

ACT

• **5/8 ACT Library Technician section.** Geraldine Barkworth will speak on *the current job market and hot skills for LTs*. CIT, Reid Campus, Building D, 5.30pm. For further information contact: Edith Hackworthy, ph (06) 268 8120, e-hackworthy@adfa.oz.au.

• **7/8-11/12 ACT Special Libraries section.** *Librarian's Libations* join the Specials on the first payday of every month, come along to the Hyatt, at 5.30pm. (7/8; 4/9; 2/10; 13/11; 11/12). Contact: Libby Coates, ph (06) 266 2346.

• **11/8 APSIG lunchtime meeting** Adrian Cunningham will speak on the *ASTINFO meeting in Teheran in May* and Andrew Gosling on the *Amsterdam International Workshop on Library Cooperation*, in April. NLA, 4th Floor, Conference Room, 12.30-1.30 pm. Contact: Marie Sexton, ph (06) 262 1519, msexton@nla.gov.au.

• **13/8-17/12 ACT Branch meeting.** 5.30pm, NLA, 4th Floor, Conference Room. (13/8; 17/9; 15/10; 12/11; 17/12). Contact: Lisa Spillers, ph (06) 249 3388, lisas@library.anu.edu.au.

• **15/8 ACT Cataloguers Group.** *Conference planning meeting.* All cataloguers welcome. 12.30-1.30pm, NLA, Training Room A/B. Contact: Cheryl Bowman, ph (06) 252 6606, fx (06) 252 6906, cheryl.bowman@abs.gov.au.

• **19/8 UCRLS panel discussion.** *What to do before the reviewer comes.* Strategic planning advice from those with first-hand experience of library reviews. NLA 4th Floor Conference Room, 4.30 pm. Contact: Libby Coates, ph (06) 266 2346.

• **25/8 APSIG lunchtime meeting.** Victor Pawley, *Asia Liaison Officer, ANU*, will talk about *Asian Studies at the Australian National Uni.* NLA, 4th Floor, Conference Room, 12.30-1.30 pm. Contact: Marie Sexton, ph (06) 262 1519, msexton@nla.gov.au.

• **29/10 ACT Branch.** *Post conference meeting.* For further information contact: Edith Hackworthy, ph (06) 268 8120, e-hackworthy@adfa.oz.au.

NSW

• **6/8 NSW Special Libraries section 2nd annual Savion dinner.** Savion, 1/38 Wairoa Avenue, Bondi. 6.30pm for 7pm, \$12 ALIA members, \$13 non-members (drinks extra). Contact: Ilana Cohen, ph (02) 9385 4682 (Mon-Thurs, 9-12) or (02) 9553 9818 (a/h), icohen@unsw.edu.au. Cheques payable to ALIA Special Libraries section NSW group.

6-25/8 Insearch/Knight-Ridder Information Seminars Introductory DIALOG (6/8), Beyond the Basics (25/8). Sydney contact: (02) 9212 2867, krinfo.aus@uts.edu.au.

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A golden day for Specials in Perth

Anthea Harris, Western Australian Specials Section

Western Australian Specials visited a very special library to celebrate Library Week. We chose to visit one of Perth's most beautiful historical buildings, the Perth Mint. The Perth Mint is Australia's specialist precious metals Mint. It opened in 1899 as a branch of the British Royal Mint and most of its staff came from the Mints in Sydney, Melbourne and London.

The original plans show a magnificent room set aside as the library. It would probably have been more like a reading room as the Mint received major newspapers from all over the world as well as a book collection including the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Two families lived in the Mint building; perhaps these resources helped with the children's homework!

The Mint has only been opened to the public for a few years, and for many visitors it was the first time they had breached the armed guards and the wrought iron gates. The serenity of the gardens, with their manicured lawns and perfumed old roses which lie inside the gates, came as a complete surprise.

The exhibition area starts in a courtyard with a reconstruction of a prospector's site — lucky prospectors if the nugget in the shovel is real! Then the visit continues through the vaults to see the exhibits of gold nuggets and Mint history. One exhibit challenges you to lift a real gold bar — it's heavy!

The highlight is a gold pour. The demonstrator pours six kilograms of molten gold at 1300 degrees Celsius into a mould where it glows red and gold while it sets and is plunged into water to cool. The atmosphere is redolent of Victorian industry, assailing all the senses with the heat, dim light, noise and smell.

Anthea Harris, a long-time member of Western Australian Specials sections described how she had rediscovered library books packed in boxes when she began working as records consultant at the Perth Mint last November. The collection is now housed in one of the beautiful glass-fronted bookcases that have remained in the Mint. The original catalogue has survived in an alpha index book with entries by title and author. The books were given a sequential number on accession and this number

was written on a large circular spine label. The spine labels are still intact after nearly 100 years. How many librarians would like the secret of that glue?

Old coin books form the core of the Mint's resurrected library. The oldest was published in France in 1689. Cataloguing these is a challenge as most of them record publishing dates in Roman numerals and use 'f' in place of 's' in the text.

The librarians who looked after the collection in the past were clerks who were employed by the Mint after passing a demanding set of examinations. These were open to 'all young men, subjects of Her Majesty, whose age is not less than sixteen and not more than twenty'. In 1900, the English Language and Literature paper had as its first question:

'1. Write an essay on one of the following themes:

(a) The falsehood of extremes.

(b) Civilisation does go forward sometimes on the powder-cart.'

The following nine questions do not look much easier and only two hours was allowed for the whole exam! The consensus was that most of the librarians present would have failed the exam. Heaven help the poor sixteen-year-old clerks!

Some of the clerks climbed the ladder of the British Civil Service and those who reached the top became Deputy Master of one of the branches of the Royal Mint in the British Empire. Many of the staff obviously enjoyed studying and some of their personal books, photograph albums and notebooks are in the library.

The visit finished with morning tea in a delightful sunlit courtyard and an informal address by local media personality Ted Bull. All present voted it a most successful Library Week function, with several vowing to make return visits with friends and family, if only to admire the wonderfully restored building.

If you are planning a visit to Perth for the 1997 Special, Law and Health Librarians conference in October, try to make time to visit the Mint and see the gold pour. It is barely five minutes walk from the conference venue, the Duxton Hotel.