

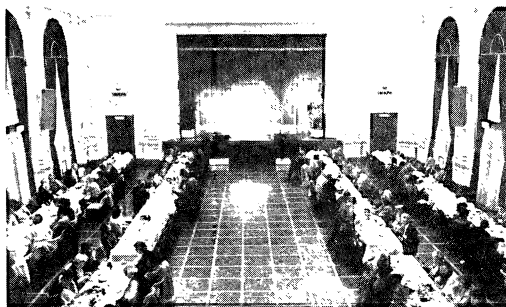


## the front line

In August 1937 the inaugural meeting of the Australian Institute of Librarians was held in Canberra. Fifty years later almost 200 members gathered in Canberra on 2-4 September 1987 to celebrate the achievements of the past, to record the growth and health of our Association, and to look forward to its continuing development in the years ahead.

Social events included a delightful informal dinner and welcome at the Albert Hall, site of the Australian Institute of Librarians' first meeting, in which musical contributions from the Canberra Philharmonic Society and the Canberra Youth Orchestra Society captured the mood of a bygone age with appropriate music and songs from the '30s. The evening reached its high point with the cutting of a huge birthday cake in the shape of Australia by the five foundation members present.

Manning Clark entertained a large contingent at the Lakeside Hotel the following evening when he presented the inaugural Harold White Oration in the presence of Sir Harold and Lady White (whose delightful garden many had the pleasure of visiting at the weekend). And on the last evening the National Library of Australia, which had done so much already in providing the venue and facilitating the running of the meeting, hosted delegates to the final social hour in part of its attractive new extensions.



**Photos:** (above) all ready to relive the 30s — the informal dinner at the Albert Hall, 2 September; (right) Manning Clark giving the inaugural Sir Harold White Oration; Presidential duo — Margaret Chisolm, ALA President, with Peter Dawe.



Yes — it was a great celebration socially!

But the heart of the meeting was in the two-day program skilfully designed by Jenny Gleeson and her committee to highlight the achievements of the past, to examine the present, and to look to the future. Papers and talks were of a high standard with some outstanding contributions.

This 50th celebration was far from the nostalgic self-congratulatory wallow-in-the-past some had predicted. Nor was it, despite the occasion, an obsessive exercise in self-introspection. For me, and I'm sure for others, it brought a deeper understanding of our past, or better appreciation of the place and role of the Association in the present day, and an often stimulating if challenging look at the Association of the future.

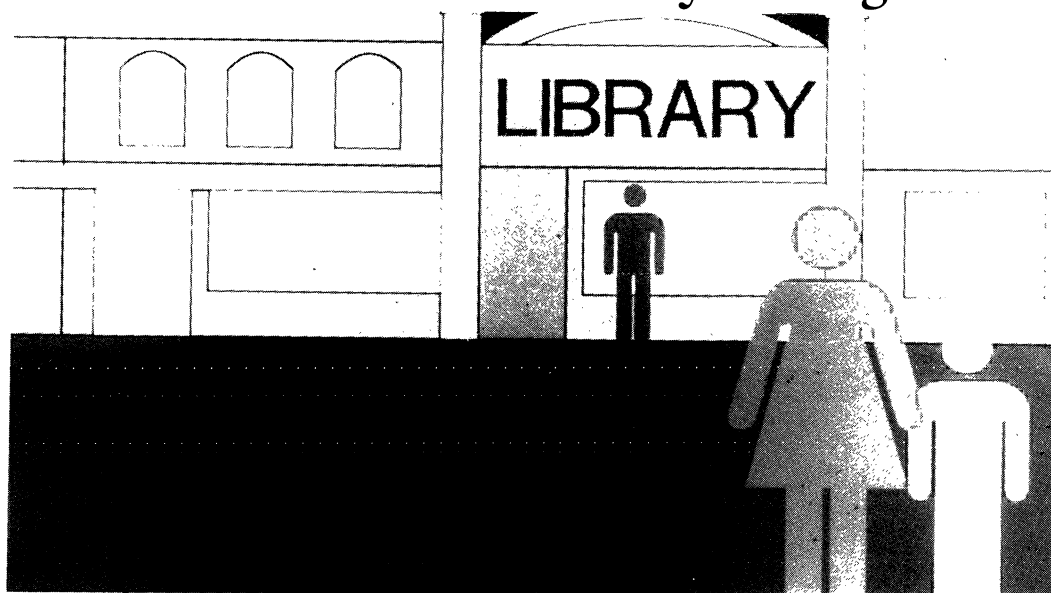
All sessions were recorded by the National Library as part of its oral history program, and John Levett, Editor of the Australian Library Journal intends to produce a special issue of the ALJ in November which will

contain at least the key papers presented. I commend it to you.

Fifty years is a notable milestone in the history of any Association. These Canberra celebrations proved a fitting way to note this milestone of our Association and will be long remembered by all those privileged to attend.

Peter Dawe  
President

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