

# A new State Library for South Australia

Carolyn Spooner, project officer in the Directorate of the State Library of South Australia

The State Library of South Australia is nearing the completion of a major two-year building redevelopment project. A major milestone was reached with the re-opening of the former Bastyan Wing, now known as the Spence Wing after writer, social and political reformer Catherine Helen Spence. This building has been closed for two years and reduced services have been provided from the Library's two heritage buildings. To add insult to the community's injury over all this inconvenience, the entire State Library closed for a month while services and collections moved back into the Spence Wing. It was a case of all hands on deck getting the new building ready for re-opening — re-labelling microfilm boxes, re-housing periodicals in new folders and display boxes, reshelving and setting up 80 workstations. Fortunately, when the State Library re-opened at 9:30am on Bastille Day 14 July 2003, a large group of eagerly-awaiting people stormed through the front doors, clapping and cheering, to the gratification of the staff spontaneously assembled on the mezzanine above. During the first week of opening 19 377 visitors came through the front doors, and volunteer 'meeters and greeters' spoke to around 5000 people, and provided tours every half hour for the first month of opening.

The 'new State Library' is well worth a visit and now has:

- a spectacular glass entrance foyer overlooking North Terrace into the Spence Wing
- major artworks in the foyers, including three stunning batik rugs designed by Pantijiti McKenzie of Ernabella Arts and hand-tufted at the Tai Ping Studios in China
- a sense of openness and a merging of the inside and outside environment by introducing vistas and outlooks from the new building through to historic buildings and gardens
- walkways linking to other areas of the historic precinct on North Terrace
- exciting exhibition and display programs providing a strong cultural experience
- \$3.7 million information technology upgrade including new digital and other copying options
- attractive and well-lit reading facilities in the Ron Boland Newspaper Reading Area
- over 35 kilometres of compactus and other shelving in the basement
- the Somerville Reading Room for the use of heritage materials is complemented by a booth for researchers working on audiovisual materials
- the CopyCentre has two staff, one of whom is a 'walker' who troubleshoots the more than 60 computers and other equipment. There are three access points to this busy area including one from outside the secured area so people can collect copy orders or make a photocopy without having to leave bags. There is also direct access to the reading room, so people can obtain on-the-spot copies of some heritage material for which there was previously a working day's turnaround.

There have been some technology improvements to make life on the desk run smoother. For example, hands-free headsets allow staff to take calls while out in the shelves, and a facility to open and lock the seven study/meeting room doors from the desk saves many trips. In the first weeks after re-opening, daily de-briefings of desk shifts have raised problems which are addressed immediately where possible, or documented for



The new look interior of the State Library's Spence Wing, with open space and natural light. Around 60 workstations are located in front of the information desk, which can be seen at the left under the Library's new 'i' for information logo. Photograph by architectural photographer John Gollings, reproduced here with kind permission of the photographer and the State Library of South Australia



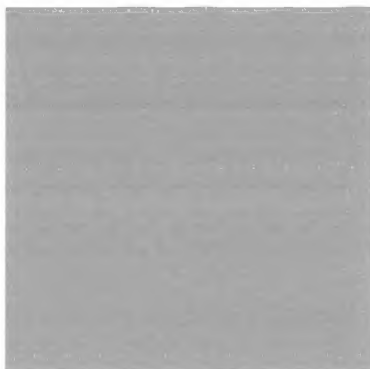
*The dramatic new glass entry for the State Library contrasts with the 1884 Mortlock Wing. The architects for the building redevelopment Hassell and Mitchell/Guirgola, Thorp have brought light and space into the Spence Wing and have made inspired connections with the heritage buildings. Photograph by architectural photographer John Gollings, reproduced here with kind permission of the photographer and the State Library of South Australia*

follow-up. Behind the scenes, retrieval from the consolidated storage area in the basement is half-hourly. There is a new Conservation Studio, state-of-the-art microfilming and preservation facilities, dedicated sound and film studios, and a photographic facility shared with Artlab.

The next landmark in the project is

the official opening of the new building on 15 October 2003 by Rupert Murdoch AO. Other projects to be completed in the Spence Wing are the indoor/outdoor café, a grassed forecourt with a water feature, a Multimedia Wall and a Treasures Wall. The Treasures Wall is a dramatic 24 metres long by 2.5 metres high, and showcases some of the rare and beautiful pieces of the Library's col-

lections. They will be displayed within forty columns featuring South Australian materials such as abalone, coal, opal, wool and zinc. In November 2003 the refurbished Institute Building will re-open and in March 2004 the Mortlock Wing (formerly known as the Jervois Wing) will re-open with an extensive exhibition area set within the bays in the much-loved Mortlock chamber. ■



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