

A tribute to our past leaders

Imogen Garner, presentation given at the ALIA 2004 Biennial Conference, 23 September 2004

Today I am honoured to pay tribute to six of our leaders who have died in the past two years. I do this as the president of a strong and vibrant association, an association that because of their leadership and commitment — and that of many others — is able to be here today to celebrate their achievements, and over these three days of conference, the success of our sector.

Margaret Trask AM [27 April 1928 to 19 November 2002] Awarded ALIA's highest award — the HCL Anderson Award in 1989, ALIA Fellow (1969), president of the Association in 1977.

Ena Noël OAM [30 July 1910 to 7 December 2003] Awarded ALIA's Ellinor Archer Award in 1984.

Jean Whyte AM [27 June 1923 to 18 March 2003] Awarded the HCL Anderson Award in 1987, ALIA Fellow (1963).

Warren Horton AM [23 June 1938 to 25 November 2003] Awarded the HCL Anderson Award in 1988, ALIA Fellow (1985), president of the Association in 1984.

Allan Horton [29 August 1928 to 16 December 2003] Awarded the HCL Anderson Award in 1979, ALIA Fellow (1969).

Ali Sharr OBE [5 October 1914 to 16 November 2002] Awarded the HCL Anderson Award in 1981, ALIA Fellow (1963), president of the Association in 1969–1970.

This occasion does not allow a detailed portrayal of the professional lives of Margaret Trask, Jean Whyte, Ena Noël, Allan Horton, Warren Horton and Ali Sharr. Much has been written on their achievements, and it would serve us all to read and reflect on how those achievements have brought us today to a profession and an Association of which we can all be proud. Their achievements have brought them recognition through numerous awards and positions on major representative bodies.

Today I can comment on only some achievements, and those that I leave out are by no means any less significant. These leaders undoubtedly lived their lives to the theme of this conference: *Challenging ideas*.

All except Ena Noël began their careers in the public library system which was undoubtedly a founding influence on them.

After a ballet career, Ena became an inspirational school-teacher and advocate for children's literature and library services to children and young adults. I doubt that there is a children's librarian today who has not been inspired by Ena.

Margaret Trask joined the staff of the State Library of New South Wales in 1945. From 1948 to 1963 she was city librarian of

Penrith, before moving to an outstanding career as a library educator at the University of NSW and later Kuring-gai CAE, and finally setting up the training and consultancy organisation ALMA, the Australian Information Management Association.

Jean Whyte began her library career in the State Library of South Australia in 1941. In the 1950s she was one of the earliest Australian librarians to undertake higher qualifications overseas. In 1959 she moved to the University of Sydney Library where she enthusiastically developed reader services to a level that set a new standard for Australian university libraries. In 1972, she joined the National Library and was one of the first women to break into the male preserve of the second division of the Commonwealth Public Service. In 1975 she became the foundation professor of librarianship at Monash University.

Warren Horton was appointed as director-general of the National Library of Australia in 1985 following three years as the state librarian of Victoria and 18 years with the State Library of New South Wales. He successfully led the National Library through a period of change in the government's relations with its public service and a move to economic rather than social imperatives.

Allan Horton worked in a number of positions associated with the then Public Library of New South Wales, including as its first archives officer. With a career change in 1960 to deputy librarian then university librarian at the University of New South Wales, Allan Horton was involved in the most rapid expansion to that date of any university library system in Australia.

Ali Sharr arrived in Australia from England in 1953 to head the Library Board of Western Australia and from 1955 as state librarian. He retired in 1976 leaving a re-vivified State Reference Library, a rapidly-expanding system of local public libraries and a new approach to the state-local authority partnership in library provision.

ALIA's first Object encapsulates the fundamental values that bind us as a profession: promoting the free flow of information and ideas in the interest of all Australians and a thriving culture, economy and democracy.

These leaders fought for better public and school library services, against censorship, positioned library services within the expansion of the university sector, established standards and resource-sharing initiatives, and redefined librarianship education and training. They were represented in every aspect of the Association's activities. In all this, they have been the guardians of that Object.

The forthright stance taken by Allan Horton, Jean Whyte and Margaret Trask in

their criticism of censorship contributed to changing community standards and government legislation so that official censorship of materials of interest to libraries now seldom occurs.

Allan Horton took up the challenge to ensure sensible photocopying provisions in libraries. This was recognised by continuing membership from 1982 of the Australian Copyright Tribunal to which he steadfastly presented the views of the Australian library community. In recent times his work is being carried on through Tom Cochrane's membership of the Copyright Law Reform Committee and advocacy for the continuation of a balanced copyright regime in both print and electronic formats.

Margaret Trask played a leading role in securing the allocation of \$27 million of federal government funds to be spent on secondary school libraries over the years 1969 to 1971. This was an outcome of the 1966 Fenwick Report done by the LAA, and which was effective in influencing government policy for the expansion of libraries in Australian schools and the commitment of commonwealth funding to school library buildings, the training and education of teacher-librarians, and the development of library collections that supported school curricula.

Allan Horton remained committed to public libraries and he made a dedicated chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into Public Libraries which reported to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1976. Margaret Trask joined him on the Committee. This excellent report, commonly known as the Horton Report, never realised its potential due to political events and changes of government at the time.

Margaret Trask's contribution to higher education has extended beyond her own professional field. Her membership of the New South Wales Higher Education Board and the Commonwealth Government's Ross Review enabled her to participate in developments in colleges and universities more generally.

Ena Noël and Margaret Trask were early leaders in the Association's School and Children's Libraries Section. Ena was also an early and diligent member of the Children's Book Council of Australia and in 1983 received its Lady Cutler Award for services to children's literature. In 1984, the General Council of the LAA created a special award, the Ellinor Archer Award, which recognised her great contributions to the development of school and children's libraries. In 1994, Ena founded her own biennial prize — the Ena Noël Award — to encourage young emerging writers and illustrators, which is presented at the ALIA Biennial Conference.

The names of Horton, Trask, Whyte and Sharr are dominant in the work of major library sector bodies such as the Australian Advisory Council for Bibliographic Services, the Australian Libraries and Information Council, the Australia Libraries Summit (1988), and beyond; in consultancy work; and in reshaping the Association, establishing the principles and policies which still underpin its professional standards.

Education

These leaders were all graduates of a system of education for librarianship quite different from that of the last 30 years. They were, though, significant in shaping education for librarianship.

With their distinctive styles, Margaret Trask and Jean Whyte redefined education for librarianship in the 1970s, and today we benefit from this in education for new professionals being based on a core of general principles, shared values, theory and practices while located within a diversity of faculties across the country.

As the foundation head of a new Department of Library and Information Studies at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education in 1974, Margaret asserted her strong belief in educating beginning library and information professionals in the common tasks they share in any work environment and the general principles underpinning professional practice. This was a significant divergence from the specialisation courses commonly being taught.

In contrast, in 1975 as foundation professor in the Graduate School of Librarianship at Monash University, Jean Whyte fostered research and research-based qualifications.

Allan Horton, Jean Whyte, Margaret Trask and Ali Sharr were influential members of the Association's Board of Examiners that administered the LAA Registration Examination, and in the 1970s encouraged its replacement through library education in the tertiary sector and the implementation of the Association's course recognition scheme. Ena Noël co-ordinated and lectured at short summer courses in secondary school librarianship at the University of Sydney in the 1960s.

Both Margaret Trask and Ali Sharr have university medals named in their honour.

Allan Horton was noted for his development of staff-training programs. Margaret Trask, Allan Horton and Warren Horton set a new direction in professional development in management with the establishment of the Australian Information Management Association (AIMA). AIMA provided leadership and management education, publications and a host of activities for people moving into senior leadership positions in Australia's major libraries. AIMA was a trailblazer in continuing education for the library profession. With the support of Warren Horton and drive of Ian McCallum, AIMA has been succeeded by the Aurora Leadership Institute which assists

future leaders in the library and associated cultural and information industry to maximise their leadership skills and potential.

Finally, a few words on Australian librarianship in the international context.

In the 1980s, Allan Horton led the expansion of Australian federal government and university-sponsored development programs in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the South Pacific. Ali Sharr advised the Nigerian government on library development.

Warren Horton was also a great promoter of close relations in our region and notably between Australia and New Zealand. He drove many collaborative ventures between the professions in our two countries, and was co-chair of our joint associations conference in 1994. These continue today, and we have a number of our New Zealand colleagues with us at this conference.

Ena Noël's name is synonymous in Australia with children's literature and with IBBY, the International Board on Books for Young People. In Australia, Ena is still affectionately known as 'Mrs IBBY'. Ena was invited to speak at many international conferences and from 1982 to 1986 served on the IBBY international executive committee. She believed literature to be a potent force in international understanding and goodwill. Ena's crowning moment in IBBY and in promoting Australian children's literature internationally was no doubt her achievement in 1986 of successfully nominating Patricia Wrightson for the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Medal for the body of her writing for children, and Robert Ingpen the IBBY Medal for his illustrations of children's books. This is the only time that both of these awards have gone to the same country in the same year. ALIA recognises Ena's achievements through our ongoing support for Australia's membership of IBBY.

From 1991 to 1997, Warren Horton was an elected member to the executive board of IFLA. He was the first board member from our region, which had been a somewhat unknown entity in what was at the time a largely Anglo-Euro-North American organisation. He was awarded IFLA's Gold Medal in 1997 and its Honorary Fellowship in 1999. It is believed by many that only his developing illness prevented him from being its president. ALIA supports IFLA as the national association member and in its many activities. I am sure that Warren's work within IFLA greatly helped to pave the way for IFLA members to elect its first African and current president Kay Raseroka, who is here with us today, to be followed by its first Australian president, Alex Byrne.

We are indebted to these past leaders for their foresight in framing the library and information services system that we work in today.

We have a rich heritage, created by leaders such as these:

- with their passion for excellent library services to the public and for intellectual endeavour;
- their efforts in shaping community standards that encourage freedom to read, to access information and to express ideas;
- their nurturing and mentoring of future generations of leaders and damned-good library professionals;
- advocacy for the profession in local, regional, national and international fora; and
- their commitment to building a professional association that improves library and information services through the support of its members.

These were not just ideals. They are principles and values by which we measure our success as a profession, its worth to our society, and our mark as individuals. They express ALIA's Objects, our purpose, in real ways.

In his contribution to the *Australian Library Journal Festschrift* (January 2004) to commemorate Margaret Trask, John Levett writes that one of Margaret's touchstones was that 'when being pressed on an issue she would challenge its advocate by asking "Well: what difference will it make?"'

Margaret Trask, Jean Whyte, Ena Noël, Allan Horton, Warren Horton and Ali Sharr — what a difference indeed you have made.

ALIA thanks you. ■

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