

Nancy Booker BA DipEd FLA FLAA, 1906–2006

Eugenie Greig



Nancy Booker (centre) with Marjorie Thompson, Jean Arnot and other librarians, c.1966.

Throughout her long career and well into retirement, Nancy Gwendoline Booker made farreaching and significant contributions to education and librarianship, in particular as a pioneer of children's library services in Australia.

Nancy Booker went to work as a library assistant at Sydney Teachers' College from 1925 until1939. In 1940 she moved to the Armidale Teachers' College, returning to take charge of the Sydney Teachers' College Library from 1942 to1953. There, with outstanding dedication to the task, she ensured the effective integration of the Library into the College's teaching program. From 1954 she spent four years lecturing in school library practice as part of the Diploma of Education course awarded by Sydney University.

Within the Australian Institute of Librarians, of which she was a foundation member in 1937, Nancy Booker served in several capacities, but her major role began in February 1946, when she was appointed as convenor of a new School

Library Committee, established 'to watch the development of these libraries and to bring librarians in this field into contact with each other and with the Institute.' The New South Wales School Library Committee's efforts, which included meetings, workshops and the School Library Bulletin, culminated in a one-day conference, 'The Library in the Primary School', held 19 January 1951 and attended by about 90 people.

By 1947, at the Institute's national conference, Nancy Booker was leading moves towards a national approach to 'desirable standards for library work with children in Australia'. In 1950, when the Library Association of Australia was formed, so was a national section for library work with children and young people.

This Children's Library Section came into being in 1953, with Marjorie Cotton its convenorandNancyBookercorresponding secretary. The committee maintained its educational role, conducting a fiveday course in 1954, which 36 students

attended. Although this was considered a notable success, members continued to press for formal courses to be instituted for library work with children and young people. Their committee today has its successor in the current Children's and Youth Services Section of the Australian Library and Information Association. For this pioneering work, the Library Association of Australia honoured her as a Foundation Fellow in 1964.

Nancy Booker became Senior Cataloguer at the University of Sydney's Fisher Library in 1959. This was a very positive step for that library, for none more so than those of us who were new recruits in the Cataloguing Department at the time. We had no idea of the extent of Miss Booker's distinguished professional achievements. As untrained graduates, however, we quickly learned to rely on her practical guidance.

In 1961, Nancy took leave from the Fisher Library to work for some months for the Documentation Section of UNESCO in Paris. By 1962, when the Fisher Library



moved to its new building, she had become Cataloguing Librarian. Under Nancy Booker's direction, centralised cataloguing was extended to branch and department libraries, the resources of which were just beginning to be fully integrated into the total university library system. Significant inroads were made to arrears of earlier acquisitions. The Stewart collection of archaeological reports, books and journals was one of several special cataloguing projects during this period.

For several years she served as a member of the Association's Board of Examiners, besides being an examiner and lecturer. She initiated of a series of workshops in practical cataloguing in Fisher, to assist examination candidates to gain some brief experience in a functioning cataloguing department.

Children's literature was one of Nancy's great strengths throughout her life. She set out to spread an appreciation of it, through her own lectures and by encouraging others to read, teach, and (with undeniable determination, as Maurice Saxby recalls!) research the history of the subject. As Sarah (Walters) Dingwell wrote: '...her courses in Children's Literature, conducted as a WEA lecturer in the 50s, were a great source of stimulation both to budding young librarians as well as more mature parents, teachers and others, and...will be long remembered with enthusiasm and

Sector news

Library History Seminar 2007 – Call for papers

he State Library of New South Wales is calling for papers for the next Forum on Australian Library History, which it will be hosting in Sydney from 28-29 September 2007. In addition to an eclectic mix of papers on the history of library services, individual librarians and lay people, associations, library education and technical aspects of librarianship, some papers on benefactors and their impact on library development in Australia would be appropriate as 2007 is the centenary of the David Scott Mitchell bequest. Proposed papers from students undertaking higher degree research into some aspect of the history of libraries and information services in Australia are particularly welcome. Abstracts of up to two hundred words should be sent to the Forum organiser, Dr David J. Jones (djones@sl.nsw.gov.au) by 15 January 2007.



Nancy (third from left) in Paris, 1961, with the ICCP Group. Other members here include Jean Arnot, Eugenie Grieg, M Lubetzky and Mme Lavrova.

Children's literature in the TAFE Library Certificate course.

She was invited to deliver the inaugural Nancy Booker Honour Lecture, instituted in 1986 by the NSW Group of the Children's and Youth Services Section of the Australian Library and Information Association. She chose to speak on values in pre-20th century children's books. This biennial lecture has since been presented by distinguished children's and youth librarians, speakers concerned with the

writing and promotion of high quality children's literature, and those supportive of

appreciation'. Until 1971, she lectured on professional development in the field of children's and youth librarianship.

> It is true that Nancy could sometimes appear daunting. She was driven by a sense of urgency to accomplish the unselfish goals she had set herself, and expected similar dedication from others. She worked unstintingly towards enabling the young to develop enjoyment of reading and, with it, skills to last them a lifetime.

> With thanks to colleagues and Nancy's family for their contributions.

Jean Arnot Memorial fellowship 200/

The annual Jean Arnot Memorial Fellowship honours Jean Fleming Arnot (1903-1995) MBE, FLAA, who had a distinguished career of 47 years in librarianship and was a pioneer of equal pay and women's rights.

The fellowship is funded by a generous donation from the National Council of Women in New South Wales Incorporated and the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Associations Incorporated.

The fellowship is awarded to a female librarian or student of librarianship for an outstanding paper of no more than 5000 words on any aspect of librarianship. An award of \$1000 will be presented to the winner at the annual Jean Arnot Memorial Luncheon to be held at Parliament House, Sydney, on 30 April 2007.

Entries for the fellowship close on 1 April 2007 and should be submitted to:

Elizabeth Ellis, Assistant State Librarian Collection Management Services & Mitchell Librarian State Library of NSW, Macquarie St Sydney NSW 2000

Further information: Ph: (02) 9273 1466 Email: eellis@sl.nsw.gov.au

For conditions of entry & application forms: www.sl.nsw.gov.au/awards

