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OF W.A.

A moving experience

Shifting a pile of books doesn't usually create much excitement unless the pile weighs over 30,000 tonnes, needs 40 kilometres of shelving, is priceless, and jointly owned by five million people — or if you hadn't already guessed the huge job of relocating the NSW State Library's collections into its adjoining 11 storey building has begun.

Mr Bob Carr, NSW Minister for Planning and Environment and Minister for Heritage, formally launched the relocation project on 5 June 'This is a massive operation with over 20 million items and pieces of technical equipment being relocated over the next 12 months' said Mr Carr.

The new streamlined State Library of NSW will be officially opened in April '88 but resources and services will be moved in steadily as sections of the new building are completed. The first building stage has been reached with the completion of the five underground levels.

Corporate support

Conserving and restoring rare books, manuscripts and paintings is a vital function of the State Library.

'The private sector is being encouraged to make donations to help preserve our heritage, and in the lead up to the Bicentenary the Library is seeking greater corporate support to keep its irreplaceable archives intact' said Mr Carr at the launch. 'It was David Scott Mitchell and Sir William Dixon, two far-sighted businessmen whose inspired bequests represent the NSW State Library's historic foundation — the Mitchell and Dixon collections.'

The Minister sees the library as a great contributor to economic prosperity of the state and that the use of technology within the new library will keep pace with technological developments and the public's mushrooming demand for up-to-date information and data.



Dining in and signing on

The new library building with its 22,500 square metres of floor space will provide a library with room enough for two large reading rooms, an auditorium, theatre and restaurant. Public access to computer terminals, a new audio-visual service and an automatic reading machine for the visually impaired will be a few of the new features on offer at the new building.

The State Film Library will be moving into the building, and films and videos from its collection will be screened in the new auditorium. There will also be a well-stocked Library Shop and better-planned staff areas.

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The move will continue until the Library's formal opening on 23 April — Shakespeare's Birthday! An extensive exhibition will be mounted in the old historic building to mark the Bicentenary. Entitled 'The Coming of Strangers' it will focus on life in Australia between 1788-1822.

Scholar, recluse and bibliophile, David Scott Mitchell was a genius in his chosen field of collecting Australian art, devoting his life and fortune to its accumulation. The Mitchell Library, his priceless gift to the people of NSW, is one of the world's great national collections and a fitting memorial to its generous founder.

Mitchell's great successor as a collector was Sir William Dixon. As well as presenting the then Public Library of NSW with its magnificent bronze doors and three stained glass windows, Sir William donated his valuable collection of Australian pictures and his private library.

Everything old will be new again

The painstaking process of refurbishing the historic library building has started. The main Reading Room is to be fitted out for the Mitchell Library with the number of reader places being tripled. Work has already begun on restoring the tables and chairs. A new reading room will be prepared for the Dixon Library.

The Kilners Connection — the men behind the move

Sid Champion reports that the NSW State Library move is on schedule. Sid has three Kilners' crews working at quite a pace to relocate all the books, films, videos, sound recordings, pictures and manuscripts by the end of the year.

So far items from the upper and lower stacks have been moved into the new building and the crews are now approaching the job of moving the valuable paintings which are a part of the Mitchell collection. Behind them is the time-consuming and delicate task of transporting the Rare Book Collection. This consists of a wide variety of works — some standing over a metre high and weighing 22 kilograms while one title, a miniature prayer book, was as tiny as a thumbnail.

Using typical ingenuity Kilners created false-bottomed trolleys to carry large rare items so that they could be transported 60 at a time, but singly without having the weight of another item on top.

Sid comments that the move has been masterfully organised with access routes between the historic and new building thoroughly worked out. Nevertheless he acknowledges that there is a good distance to be travelled by his workers and their trusty trolleys.

Since *InCite's* 'Sid's the Champion' article late last year Kilners phones have been running hot. In case your library is planning a 'moving experience' their number is (02) 502 1611 just ask for Sid.

