



Stopping the Rot

Australian Libraries Summit



Mr Peter Collins, NSW Minister for the Arts.

This Bicentennial year you'd be hard pressed to find historians or writers who were not indebted to the work of conservators. In Robert Hughes' introduction to the Fatal Shore... tribute is paid to the librarians and staff of libraries and archive offices. Not only in Australia, but also in England, Ireland, United States and France. In fact Hughes acknowledges that his greatest debt is owed to this group.

So said Mr Peter Collins, NSW Minister for the Arts at the recent launch of the new LAA publication, *Stopping the Rot: a handbook of preventive conservation for local studies collections*. Occasional Paper No. 10 in the NSW Branch series, the publication is based on the workshops of the LAA Bicentennial Conservator, Helen Price.

The launch was held in the superbly renovated Dixon Galleries of the State Library of NSW. The large group of around 80 people were addressed by the Minister, Helen Price and Patricia Ward. The MC for the afternoon was NSW Branch President, Mairead Browne.

After praising the work of librarians and conservators, the Minister spoke about the difficulty of preserving documents, listing the agents of decay. He noted the acidity of paper itself as a major cause — something which the LAA and Helen Price have taken into consideration when producing this title on acid reduced paper.

After the Minister's speech Helen Price took to the rostrum. During her time as LAA conservator she has conducted 25 'at-home' workshops at the University of NSW and has spent 45 days in country areas. Her travels have taken her as far away as Lismore, Albury and Broken Hill. Great interest was shown in both city and country areas but she felt that the greatest need for information on preservation was in the country so that documents can be held locally.

Pat Ward, the afternoon's final speaker, gave a short history of the project, outlining the groundwork done to secure funding for a conservator from the NSW Bicentennial Council. She congratulated the associations involved in the 'Conservation on the Move' project for their close co-operation. She thanked the University of NSW and the LAA for their support.

The audience was impressed with the Minister's general enthusiasm for libraries and his promise to put *Stopping the Rot* to good use in preserving his own collection. The afternoon ended with Mairead remarking to the Minister that when people walk past Parliament they would know that the cloud of steam above Parliament would not be coming from the Ministerial sauna but would be escaping from Mr Collins personal vapour tent.



Helen Price presents the Minister for the Arts with a package of material used in her conservation workshops.



Patricia Ward pays tribute to those involved in an earlier LAA publication, *Rotting History*.

Stopping the Rot: a handbook of preventive conservation for local studies collections (ISBN 0 86804 667 3) is a practical and easy-to-read guide — described by Alan Howell, Preservation Manager, State Library of NSW, as 'filling the gap between the technical literature of professional conservation and the often inaccurate do-it-yourself remedies that proliferate in the popular press and remainder bookshops'. Now available from the LAA Head Office for \$8 LAA members and \$12 non-members (plus \$1.50 postage).

NSW workshops

Over 100 participants attended the workshops held on 25 and 28 May 1988 at the State Library of NSW. Each of the Summit papers was discussed in terms of whether the issue needs attention at the Summit and if not what are the relevant related issues.

Sessions were led by Mairead Browne, Alison Crook and Allan Horton. Janine Schmidt led the session on collection development. Each group was assisted by a recorder. At the plenary session, the decisions of each group were presented and points clarified. Some groups decided to convene sub-committees to continue discussion and produce further recommendations.

Participants greatly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss with colleagues the range of issues raised by the papers. All comments and recommendations have now been received prior to forwarding to the Summit Steering Committee. A number of NSW regional and special interest groups have held meetings and their responses are also being finalised.

Alison Crook.

Victorian Consultations

Victorian activities of the Summit were launched by the Director General of the National Library at a meeting in the Queen's Hall, State Library on 21 April 1988. About 70 people attended and those who were willing to take an active part in organising consultations were invited to put their names forward. A small committee was formed consisting of Jane La Scala, Bruce Davidson (LAA Branch President), Jane King (Carrington Regional Library), Don Schauder (Chisholm Institute) and Betty Foord (State Library).

In nominating conveners we aimed to have all LAA sections and both country and urban libraries represented. It was left to the conveners to arrange meetings at times convenient to them. An insert in *InCite* advertised the names of the conveners and dates of meetings.

Numbers of people attending meetings varied and ranged up to twenty. Despite the very short lead time most conveners were able to meet the deadline of 13 June for reports. Great interest has been shown in the discussion papers by a much wider audience than those who actually attended the consultations and around 200 copies have been distributed.

The committee will distribute a four-page insert in the next issue of *InCite* summarising the results of the consultations.

We will be receiving copies of the results of the consultations in other states, so Victorian members, particularly those who will be in Sydney for the IFLA/LAA Conference, will have the opportunity to discuss any differences with their colleagues from other states. For copies contact Betty Foord on (03) 669 9917 or c/-State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne 3000.

Betty W. Foord
Victorian Co-ordinator