



FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS

Melbourne Rare Book Week is a 10-day program of events, exhibitions and lectures held annually that runs from 14 to 24 July this year. **GEMMA STEELE** of Museum Victoria tells us more.

Melbourne Rare Book Week (MRBW) started in 2012 to support the annual rare book fair run by the Australian and New Zealand Association of Antiquarian Booksellers (ANZAAB), but since that first year MRBW has taken on a life of its own. The program has grown each year since its inception, and last year over 44 free events were held at libraries, literary and historical societies and bookshops throughout Melbourne.

The slogan for MRBW is 'For the love of books', and for organiser Kay Craddock this is a real labour of love: 'Melbourne Rare Book Week is a celebration of literature and the importance of the printed word in this UNESCO City of Literature,' says Kay. 'It's a major attraction for book collectors, librarians and all who have a love of words, print on paper and literary heritage. Rare book librarians were pivotal to the initial idea of running MRBW. Their continued support and growing involvement in the program is building an even stronger bond between libraries, the rare book trade, and public recognition of the role of libraries in our society.'

The Museum Victoria Library has been involved since 2013, and for us it is a fantastic opportunity to share our collections and knowledge with the public and to promote our library service. This year we are running an *Antiques Roadshow*-style of event called Rare Book Discovery Day, where members of the public can bring along books, maps and prints for discussion and informal appraisals from a panel of leading antiquarian booksellers and dealers.

Our program also includes a talk by our paper conservator on the care and storage of books, paper-based collections and photographs, which may be of particular interest to sole-charge librarians or those tasked with repairs. Our curator of vertebrate palaeontology, who has searched the globe for rare books vital to his work, will also give a talk about all things bones, stones and tomes!

One of the standout events on this year's program is Melbourne Library Service's celebration of the 100th anniversary of Roald Dahl's birth. A whole-day program includes an exhibition of Roald Dahl first editions, themed story times, a scrumdiddlyumptious afternoon tea inspired by *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and a talk that reviews the publishing history of Roald Dahl and highlights the important landmarks in his output for both children and adults.

If you are a keen collector of books there will be lots to look forward to as well: talks on collecting vintage Penguin books, ancient history, ancient Egypt and collecting travel books. MRBW culminates in the ANZAAB Australian Antiquarian Book Fair, held in the University of Melbourne's historic Wilson Hall, where millions of dollars' worth of rare and collectable books, maps, photographs and manuscript material will be on offer. The full program will be available online at the Melbourne Rare Book Week website – rarebookweek.com – later this month.

A host of public, academic and special libraries take part in MRBW. Attending the events is a great opportunity for free professional development and also to network with other librarians and those in the book trade.

The creativity of the programming and diversity of libraries and societies that host MRBW events has been extremely inspiring. I highly recommend attending some of the free events held during MRBW, and I do not see any reason why a similar event could not be established in other locations. 🌱

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