

# OBITUARY

## HELEN THOMSON

Helen Thomson died on Monday, 5 August after a long illness. At the time of her death she was Acting Chief Reference Librarian at the State Library of South Australia. Helen was born on 19 March, 1933 and grew up in the small country town of Kapunda.

Her professional life was dedicated to giving all people ready access to the information found in libraries. Helen started work in the then Public Library of South Australia in February 1951 (at a salary of £202 per annum), when the wise and humane George Pitt was Principal Librarian. In those days it was usual to move staff from one section to another after about 12 months, to widen their experience. She worked in the Country Children's Book Service for 16 months, the Adelaide Lending Service for 17 months, the Reference Library for 12 months, the Research Service for 15 months, the Education Department Library for 3 months, and then returned to the Research Service for 3 months before resigning in September 1956 to travel overseas.

She came back to the Public Library in January 1959, working in the Periodicals Section until November that year when she began her long association with the Cataloguing Section. She passed the Registration examination in 1961 and completed her BA in 1968. For some years she was the Library's Publications Officer, suggesting titles for the Library's successful facsimile program, organizing their production, and preparing their publicity brochures.

In March, 1984, in troubled times and already suffering from a terminal illness, she took firm control of the Reference Services Branch. Despite ever-increasing infirmity and pain, she remained at work in an arduous and

highly responsible position until 10 days before her death. During this period, knowing her failing strength but refusing to allow it to dominate her, she was for a time Acting State Librarian.



Helen Thompson

Helen was an active member of the LAA and was a Branch Councillor, then Vice President and later Secretary of the SA Branch; she was a General Councillor; she was President of the LAA Cataloguers Section in SA and later President of the federal body of cataloguers. She was heavily involved in the two most recent LAA Conferences held in Adelaide; in 1969 she took over the position of Convenor of the Accommodation Sub-Committee, and for the 1982 Conference she was Convenor of the Publications Sub-Committee, which ran for over three years and with Valmai Hankel and Charlotte Story, edited the *Conference Proceedings*.

In the 1960s and 1970s Helen taught the LAA Registration examination cataloguing

papers, both the compulsory papers and the advanced level one. She was regarded as the South Australian fount of all knowledge on cataloguing matters, and was always willing to help and give advice about cataloguing problems.

Helen's other professional duties included compiling the index for the Libraries Board's publication, *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin* (1974), a volume of over 600 pages; indexing the first *Australian Book Review* from 1967 to 1970; editing (with Valmai Hankel) three major bibliographies of the works of C.J. Dennis, compiled by Ian F. McLaren and published by the Libraries Board of South Australia; compiling (with Valmai Hankel) a pamphlet on careers in librarianship for the SA Branch of the LAA; and, most recently, compiling the State Library's staff handbook.

Helen bought books selectively for many years, and built up a fine personal collection. Her especial interest was South Australiana, and her library included many rare nineteenth and early twentieth-century works, all in excellent condition. Unlike many collectors she read her books, and, not surprisingly, she maintained a card catalogue of her collection.

Helen shared her interests with her family and her friends whom she entertained by her vigorous commentaries. She was energetic, forthright, honest, uncompromising, practical and always to the point. We shall miss her reasoned advice on library policies and procedures as much as her lively conversation and shrewd humour. Her fierce love for her work, her determination to live life to the full, and her courage kept her going when most people would have given up. Those of us who worked with her are privileged to have known such a dedicated and capable professional worker.

Valmai Hankel

## The Search is Over FOR INFORMATION ON

Abrasives  
Cadmium  
Cement and Plasters  
Ceramics  
Fibre Optics  
Fibres

Glass Chemistry  
Lead  
Packaging  
Paint  
Papermaking  
Plastics

Pollution  
Polymers  
Printing  
Publishing  
Solvents  
Surface Coatings

Textiles  
Trade Names  
Water Resources  
Water Treatment  
Zinc

### PERGAMON INFOLINE TRAINING DATES AND VENUES

30th September	Introductory	Perth	14th October	Introductory	Auckland
1st October	Advanced User	Perth	15th October	Advanced User	Auckland
3rd October	Introductory	Adelaide	17th October	Introductory	Sydney
4th October	Advanced User	Adelaide	18th October	Advanced User	Sydney
7th October	Introductory	Melbourne	21st October	Introductory	Brisbane
8th October	Advanced User	Melbourne	22nd October	Advanced User	Brisbane
10th October	Introductory	Hobart	24th October	Introductory	Canberra
11th October	Advanced User	Hobart	25th October	Advanced User	Canberra

For further information on  
Training Registration please  
contact:  
Saztec Information Retrieval  
Services P/L  
PO Box 154  
122 Alexander Street  
Crow's Nest  
NSW 2065 Australia  
Tel: (02) 438 3088 for Course  
Registration, or (008) 022563  
(Toll Free) for Help, Desk and  
Enquiries  
Telex: AA 26033

### TRAINING REGISTRATION

NAME ..... ORGANISATION .....

ADDRESS .....

TELEPHONE ..... TELEX .....

1) PLEASE RESERVE ..... PLACE(S) ON THE ..... (SUBJECT)  
TO BE HELD IN ..... (TOWN) ON ..... (DATE)

2) PLEASE RESERVE ..... PLACE(S) ON THE ..... (SUBJECT)  
TO BE HELD IN ..... (TOWN) ON ..... (DATE)

3) PLEASE RESERVE ..... PLACE(S) ON THE ..... (SUBJECT)  
TO BE HELD IN ..... (TOWN) ON ..... (DATE)