

Forty-three years on!



Russell Fletcher Doust is vacating the office of State Librarian of New South Wales on 27 March 1987. This will be his last working day at the State Library, although his formal retirement date is in September.

Russell was appointed to the staff of the New South Wales Public Library in 1944, as a Junior Library Assistant. The library then had the responsibility for also running Government Department and Teachers College libraries, and over the next 18 years he worked in the General Reference Library and its research service, as a Library Assistant in the Sydney Teachers College Library, and as Librarian-in-Charge of Newcastle, Balmain and Alexander Mackie Teachers Colleges. He returned to the Public Library building in 1960 to work in the Extension Service, and in 1962 was promoted to the position of Senior Archivist. He was promoted to Deputy Principal Librarian in 1970, and appointed as Principal Librarian (now State Librarian) in 1973.

Russell has over the years been very active professionally. He was General Secretary of the Library Association of Australia from 1963-65 and General Treasurer from 1966-67. He has been a member of the Australian Libraries and Information Council since its establishment in 1982 and represented it on the LIA Network Committee since 1985. He is a Foundation Fellow of the Association, and one of the first librarians to take out a Master of Libraryship degree at the University of New South Wales.

Although it is possibly not known to many of his present staff, he was, like most of his contemporaries including John Macallister, Peter Hazell and Allan Horton, an active unionist in his younger days in the Public Library. This is in fact where I first met him, and I

have vivid memories of the many 'the Public Service Board's offer is outrageous!' speeches that they regularly made at union meetings in the 1950s and early 1960s.

When sitting opposite Russell at a meeting in the National Library recently I spontaneously asked him to list what he took most pride in achieving in his career. He decided after some thought on the following:

1. The closer integration of the State Library of New South Wales with public library services.
2. Implementation of 'special grants' to local authorities for their public library services, and interest subsidy on loans for public library buildings and other capital expenditures.
3. Creating a higher profile for the State Library of New South Wales, including better relations with the community through such avenues as the recently established Library Society.



Photos. Two views: Russell Doust on the steps of the State Library of NSW where he began his career in the 1940s; and looking across at the construction in progress of the library's second Macquarie Street building, due to open in April 1988. (Photos by Sue Charman-Horton)

Russell, when appointed State Librarian of New South Wales, brought to the position a clear vision of the opportunities to provide effective state-wide service. This led to the amalgamation of the two statutory bodies previously responsible for the State Library and free public libraries into a single Library Council of New South Wales in 1975. This continued interest in the development of effective state services is reflected in his own assessment of his achievements.

NEW LAA SECTION — only the beginning

On 23 February about 50 people gathered at History House in Macquarie St, Sydney for the inaugural meeting of the LAA Local Studies Section. The mood of the evening was one of excitement and self-congratulation. Jo-anne Fuller, LAA Program Support Manager, told the members of the new section that they had every right to congratulate themselves as they had fulfilled all the specified requirements and organised themselves in record breaking time!

The period setting of the venue was apt as the audience comprised of local history librarians, archivists, genealogists, and amateur and professional historians — a good cross section of the community of people interested in preserving and giving access to

Next issue!
Special Heritage Week
feature; Source has a
birthday; and Katie Blake's
UNDERCURRENTS takes a
look at CD-ROM!!

Most people with any detailed knowledge of his career would add two other very significant achievements.

The first is convincing the New South Wales Government to proceed with the construction of Building II adjacent to the present State Library of New South Wales building in Macquarie Street. This major project, which is to be completed in 1988, will give the State Library of New South Wales unrivalled accommodation and, in particular, the opportunity to further develop its role as a central information and cultural facility in Sydney.

The other achievement is of course the decision by him and the then President of the Library Council, Mr Justice Rae Else-Mitchell, to establish a Committee of Inquiry into the role and needs of the [State] Library of New South Wales in 1974-75 (the LERN Report). This report was the catalyst for most of the major management and operational changes for the Library Council of New South Wales in the next few years. It is very much to his credit that he not only had the imagination to give a staff committee such wide-ranging terms of reference, but then was prepared publicly to live with and implement the results.

Russell, in a career spanning 43 years, has developed a wide network of acquaintances in librarianship and cultural life. He is a person of considerable charm and wit, and it is a testament to him that so many also count him as a friend. The best wishes of the profession go with him in his retirement from librarianship, and as he starts a new career with the National Trust in New South Wales.

Warren Horton
Director-General
National Library of Australia



Photo. Left to right: Richard Daley (Committee Member), Judy Washington, Michelle Nichols, Patricia Ward (Committee Member), Margaret Wyatt and Ann Enderby (Committee Member).