

Knowledge navigator

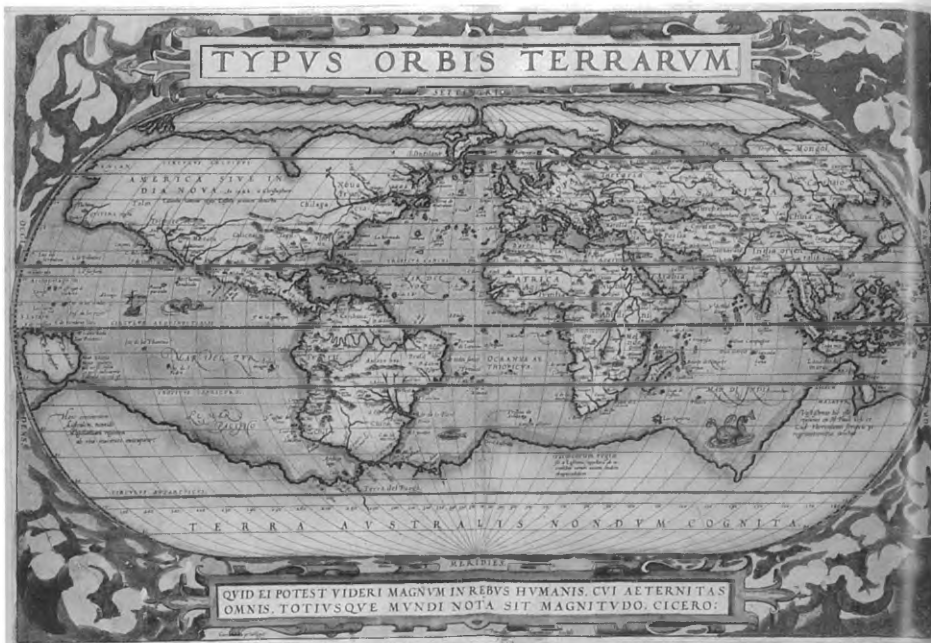


Helen Tait

Director

State Library of Victoria

I come from 18 years as a public library manager in New Zealand and five years in local government general management. The particular attraction which brought me to Melbourne was the prospect of the redevelopment building program and the opportunity to be involved with the development of new services and new methods of delivery in planning for the 21st century.



One of the State Library of Victoria's extensive collection of early maps from the nineteenth century

The library

Mission: The State Library links Victorians to the world's knowledge and the world to our documentary heritage.

'The State Library is the focus of the public's right to knowledge. It's principle roles are to be:

- the knowledge navigator and gateway to the world's information, and
- the guardian and source of Victoria's documentary heritage and provide related specialist services'

These quotes from the State Library's strategic plan embody the constant tensions of stretching limited resources to both preserve the local and provide access to world-wide resources.

The library has particularly strong collections of nineteenth century material. Rich pictures, maps, manuscripts, and rare books collections will form the basis for an intense program of digitising. Special collections in chess, conjuring, and the Ken Pound Collection of Australian children's literature, are of world standard.

A State Library fit for the 21st century

The State Library of Victoria is six years into a \$186 million redevelopment program, which encompasses the construction of three new buildings, the roofing over of some 2200 square metres of courtyard space around the central dome, and will see the library take over the whole of the city block site currently shared with the Museum.

The 33 000 square metre redeveloped library will include exhibition spaces, a restaurant, bookshop, meeting rooms, and a 210-seat theatre, as well as greatly improved housing for collections and provision of technology. The familiar and much-loved

Part of an historical series published by the State Library of Victoria

domed reading room will be fully restored, with its original furniture retained, and will house the La Trobe (Australiana) collection. Queen's Hall will be redeveloped to retain its 19th century grandeur while accommodating 21st century services, and a major new general reading room will house some 250 000 volumes on open access.

Education centre

From the time it commenced operation in 1991, the State Library of Victoria's education centre has adopted a strong philosophy of delivering its services and products to students and teachers in their schools.

In consultation with practising teachers and curriculum development officers, the Education Centre has produced an extensive series of research packages for use by teachers and students which contain information not otherwise readily available to schools. In addition, a number of texts which contain primary source documents held by the library as well as a series of question and activities for students to complete have been published.

While a principal aim of these publications was to increase accessibility to the library's unique holdings, the fast and low-cost supply to school libraries of a wide range of current and relevant periodical articles was introduced in 1993 to improve the accessibility of articles which schools would not normally obtain. This popular subscription service provides copies of articles which have been selected by subject specialist teachers for their appropriateness in responding to curriculum needs.

The multimedia source project

The project is funded as one of a number of Victorian government initiatives in the multimedia area. It will provide digitised, multimedia access to the extensive cultural content of the libraries collections and services. The library possesses a database of



close to two million comprehensively-catalogued items. A previous project created *Pictoria*, a digital collection of some 107 000 images taken from the pictures collection. The first stage of the multimedia project, to be completed by mid-1996, is to amalgamate these extensive digital resources and make them more accessible to all Victorians, and the world through the popular world wide web interface. Schools, libraries and homes will have access to these rich resources in their own localities, along with the same freedom readers have always had within public reading rooms to interpret, rearrange and use the material for their own individual needs.

VICNET

On 23 May, Victoria's Network: VICNET celebrated its first birthday with a week of public promotion and internet surfing in the State Library foyer, a birthday party complete with cake cutting, and a \$146 000 birthday gift from the State Government for infrastructure upgrade. Since its launch by the Premier in May 1995, VICNET has seen great progress in achieving its two main goals, and raising the profile of the State Library of Victoria.

The goals of VICNET are firstly, to provide free access to VICNET and the Internet

to all Victorians through the Victorian network of 250 public library branches and other community outlets.

Secondly, VICNET aims to publish information about Victoria from individuals and organisations on the Internet. It has published information on over 1000 community and public organisations, and gives access to a wide range of government information. Take a look at our world wide web site at <http://www.vicnet.net.au>. The huge amount of community, government and other Victorian information available on VICNET is in large part due to the voluntary assistance of individuals and community and other groups. VICNET plays a prominent role in Victorian Government initiatives in communications and multimedia — Victoria's on-line, searchable Hansard went live on 5 June, for example. VICNET has enabled the State Library of Victoria, for the first time in its history, to provide a service which will be equally accessible to all.



The State Library of Victoria's new 214-seat lecture theatre

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Victoria's Network: VICNET

VICNET is extremely pleased to sponsor this year's ALIA Conference. The ALIA website can be found on VICNET at this location <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~alia>.

Libraries are involved in VICNET because they have always been concerned with providing access to the widest range of information to their user communities. With the introduction of the Internet, more and more information is being published **only** in electronic format.

VICNET is making the extraordinarily powerful electronic publishing capacities of the Internet available to community groups, clubs and other organisations. Community and public interest information is published free, business and commercial information is published for a small fee. There is a great deal of information available on just about any topic you can think of. VICNET provides an organised access point to Victorian information but also to the resources of the global internet. VICNET offers keyword search, subject orientated hierarchical access and straight alphabetical listing to Victorian resources.

So give us a ring on (03) 9669 9710 or email us on editor@vicnet.net.au and let's see how we can help you!



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