

## Philanthropy in Australian Libraries

The State Library of NSW's website proudly proclaims that:

*this year marks the centenary of the greatest single cultural bequest to the Australian nation. On his death in July 1907, David Scott Mitchell, an avid collector of Australiana, left to the Australian people his extraordinary collections of books, documents, maps and pictures. This formed the basis of the Mitchell Library.*

While Australia does not have the same history of traditional philanthropy as, say, the United States, where names like Getty and Rockefeller are synonymous with some of the world's greatest collections in museums and art galleries, we are fortunate to have numerous examples of bequests of considerable significance to our cultural assets in libraries.

**Bequests** of physical material to libraries can be in a range of forms — books, manuscripts, maps, photographs, artwork, ephemera and music scores for example — and accepting them into your collection brings the responsibility of caring for the material appropriately, and making them accessible. First, you

should consider if the material fits with your library's/institutions' collection development policy. Also consider that the material/collection was given for the common good and to enable public access for perpetuity, so in accepting the material, you should have the: appropriate technical expertise and funds required to preserve and conserve the material; physical housing requirements — adequate storage/display possibilities/public access, and; expertise needed for cataloguing highly specialised material.

There are several common forms of bequests. The State Library of Tasmania's website at <http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/who/aboutus/bequestsdonations/bequest> clearly describes these.

- **A Residual Bequest:** After making provision for others, such as family and friends, you may choose to leave what is left (the residue) as a bequest.
- **A Percentage:** Some people decide to share their estate among a number of beneficiaries and allocate a percentage to beneficiaries. This overcomes the need to review your will regularly to take account of changes in your estate or to compensate for inflation.

- **Gifts of Property:** Artwork, books, manuscripts may be gifted in your will.
- **A Specified Cash Sum:** While a specific amount of cash is a common form of bequest, it does not allow for inflation. The real value of the gift can prove to be substantially less than intended due to the effects of inflation between the time of making the will and the allocation of the assets. It is preferable to allocate your estate by one of the above methods.

### The Role of the public trustee

There are public trustee offices/networks in each state and territory. Making a will with the public trustee as your executor is free of charge. Public trustees suggest that you reconsider or review your will at least every five years so that changes in your personal relationships and asset structure can be reflected in your will.

### How to specify a bequest

Examples of wording for bequests to libraries can be found at <http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/who/aboutus/bequestsdonations/bequest> and <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/foundation/bequest.cfm>. You could adapt the wording to include in a brochure or advice to potential donors to

## ALIA Research Fund

A profession will grow and develop in as much as its members are prepared to commit to research and innovation so that the body of professional knowledge can continue to expand and lead to improved professional practice. As the peak professional body for the library sector, ALIA has a critical role in nurturing the advancement of the profession by fostering and supporting research activities to ensure ongoing excellence in library and information services.

ALIA's Research Fund was established to support research initiatives and, through the Research Awards program, assist members to undertake projects which they may have otherwise been unable to complete.

### Why donate?

Donations to the Research Fund will benefit individual researchers and the library and information profession as a whole by enabling:

- research for innovative practice
- more opportunities for members to obtain grants through the Research Awards program to undertake research for innovative practice

- greater ALIA involvement in partnerships with educators, researchers and the workplace to encourage sharing of knowledge for mutual benefit
- support for ALIA member involvement in research thus creating a research culture within the profession
- scholarly, scientific and rigorous research in library and information science.

### How can you donate?

- with your annual ALIA membership renewal
- by directing donations to the ALIA Research Fund
- contact ALIA personally to discuss bequests, endowment of research awards and other opportunities.

### All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.

More information is available from Marie Murphy at [marie.murphy@alia.org.au](mailto:marie.murphy@alia.org.au).