

ALIA TEAM – OUT AND ABOUT

National Library of Australia



deserved break after having huffed and puffed my way around Lake Burley Griffin on my bike. But I digress ... The library has completed part of its renovations (which I hadn't seen before), and they were very tasteful and art deco-ish – they kept the changes in harmony with the time period of the rest of the building. The architects thought of everything: the wood panelling to match the rest of the woodwork, the placement of glass to enhance the daylight within the building, and my absolute favourite – the carpet reflected the columns in the main reading room – as if shade from the columns had fallen on the carpet.

The public part of the library is always a quiet place – people talking in whispers, and the activity behind the scenes reflected this – quiet and subdued. I found the scanning and photography area of the library the most amazing machines (one new machine recently acquired by the library allowed books to be scanned on an angle so as not to damage the spine of these books – I was itching to try it out) and the brightest of lights. The lights were so bright it was difficult to keep your eyes open in the room (and it was a huge room). Charlie the robot was also a source of fun – I had always imagined, when my book order went through, many busy people running around carrying large piles of books. Instead it is only Charlie quietly doing his rounds – until he gets his bearings a bit confused and demands (yes he can speak) that the already open door move out of his way.

The library, we were informed, is very popular with people researching their ancestry, academics (from overseas as well), and students. Exhibitions held regularly at the library are also a hit – rare and fragile books are fascinating to view. I am looking forward to the light display (held once a year) where major national buildings in Canberra light-up in funky designs – the NLA looks amazing lit up with a huge collection of – what else – books."

From Janice:

"It is truly a significant national repository where you can discover and engage with our history and culture through its vast and diverse collections. A highlight for me was their robot Charlie who was kept very busy retrieving items for customers while we were there – he talks as he navigates his way through the corridors and even has a twin being



The next tour for the ALIA Team was big – very big. The biggest. The National Library of Australia. Four staff members toured the facilities for just over two hours, and were asked to play intrepid reporters for this issue of INCITE. They were asked to think about

- The level of activity in the library on the day. What were people doing?
- How the library connected with its users and its "community"?
- Two highlights from the visit?
- What they learned about the library that they didn't know before they visited?
- The colour and design of the carpet?

... as well as share their experience.

We'd like to say a big thank you to Aileen Weir, Director, Reader Services at the National Library and ALIA board member who helped us to make it all happen and along with NLA staff, made us very welcome.

From Agnes:

"I chose the NLA to visit because I spent many (happy?) hours there during my assignment days. I have always loved the library because of its location, sheer size, the availability of any and every book you can imagine, and let's not forget the great food served in the cafeteria. I recall sunny afternoons enjoying the coffee and cake at the outdoor part of this cafe – a well



charged up and ready to take over when he runs out of puff!"

From Aileen Weir

"When I approached staff working in different areas of the National Library to arrange this visit, I received an overwhelmingly positive response. Librarians and curators at the National Library regularly share what they do with visitors and were particularly pleased to be talking to the staff of our professional association. In addition to visiting the reading rooms, galleries, and public spaces, ALIA staff heard how the National Library manages the Australia-wide legal deposit scheme and acquires original manuscripts, paintings, and photographs. They met the managers of 'Libraries Australia' and Trove, learned more about the Library's significant digitisation program of Australian newspapers, and took a

tour of the extensive subterranean library stacks. Although time did not permit a visit to the library's preservation and conservations labs or Asian collections, the visit showcased some of the ways the National Library services both individuals and libraries around the country. Libraries are rapidly evolving and these visits are a great way to expose ALIA staff to the issues we face. We'll have to do it again!"

Images

1. The NLA entrance
 2. Sound chairs
 3. Catalogue card style signage
 4. Aileen Weir and NLA refurbishing plans
 5. Newspapers and Microform reading room
 6. Charlie the robot
 7. The team are shown one of the many stacks rooms
- Contents page: Agnes inspecting the art stored in the Pictures and Manuscripts department



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