

O'Donovan collection to open again

The Queensland Parliamentary Library has announced that its historical O'Donovan Collection will now be opened annually due to unprecedented demand.

On Saturday 17 May, the Parliamentary Library opened its O'Donovan Collection to the public for the first time in its 143-year history as part of Library and Information Week celebrations. More than 520 people attended with many having to wait to gain access.

The parliamentary librarian Mary Seefried said 'We had ninety people waiting to come through the collection in the first twenty minutes of the opening. Visitors just kept coming all day.'

The library was overwhelmed with the response. Volunteer staff worked constantly to keep visitors occupied as they waited, while also answering a myriad of visitor's questions.

The O'Donovan Collection is a treasure trove of historic books dating back to the 16th century. It is named after Queensland Parliamentary Librarian Denis O'Donovan who ran the library from 1874 to 1902. Many of O'Donovan's descendants attended the open day, some of them meeting for the first time. They justifiably took great pride in their ancestor's achievements.

The collection has a large number of irreplaceable and valuable items including explorers' journals of Cook, Darwin, Mitchell, Flinders, Oxley, Leichhardt, Jardine and La Perouse. One of its oldest items is a Spanish-English dictionary published in 1599. Another highlight of the collection is Silvester Diggles famous *Ornithology of Australia* (1866-70) which contains original painted lithograph plates of Australian birds. Three generations of Diggles came to the opening to also take pride in their ancestor's achievements. Some of them had never before seen their ancestor's work in colour, while others had similar valuable copies in their keeping.

Adding to the collection's significance is that it is housed in its original surroundings, the old library in the George Street wing of the Queensland Parliament, allowing people to experience the grandeur and beauty of colonial Queensland.

As a result of the obvious interest, the Parliament has decided to open

the O'Donovan Collection annually during Library and Information Week.

Next year, the Queensland Parliamentary Library is considering opening the Member's Reading Room where there will be formal briefings on the O'Donovan Collection and the Parliamentary Library. This will enable the Parliament to handle the large number of visitors expected. Further details will be released prior to Library and Information Week 2004.

For further information, please contact Judith Barker on 07 3406 7920 or judith.barker@parliament.qld.gov.au.

Donation of historical papers to the Queensland Parliamentary Library

The Queensland Parliamentary Library was recently presented with the research papers that were used to compile biographies of all members of the Queensland Parliament. In a ceremony on 14 May, the Speaker of the Parliament, The Honourable Ray Hollis, MP officially received the working documents that Emeritus Professor Duncan Waterson had used while researching his three volumes of biographical registers of the Queensland Parliament.

Professor Waterson, Emeritus Professor of Modern History at Macquarie University, published the first of these volumes in 1972 and his research provides the prime resource of historical and biographical information on members elected to the Queensland parliament since 1860.

On handing over his papers, Professor Waterson thanked the past and present members of the Queensland Parliament who had openly co-operated with his research by answering his questionnaires. He said that while his published works detailed the facts of each member's life, his working papers contained some more insightful comments and facts about those who had served the parliament.

On receiving the papers, the parliamentary librarian, Mary Seefried, said 'These valuable files will form the foundation for any future research by the Parliamentary Library on Queensland parliamentarians and parliamentary history. They add more colour and background to this history than the compilation of facts which we have in our parliamentary records.'

The library will store the papers in a special collection which will have biographical material and ultimately a photograph of each parliamentarian who has been a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council.

Professor Waterson is conducting research for the fourth volume which will cover all members elected to the Queensland Parliament after 1992. ■

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