

# An aspiration to be modern

Jane Garner

On 21 March 1959, the Baillieu Library was officially opened by the then Prime Minister of Australia, the Rt Hon. Robert Gordon Menzies, CH QC LL.M. The building on that day was a very different building from the one we know now,<sup>1</sup> and in March this year we were able to mark the occasion of the Baillieu's 50th anniversary.

The construction of the Baillieu was significant not only for the innovative design of the building, but also because it symbolised the aspiration of a move towards a post-war society that was to be 'technologically advanced, educated and modern'.<sup>2</sup> The Menzies government supported greater access to higher education to alleviate nationwide skills shortages and the ambitions of its constituents. The University of Melbourne showed that it shared this vision by investing resources to provide state-of-the-art infrastructure for its ever increasing enrolments.

At a time of great physical expansion of the University, more funds were allocated to the construction of the Library than to the many concurrent building projects, including that of Wilson Hall. This demonstrated the importance of the Library to the University and recognition of its



significance in the lives and studies of the University community. In a letter to the Premier of Victoria, Sir Henry Bolte, requesting financial support for the project, the Vice-Chancellor of the time, G.W. Paton, described the University Library as 'the central core for all university training'.<sup>3</sup> The State Government's eventual contribution to the project totalled £373,183.<sup>4</sup>

The building, including equipment and furniture, cost approximately £750,000,<sup>5</sup> of which a sum ultimately totalling £105,000<sup>6</sup> had been bequeathed by Edward

Lloyd Morgan Baillieu (1867–1939) in memory of his older brother, William Lawrence Baillieu (1859–1936).<sup>7</sup> The Library was named in recognition of this significant contribution and an acknowledgement placed prominently in the entrance foyer. In 1945, the architectural firm of John F.D. Scarborough was commissioned to plan the new Library, but it wasn't until 1954 that a site was chosen and the design and layout were finalised. Another five years would pass before the construction work was complete

Previous page: The Baillieu Library building under construction, 1957, photographic print, 25.0 x 18.3 cm. Photography by Visual Aids Department, University of Melbourne. University of Melbourne Archives.

and staff could begin to move the 150,000 volumes that made up the initial Baillieu Library collection. Despite the delay of 14 years, Scarborough was able to see the commission to its completion and the firm was a major contributor to the subsequent expansion of the Baillieu that occurred between 1969 and 1974. In his speech at the official opening, the Chancellor of the University, Justice Arthur Dean, said 'We were lucky to have caught a young architect so that he could survive the period of delay and frustration, and to be able to be present at the opening of this Library.'<sup>8</sup>

Over the past 50 years, the Baillieu Library has played a vital role in both the life of the University and that of the individuals who work and study there. The 50th anniversary of its opening has given the staff of the Library and the broader University community an opportunity to gather together exciting items and events to celebrate the occasion. An anniversary exhibition, *'A storehouse of wisdom': Celebrating 50 years of the Baillieu Library*, utilising many spaces in the building, opened on Friday 20 March and went until 17 May. For the exhibition we were able to bring together materials from our Special Collections and the University of

Melbourne Archives, alongside privately owned items, personal anecdotes and reminiscences of former staff and students.

Special Collections staff, in consultation with Professor Emeritus Ronald Ridley of the School of Historical Studies, selected a wonderful collection of library items for the exhibition. The oldest was a Latin Bible, published in Mainz in 1472.<sup>9</sup> Our smallest item was also displayed: *The smallest English dictionary in the world*, dating from c.1893–1900.<sup>10</sup> The exhibition included a book from the J. Orde Poynton Collection. This copy of *Publii Terentii Afri Comoediae*, written by Terence, a major Roman comic playwright from the second century BCE, was published by John Baskerville in around 1772.<sup>11</sup> The book is a fine example of Baskerville's work, famous for its type and paper which was produced by 'weaving' and then hot pressing to give it a gloss finish.

Many other rare items were displayed, including a Shakespeare from 1632,<sup>12</sup> the only copy of the first edition of Giannone's *Dell'istoria civile del regno di Napoli libri XL* to be held in Australia,<sup>13</sup> and the copy of Flemynge's *An introduction to physiology*, reputedly carried by James Cook's surgeon on his voyages.<sup>14</sup> The

Library's complete collection of books from William Morris' Kelmscott Press was represented by *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer* of 1896.<sup>15</sup> Four engravings from the Baillieu Library Print Collection were on display: a William Hogarth engraving from 1751, *Gin Lane*, donated by Dr J. Orde Poynton in 1959;<sup>16</sup> an Albrecht Dürer engraving, *Knight, Death and Devil*, from 1513;<sup>17</sup> and a series of Lionel Lindsay wood engravings of Robert Menzies' bookplates from the collection of Harold Wright.<sup>18</sup> A bust of Menzies was also displayed.<sup>19</sup>

In searching for materials to be included in the 50th anniversary events, Library staff came across fascinating items from the early years. The foyer sculpture, *Areopagitica* (1959) created by Norma Redpath, was just one of many possible works of art for the foyer.<sup>20</sup> A competition was held to choose a design and the Library kept the models of some other entrants' submissions. These were displayed along with information about the competition and a thesis written about the competition.<sup>21</sup> Other interesting finds were some of the original 'Mitzi' chairs designed by Grant Featherstone, with their lime green coverings, and a study desk bearing evidence that food and drink were indeed consumed in the Library in



Baillieu Library loans counter, September 1959, photographic print, 24.7 x 19.7 cm. Photography by Visual Aids Department, University of Melbourne. University of Melbourne Archives.

years gone by. This furniture was also seen in the exhibition.

When working to locate a photographic record of the Baillieu Library from its opening to the present day, we discovered that no comprehensive visual record of the building and its subsequent development existed. Many photos were taken in the early days of the Library as the building opened, but from that time, no further official photos were taken. This raised an interesting problem for staff gathering materials for the exhibition. As a solution, we sourced images from individuals outside the University community via social networking sites such as *flickr*.<sup>22</sup> Past students who had exhibited photographs of the Library through the Art in the Library program allowed us to use their images. In addition, a new series of images of the building was created, many of which replicate photographs produced in 1959. These images serve both as exhibition items and as a current visual record of the Baillieu and the way the University community uses it.

Staff of the Baillieu Library were recognised in a case displaying photographs of all past University Librarians and collections of memorabilia sourced from past and present staff. These include photos of

past staff, copies of both sanctioned and subversive staff publications, two 25-year service medals awarded to staff members and some poetry written by current staff member Gordon Dunlop.

The 1959 opening ceremony was highlighted by the inclusion of four minutes of black and white film footage of Robert Menzies opening the Library. Photographs taken during the ceremony were also shown.

Scarborough Architects was able to supply us with the original contract for the initial construction project. The director of the company also attended the exhibition launch. Further involvement from outside the Library came from the University's Property and Campus Services Division, which recreated the early plantings in the foyer showcase. Property and Campus Services staff studied photographs taken in 1959 by Wolfgang Sievers and donated, installed and cared for the new plants as an anniversary gift. Learning Environments staff designed a Baillieu Library 50th anniversary logo for use throughout the year on banners, publications, signage and the like.

A more contemporary focus on the Library was achieved by recognising the references to the Baillieu Library in popular culture.

In her 2006 book *The student chronicles*, Alice Garner describes the Baillieu as 'seductive' and as having 'its own secrets and charms'.<sup>23</sup> Other references to the Baillieu Library were sourced from films, images and newspaper articles.<sup>24</sup>

The use of the Baillieu Library in more recent times was highlighted in a collection of 'Feedback notes' kept from the years when we devoted a foyer notice board to user feedback and responses from staff. These often humorous notes show that problems with seating availability and air-conditioning just don't go away. In fact, in the edition of *Farrago* published shortly after the 1959 opening ceremony it was stated that there was 'inadequate seating in the new library',<sup>25</sup> a common complaint of students today.

To help celebrate the anniversary, the University Bookshop has organised author talks to be held in the Library over this anniversary year. Authors such as Peter McPhee, Stuart Macintyre, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, Anthony Lowenstein, and others who have an association with the University, have been invited to speak about their use of the Baillieu Library or about libraries in general. We hope that these talks will forge stronger links between the Library and the Bookshop and provide an

The Baillieu Library central stairs looking up from the ground floor, c.1959, photographic print, 24.6 x 19.5 cm. Photography by Wolfgang Sievers. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Australia. University of Melbourne Archives.



opportunity for the public and University community to experience the Library in a new way.

An anniversary website has been developed.<sup>26</sup> The site provides links to an exhibition website, a listing of related events, some history of the Baillieu Library, and a guest book. A memory board has also been created to enable members of the public and past and current students and staff to contribute their memories of their time spent in the Baillieu. Individuals can enter text, images, video or audio that will become available to all users of the website.

We hope that this facility will provide us with a collection of personal histories and memories contributing to the body of information about the Library and how it has been used and regarded since 1959. The exhibition website has a slideshow of images of the Baillieu.<sup>27</sup> Many of these were digitised from paper prints and are available for the first time in an electronic format, allowing unprecedented access to the visual record of the Baillieu's history. A commemorative booklet was also produced by the Publications team in the Library.<sup>28</sup>

The Baillieu Library has seen 50 years of teaching, learning and collecting and many changes in the way these functions are carried out. James Kilpatrick described the Library in 1959 as 'establishing a new trend, one that continues to this day: that of the research library as utilitarian and a site for the latest information resources'.<sup>29</sup> Our Library has undergone two further stages of construction between 1969 and 1974 and a major refurbishment in the 1990s that included significant updates to the information technology infrastructure.

Over the past 50 years, staff have aspired to lead the Library's development and provide quality services and collections for our users. Perhaps the driving force behind all these aspirations has been the desire to be modern in all that we do. It is to the credit of 50 years of dedicated staff and support from the University community that we have been able to implement the vision of Lord Baillieu in providing a library that is 'the very corner stone of the life of any university. It is at once a store-house of wisdom, a shrine of memory, a seed-bed for the germination, the nourishing of thought and research'.<sup>30</sup>

Jane Garner has been a staff member of the University Library since 1990. She is currently a member of the Arts team.



The Baillieu Library 50th anniversary logo  
 designed by Josella Rye from  
 Learning Environments,  
 University of Melbourne Library.

## Notes

- 1 For a description and illustrations of the building in its original state see the booklet by K.A. Lodewycks, *The Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, 1959*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1959. On the history of the project, see also *University of Melbourne Library Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, December 1999, particularly 'The Baillieu Library: A chronology', p. 5, and Susan Reidy, 'Steel and silk: Introducing the Baillieu Library', pp. 6–9; also James Kilpatrick, "Grow with praise of future ages": Creating the Baillieu Library building 1959', *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, vol. 32, no. 2, April 2001, pp. 82–92.
- 2 Kilpatrick, 'Grow with praise', p. 90.
- 3 Cited in Kilpatrick, 'Grow with praise', p. 86.
- 4 John Poynter and Carolyn Rasmussen, *A place apart: The University of Melbourne: Decades of challenge*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 496, note 22.
- 5 Lodewycks, *The Baillieu Library*, p. 1; £713,075 is cited for the building in Poynter and Rasmussen, *A place apart*, p. 496, note 22. Lodewycks reported that £45,000 was spent on furniture and shelving, Karel Axel Lodewycks, *The funding of wisdom: Revelations of a library's quarter century*, Melbourne: Spectrum Publications, 1982, p. 132.
- 6 Lodewycks, *The Baillieu Library*, p. 1.
- 7 The circumstances of the bequest are recorded in Poynter and Rasmussen, *A place apart*, pp. 67–68.
- 8 Hon. J.A. Dean, Speech at the Baillieu Library opening ceremony, 21 March 1959, *University Gazette*, September 1959, p. 4.
- 9 [*Biblia Latina*, Mainz: Peter Schöffer, 23 February 1472]. Purchased 1993, Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 10 *The smallest English dictionary in the world: Comprising besides the ordinary and newest words in the language short explanations of a large number of scientific, philosophical, literary, and technical terms*, Glasgow: David Bryce and Son, c.1893–1900. Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 11 Terence, *Publii Terentii Afri Comoediae*, Birmingham: Johannis Baskerville, 1772. Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959, Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 12 William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, and tragedies*, London: Tho. Coates, 1632. Gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959, Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 13 Pietro Giannone, *Dell'istoria civile del regno di Napoli libri XL*, 4 vols, Naples: Niccolò Naso, 1723. Henry Arthur Pitt Memorial Bequest, Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 14 Malcolm Flemyng, *An introduction to physiology: Being a course of lectures upon the most important parts of the animal oeconomy: In which the nature and seat of many diseases is pointed out, and explained*, London: Printed for J. Nourse, 1759. Purchased with support from the Library Endowment Fund. Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 15 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer now newly imprinted*, Hammersmith: Printed by William Morris at the Kelmescott Press, 8 May 1896. Purchased with contributions from the Library Endowment Fund, the Ivy May Pendlebury Estate and the Friends of the Baillieu Library, 2005, Special Collections, Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.
- 16 William Hogarth, *Gin Lane*, 1751, engraving, 35.3 x 30.2 cm (image). Reg. no. 1959.2607, gift of Dr J. Orde Poynton, 1959, Baillieu Library Print Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 17 Albrecht Dürer, *Knight, Death and Devil*, 1513, engraving, 25.2 x 18.8 (sheet). Reg. no. 1988.2014, Baillieu Library Print Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 18 Lionel Lindsay, *Ex libris Robert G. Menzies*, (1940–1942), wood engraving, 13.6 x 11.4 cm (sheet). Reg. no. 1964.2373; and *Ex libris Robert G. Menzies*, (1940–1942), four wood engravings in various states, each 11.7 x 9.0 cm (sheet). Reg. no. 1964.2374, bequest of Mrs L.I. Wright, 1964, Baillieu Library Print Collection, University of Melbourne.
- 19 Les Tanner, Portrait bust of Sir Robert Menzies, 1966, plaster, height: approx. 40.0 cm. University of Melbourne Archives.
- 20 Norma Redpath, *Areopagitica*, 1958–1959, silky oak and tempera, approx. 240 x 390 cm. Reg. no. 1958.0012, University of Melbourne Art Collection, commissioned 1958.
- 21 Gillian McCarthy, 'Areopagitica: The Baillieu Library Mural Competition 1958', thesis for Postgraduate Diploma in Art Curatorial Studies, University of Melbourne, 1990 (copy held in Elisabeth Murdoch Resource Library, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne).
- 22 www.flickr.com
- 23 Alice Garner, *The student chronicles*, Carlton: Melbourne University Publishing, 2006, pp. 46, 50.
- 24 Many thanks to the Copyright Office for obtaining permissions to include these items.
- 25 Editorial, *Farrago*, vol. 35, no. 2, 24 March 1959, p. 1.
- 26 www.baillieu50.unimelb.edu.au
- 27 www.baillieu50.unimelb.edu.au/exhibition/artwork\_slideshow
- 28 *A storehouse of wisdom: Celebrating 50 years of the Baillieu Library*, Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2009.
- 29 Kilpatrick, 'Grow with praise', p. 90.
- 30 Lord Baillieu, Excerpt from speech given at the opening of the Baillieu Library, 21 March 1959, *University Gazette*, September 1959, p. 7.