

# Exploring Australian state libraries



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Australia's state libraries house magnificent heritage and reference collections. They represent diverse architectural styles and reflect the personalities of their founding fathers and their principal librarians throughout the decades. In recent years these libraries have responded to the new information technologies in exciting and innovative ways. In our state libraries we can see the application of cutting-edge technologies in digital services and preservation.

In this edition of *inCite* we present a snapshot of our state libraries. You will meet the personalities who have the responsibility for these collections and for managing often vast human and physical resources. Read about the history of the buildings and the eclectic collections.

I have had the privilege of visiting each of these libraries and have been impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication of staff and have had the opportunity to appreciate some of the impressive (and sometimes unexpected) treasures they care for.

All of the states and the Northern Territory have 'State' libraries and are featured in these pages. The Australian Capital Territory has no state library equivalent and this is the matter of some local interest. For many years the National Library fostered a local heritage collection which has, since the establishment of the Territory Government in 1988, been handed over to the local community. While there are eight branch libraries within the ACT Library Serv-

ice, there is no central reference and heritage service, the former role falling largely to the National Library which has been used extensively by local residents. On 1 June a review of the ACT Library Service was released for public comment which recommended the integration of the heritage collection within the library service outlets.

The ALIA ACT Branch has already indicated that it will hold a public forum to discuss the report's recommendations many of which were welcomed by branch president Cliff Law. At this forum the branch wishes to explore opportunities for a whole-of-government approach to the provision of information services. Such an approach would incorporate the interests of school, TAFE, university, legislative assembly and local library users.

Pressure on the services provided by the National Library, especially in the light of the current Federal Government's approach to funding cuts, may well mean that the range of services available to the local community has to be rationalised. This will place a greater responsibility on the locally-elected representatives to provide a reference and heritage service that approaches that provided by state governments and by the Northern Territory. In next month's *inCite* we will be looking at the situation in the Australian Capital Territory in more detail.

This is our first full-colour edition of *inCite* and we are delighted that we celebrate this event with some wonderful photographs from many of the best libraries in the country. ■

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