

# Vale *Sarah Dingwell* *nee Brolly* 1928 – 2014

**A**fter 40 years with the City of Sydney Library, Sarah Dingwell retired in 1989. FAYE LAWRENCE and KARYN GREEN remember her as a gracious friend, a vibrant, elegant woman and fine professional.

Sarah Dingwell was City Librarian for nearly 20 years – the first woman in this position and also the first female department head at Sydney City Council. Her career paralleled the development of public library services in the aftermath of World War II when, under the *Library Act of New South Wales* (1939), many NSW councils set up public libraries.

Sarah Margaret Brolly was born in Cootamundra on 3 November 1928. In 1932, the family moved to the Sydney suburb of Ryde. Up to the age of 42, when she married Leo Walters, she chose to be known as Margaret. This was to avoid being associated with the nurse, Sarah Gamp, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a character described as 'dissolute, sloppy and generally drunk' – an indication of her literary appreciation and humour.

On her first day at Fort Street Girls' High School in 1941, she joined the City of Sydney Public Library, starting a long association with that institution. A visiting Sydney University librarian who spoke about the library profession inspired Sarah's career choice. In 1946, she enrolled in the three-month introductory course in librarianship at the State Library of NSW.

Upon completing the course, Sarah accepted a position as library assistant at the newly established Ryde Public Library and moved to the City Library in 1949. She completed a BA, part-time, from the University of Sydney in 1955 and two years later obtained a Certificate of Competency as a Librarian (Registration).

Promoted to City Children's Librarian in 1953, she joined the Children's Libraries Section of LAA (Library Association of Australia, later to become ALIA), serving as president from 1959 to 1960. She was also president of the Children's Book Council from 1964 to 1965.

Sarah was appointed City Librarian in 1970. She established LOGOS (a pre-internet current awareness service produced for councillors and senior staff), added public access to airmail editions of popular international newspapers in a range of languages, undertook early automation of the library systems, set up the Citizens Advice Bureau at the Sydney Town Hall, supported establishment of the City of Sydney Archives Service; and opened the busy Haymarket branch that provides an extensive Chinese language borrowing collection.

Sarah participated and held office in several professional and community organisations, including the ABC Programme Committee (1981–83); Australian Library Promotion Committee (1981–83); National Book Council, as deputy chairman (1978–80); President of the Society of Women Writers (1984–86); and the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographic Services, NSW Regional Committee (1970–89).



Sarah meets Gough and Margaret Whitlam

Among the many authors who visited the library that she befriended were George Johnston and Charmian Clift; Nancy Keesing; Kylie Tennant; EV Timms's wife, Alice; and Dymphna Cusack. Sarah was a strong supporter of Colin Simpson, Barrett Reid and Richard Walsh in developing what was to become the Public Lending Rights scheme, which she saw as justice for authors. She was a lifetime friend of Joan Pilone, the first female councillor of the City of Sydney, and Dulcie Stretton, who was an outstanding promoter of libraries.

Sarah's interest in people and ideas continued in retirement. She joined and contributed to many significant organisations including the Royal Australian Historical Society (where she was vice president 1990–92); Pen International; Toastmasters; and the Seaborn Broughton and Walford Foundation. In 1993, she was a judge for the first Nita Kibble Literary Award for lifetime writing by a woman (established in honour of the first female librarian at the State Library of NSW and founding member of the Australian Institute of Librarians).



*Sarah Dingwell*

In retirement, following Leo's death, Sarah moved to the Central Coast of NSW to be near her sister, Helen, but would visit Sydney often to get her city 'fix'. She later married and shared happy years with Len Dingwell, who also predeceased her.

Throughout her life and career, Sarah was a warm, generous and loyal friend to many, with a strong commitment to charitable and educational causes. She was a mentor to students of Kincumber High School almost to the end of her life. Her practical, career-oriented contribution to the education of students in this region was acknowledged with admiration at her funeral by the principal of the school.

An exceptional life and career. ✨



**A**ustralian libraries are invited to take part in *Go Digi* in 2016, the National Year of Digital Inclusion. **BRENDAN FITZGERALD** tells us how your library can get involved.

Technology is increasingly becoming a large part of the day-to-day business of running any organisation or service, and this includes public libraries. The technology provided in libraries, especially computers and wi-fi, is highly valued by people who would otherwise have limited or no access to it. Statistics show that libraries in 2015 are used by people who don't have access to this technology at home. Complementing this public service are digital literacy programs provided by libraries around Australia. Go Digi, a four-year digital literacy program, was launched at the National Library of Australia in February 2015. This is a partnership between Infolchange and Australia Post and aims to improve the skills, confidence and digital literacy of over 300,000 Australians.

To celebrate this target, Infolchange and Australia Post have declared 2016 as the National Year of Digital Inclusion (NYDI). The main goal of the NYDI is to help Australians realise their online potential. It's a grassroots movement inspired by the National Year of Reading. There will be a range of events across Australia, including Go Digi Pop Up events in major cities and regional centres.

Your library can start preparing for the NYDI right now by becoming a Go Digi network partner, and librarians can sign up to be mentors. Becoming a Go Digi mentor is free and gives you the skills you need to help clients become more confident online. You don't need to be an expert to become involved in the Go Digi Mentor program; all you need is some confidence and experience using the internet in everyday life.

Encouraging anyone in your community to mentor someone who needs such assistance is a great way to attract new members to the library. Through the Go Digi program, there are also more than 60 learning guides that anyone can use to teach others about being online. Go Digi is free and user-friendly, so participants can learn at their own speed.

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