – the accountant Arthur EH Phillipps, Arthur Hosken and Charles FH Shellew. Phillipps was unkempt in appearance and, not to belie his appearance, muddled through his work. I can say this as on several occasions it was necessary for me to tidy up after him, – a fact he readily admitted. Hosken, who died suddenly on his way to work shortly after I left the library and Shellew both, at different times, were in charge of the newspaper room. That was an exacting routine task of an entirely clerical nature. Shellew's eyesight failed and he retired when nearly blind. In my time Hosken's chief work was at the catalogue. The catalogue cards for the

new books came to him and he inserted them in the catalogue – a tedious and exacting job requiring close attention as anyone with experience of a dictionary catalogue will readily agree.

I do not wish to say anything at length about members of staff who came to the library later than I did. Some of them, either because unacceptable to the library or because they transferred of their own accord, can be neglected; but two of them William Charles Baud and Colin Alexander McCallum who in turn became Chief Librarian must at least be mentioned. Of Colin McCallum the mention will be very brief. Everyone interested knows with what dignity and distinction he has filled his position. Anything I could say of him would be favourable. Of Baud much more can be said. He died suddenly, in October 1945, after occupying the Chief's chair for only about twelve months. Bill was on the afternoon shift with me for quite some time and after I left the library we were in very close touch till the day of his death. It was rather a shock when he was taken off my shift and put onto the other shift under Cooke. Strangely enough a junior (or relatively so) John Benyon Dwyer came to me in his place. The reason given for giving a junior and transferring Baud to Cooke's shift was an indication of something, – but may be left at that. Jack Dwyer was a delight to work with. He resigned to go to Warrnambool where he became a prominent solicitor and townsman. His picturesque language after satisfying a difficult inquiry from an awkward visitor was a delight. But to return to Baud. He had spent much of his time in the lending branch nominally 'under' Brazier but actually running the place. Genial and outspoken but always obliging and helpful Bill was very popular. If he came from an interview with the Chief and said he had used certain expressions even though he knew them to be unpalatable you could be sure he had actually used them and not only, after the event, wished he had done so. And probably that is more than can usually be said. Baud was Chief after a long period of relative incompatibility between the Chief and the Sub-Librarian. That was changed by him and his death was a great misfortune even though he had a worthy successor. Baud was a first-rate inquiry room officer imperturbable and obliging. For years he contributed to *Stead's Review*, providing answers to many questions posed by readers. This called for much research on his part and from this work, his value to the library, in the inquiry room benefited.

But I have gone far beyond my years of service, (from 1908 to 1926), in the Public Library of Victoria and shall bring these [ruminations ?] to a full stop.