



The 2014 Conference

Right from Marie-Louise Ayres' official welcome speech with its interesting plotting of the use of 'bibliography' in newspapers indexed by Trove over the last century, the 2014 conference just got better and better. The papers can be loosely grouped in categories by subject, the largest of which is historical. Dennis Bryans' (*in absentia*) account of early typesetters in Australia was the iceberg tip of two decades of work that is about to appear in a monograph, *A Survey of Australian Typesetters' Specimens*. Bryan Coleborne offered a startling exposé of government surveillance in eighteenth-century Ireland, and the implications of this for Jonathan Swift. We detoured to New Zealand – Elizabeth Nichol's account of a prominent Auckland music publisher, and Margaret Rees-Jones' evocation of the difficulties and perils of running a provincial newspaper in nineteenth-century New Zealand — and to France with Rodney Swan updating an earlier paper with a suggestion of Henri Matisse's source for the design of his artist's book *Jazz*, and an argument for its embodying a spirit of *résistance*. Caren Florance gave an authoritative overview of the history of artist's books and private press books in Canberra, and Amanda Laugesen followed through the three waves of editions of John Brophy and Eric Partridge's dictionary of WWI slang, documenting the authors' changing attitudes to it. Somewhere between history and textual criticism was Jean McBain's analysis of the afterlife of *Cato's Letters* following their appearance in the eighteenth-century *London Journal*. Some of them were adopted as statements of principle in the ideological lead-up to the American Civil War, undergoing textual modification in their new environment.

The second category comprised technical papers on bookbinding and restoration. Robin Tait gave an exposition of the temporary bindings in which books were issued at the end of the eighteenth-century, while Erica Mordek demonstrated the paradoxical point that it is

only when some books commence to disbind themselves that the conservator/scholar can actually see enough of the evidence of book-making technique to infer the place of publication and perhaps date if these are absent from or falsely declared in the text of the book. Philip Jackson gave an excellent account of the nineteenth-century printing process called Woodburytype which produced fine-grained, almost luminous illustrations that could be tipped into books. Like Walter Scott's Highlanders, however, their exotic appearance could not save them from Roundhead modernity in the form of rotary presses and rapid processing. It seems, nonetheless, that an international Brotherhood of Woodbury practitioners keeps knowledge of the process alive.

The third group of papers might be loosely labelled 'Found in the Stacks'. Geoffrey Burkhardt discussed some of the forms of evidence of provenance in books (inscriptions, bookplates, embossing, library marks etc), and then took examples of books which had made the journey from England to colonial Australia to see how much of their stories could be recuperated. Anthony Tedeschi concentrated on books from Sir Redmond Barry's library, whose sale catalogue (so far) has entirely disappeared. He raised the biographical question: Why did a philanthropist like Barry not leave his collection to the Melbourne Public Library? and offered four reasons, all of them speculative but plausible. If anyone knows of other Redmond Barry items in their institutional library, Anthony would like to hear from you.

The final group of papers could be labelled 'Polemical'. These included Colin Steele's keynote address, Mary Jane Edwards's paper on Richard Bentley and Sons, and Michael Piggott's exposition of the state of cataloguing of the collections acquired for the NLA by Sir John Ferguson.

Colin Steele's talk was far-ranging with a generous supply of striking (if horrifying) illustrations indicating the diminished status and even stability of libraries. For example,

when La Trobe University was founded in 1965 the first appointment made after the Vice Chancellor was that of the University Librarian; by contrast, at a recent Retreat for the top 100 administrators at University-that-Shall-Be-Nameless A the University Librarian was not included. Again, there are now more people employed in the marketing department of University-that-Shall-Be-Nameless B than there are in the Library. Although he stopped short of the point where everyone in the room would be slitting their wrists, the address was a sombre reminder of the difficulties of maintaining the prestige of and interest in the physical book. From the point of view of institutional collecting, Steele's advice was unequivocal: 'Salvage first; do the inventory and arrange storage later.'*

Going against this rather gloomy tide, both Mary Jane Edwards and Paul Brunton offered recent examples of where people power had ensured the reversal of bureaucratic decisions which would have diminished libraries and their contents. This prompted the idea that the BSANZ should proactively prepare a manifesto of why the physical book continues to be important which can be used in what will no doubt be a regular succession of anti-book decisions across institutional, municipal, and government entities. Paul Brunton and Paul Eggert were deputed to draft the manifesto.

Michael Piggott's polemic was against the inadequate cataloguing of collections acquired by Sir John Ferguson, especially the lack of use of Ferguson's own papers to provide information about the provenance of these satellite collections. Piggott contrasted this failure with the National Library's repeatedly expressed desire to honour Ferguson's unparalleled contribution to the Library. The battery of polemical voices made this annual conference the most feisty for ages.

Another notable feature of the conference was the presence of a number of antiquarian bookdealers who provided a pop-up book stall at lunch on the Thursday with some delicious treasures on display. Most of the booksellers attended the sessions throughout. This was a very welcome aggregation of interests which we hope to further. BSANZ will be represented at the Melbourne Book Week next year.

The National Library provided the venue and printing as well as treats for the conference

bags. In the Age of the Efficiency Dividend this generous support is notable and greatly appreciated. Andrew Sergeant, as convenor, made all things happen with good-humoured and unobtrusive efficiency.

[*If you weren't at the talk find someone who was and ask them to recount Steele's Manning Clark Lecture anecdote. It's a cracker.]

Chris Tiffin

Bill Thorn (1932–2014)

Bill Thorn was President of the BSANZ in 1991–92 and convened its 1991 conference during which he showed considerable skill in committee management. He was then not long retired from a 32-year career at the Australian National Library. A former colleague contributes this account of Bill Thorn's life:

William Darbyshire Thorn was born in Richmond, Victoria on 7 August 1932. His family valued education: his mother qualified as a doctor at a time when women in that profession were still a rarity, and his father was an engineer. He and his two brothers attended Camberwell Grammar School. He first studied civil engineering at Melbourne University, at his father's wish, but switched to a commerce degree with the intention of becoming a librarian, and began his training at the Library School of the Public Library of Victoria during his second year at university. In 1955 he graduated B. Com. and was appointed to the Commonwealth National Library as a trainee librarian. His continued training there was the usual mixture of on-the-job and formal learning of those days, and he qualified as a librarian in 1958. He began in cataloguing, as did most new librarians, then spent two years in acquisitions. From 1960 to 1963 he was Chief Bibliographical Officer and Secretary of the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services (AACOBS), then the major national forum for libraries in Australia.

This was the beginning of a time of extended organisational change, as the Parliamentary Library, based at what is now Old Parliament House and for many years encompassing a role as National Library as well as the library of the Parliament, became separate National and Parliamentary libraries under the National Library Act (1960). Thorn

moved between them: three years in the Legislative Research Service of the Parliamentary Library, during which time he established its Statistical Service, was followed by three years as the National Library's Chief Liaison Librarian at Australia House in London (1966-69). At this time the Library maintained an office in London, responsible for liaison with British libraries and acquisitions work at a time when much important collection material was being purchased abroad. He returned to Canberra quite soon after the new National Library building had opened in 1968, filling a series of middle management positions in user services and reference areas, including working as an advisor to the High Court on planning library services in the new High Court building.

He was then appointed to senior management as Director of the Australian National Social Sciences Library in 1975. This was one element in a fairly short-lived division of the National Library into subject specialist areas. Following this, in 1980 he was appointed as Assistant Director-General in charge of Reference Services, and served in that role until his position was abolished in a restructure in 1986. He retired in 1987. Many at the library mourned his departure, knowing his qualities as a generous and supportive colleague and manager.

Apart from his family, his passion was for books and bibliography. A river of books flowed through his life, and his personal library was substantial. At its core was a significant collection of private press books, mostly from Australian and English presses, which he donated to the Museum of Printing at the New England Regional Art Gallery in the last months of his life. And he was a maker as well as a collector. His first interest was in letterpress printing. In 1974 he enrolled in an evening printing course at the then Canberra Technical College, and at the same time bought an Adana 5 x 3 inch table-top platen press, with which he printed the first in what became an unbroken series of Christmas cards which ended only with his death. In 1975 he acquired a larger press, a Chandler & Price 12 x 8 inch treadle platen manufactured about 1900, which he cherished and for which he found a new working home shortly before he died. The most substantial productions of his Duyfken Press were an edition of *The*

Reformed Library Keeper (1650) by John Dury, published in 1977, and *The Moon's Horn*, a collection of Barbara Thorn's poems illustrated with linocuts by Hilary Archer (1983). He also relished jobbing printing such as marmalade and jam labels, did signs for the band of a nephew, the Neo-Penguins, and for many years printed typographically elaborate letterpress invitations for the Odd Volumes, a congenial luncheon club for retired National Library staff he convened after his retirement, on catalogue cards salvaged from the Library. In later years his interest in bookbinding somewhat overtook printing, and he described himself as a hobby printer rather than as the proprietor of a private press. He also took up embroidery and paper marbling, in which his masterful use of colour and strong design sense were apparent.

Bill's son William describes him as a 'flexible conservative', something that is strongly apparent in words he wrote in 1987:

I believe strongly in the rights of the individual to freedom of thought, to freedom of expression and to have freedom to be different from others. I believe in the essential goodness of humankind and I am loath to see evil or selfishness in anyone without strong reason. I am distressed when I encounter thoughtlessness, selfishness or lack of concern for the feelings and welfare of others. For me there are many paths to truth (or salvation) not all of which I personally may wish to follow. I have a deep suspicion of fundamentalists and others to whom 'the truth' or 'the one true path' has been revealed whether in matters of religion, management, finance, or personal relations. I believe the qualities of co-operation, compromise and compassion are fundamental to all facets of our personal and working life.

Michael Richards

[This is an abridged version of the obituary that was published in the *Canberra Times*, and is reprinted by kind permission of the author and Fairfax Press.]

Victor Crittenden OAM (1925–2014)

The bibliographer, biographer and publisher of the literature of colonial Australia, long-time

member and former Secretary of the BSANZ, Victor Crittenden, died in early June 2014 in Canberra.

Born in Newcastle in 1925 he studied at Sydney University following army service in Rabaul during World War II. After a stint of teaching in Victoria he completed a Bachelor of Library Sciences at the University of Toronto. Appointed to the library of the University of New England he was soon cultivating what would become a lifelong passion for gardening, one that, for him, would inevitably be entwined with bibliographic documentation, principally his *A History of Australian Gardening Books and a Bibliography, 1806–1950* published in 1986.

Victor came to live in Canberra following his appointment at the end of the 1960s as foundation Librarian at the then Canberra College of Advanced Education, now the University of Canberra. He served in this role until his retirement in 1986, having notably facilitated in 1980 the housing in the Library of the Lu Rees Archive of Australian Children's Literature, which now boasts 25,000 books and extensive biographical files.

Retirement allowed Victor more scope to pursue his abiding passion: through the productions of his prolific Mulini Press (which he had established in the 1970s) and its regular catalogues he wanted to keep interest in colonial Australian culture alive. He was prepared to put his own money on the line to do it – even if that meant the production values needed to be quite modest ones, especially from the 1990s. So he pushed on with new titles in series that he had already established and started new ones. There were his First Fleet Series, the Colonial Poets Series (generally in pamphlet format and often sent to his friends at Christmas as charming keepsakes), Small Tales of Early Australia, and individual colonial novels and stories by various writers (with Louisa Atkinson receiving special attention).

Victor was perhaps most widely known for his editing and publishing of *Margin: Life and Letters of Early Australia*, which he took over after founding editor Dennis Davison's death in 1994. He produced almost 50 issues until 2010, often writing a substantial proportion of the contents, especially the reviews and mentions of recent work in the field. The subtitle, a new one, was Victor's. In his hands,

Margin was more an enthusiast's journal than a scholarly one; and if Victor's editorial voice was occasionally one of complaint at the latest academic trends espied at Australian literature conferences, then mild exhortation to his readers to keep up the struggle for recognition of the colonial literary heritage was its more constant and quietly redeeming feature.

Failing health dogged Victor during his last years but he pushed ahead nevertheless with his final project: uncovering and publishing the complete works of the first Australian-born novelist and short-story writer John Lang (b. 1816). Prompted by findings in Victor's biography *John Lang: Australia's Larrikin Writer* (2005) the project was accompanied by a newsletter for supporters: *The New Moffusilite: Journal of the John Lang Project* (8 issues, 2006–09), named after the newspaper Lang established in Calcutta in 1845. A good number of slender and larger volumes appeared in the series.

Victor's activities were recognised by various awards: from the Children's Book Council in 2005; the BSANZ in 2006 for his 'sustained contribution, through publishing, editing and writing, to the bibliographical and literary study of the Australian colonial period'; a medal from the Friends of the National Library of Australia in 2009; and finally the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM), which he received in 2010.

A scholar-librarian and bookman with a chuckling sense of humour and a passion, always mildly and simply expressed, for what he believed in, Victor will be missed by all who knew him.

Paul Eggert

**Date claimer: 2015 BSANZ Conference,
Melbourne 25-27 November**

Committee Reports tabled at the 2014 AGM are available on the Society's webpage under 'Governance', and the Minutes of the AGM including results of election of officers will be posted shortly. Go to www.bsanzt.org