

LIBRARIANS OLD AND NEW



We had a wonderful time recreating our famous historic photo in Canberra. As **HEATHER WELLARD** reports, it was all part of ALIA's 80th birthday celebrations.

The historic photo of the inaugural gathering of librarians was taken on 21 August 1937 outside the Albert Hall in Canberra. This first meeting of the Australian Institute of Librarians was the start of today's member association for the Australian library and information sector.

The book, which details the early history of ALIA, *Uniting a Profession: The Australian Institute of Librarians 1937–1949*, gives some of the wonderful detail of how the librarians travelled to that first Canberra meeting.

The book notes: 'On the leisurely train journey to the federal capital they had many opportunities to socialise.' And it continues: 'Thus for these delegates the vital ingredient of "association" began even before they set foot in Canberra and would continue on the twopenny bus ride from the railway station to the Hotel Civic, where all the library delegates were staying, and during luncheon'. On the photo, the book notes: 'The meeting closed at 1.10 pm and delegates donned their overcoats for a group photograph on the sunny side of the Albert Hall.' And 'By any standard the foundation meeting in Canberra had been remarkably successful ... No-one had broken ranks and taken their bat and gone home'.

Eighty years later, it dawned foggy and cool on the morning of 23 June 2017 when we were gathering everyone at Albert Hall at around 9 am to re-enact this photo. The minimum temperature on that day was minus 3 degrees, but it did manage to climb to 13 degrees later in day. Some were attending the New Librarians' Symposium 8 (NLS8) at the National Library of Australia

(NLA). Others were ALIA Members located in Canberra who wanted to be a part of this small slice of history.

Sue McKerracher, CEO of ALIA, was on hand to help marshal participants into place. She said: 'Many things have changed in 80 years, but some things stay the same. The aim of preserving the human record is still paramount for librarians, but the way it is done through digitisation, the creation of digital works and accessing information online through cloud-based services could not have been imagined in 1937'.

'I am sure the increased accessibility of information would have been welcomed by our founders. They would have been delighted their successors continue to innovate and transform the way we deliver our services in this information-rich world'.

After the photo, many conference delegates took the short walk back to the NLA to attend the library tours and workshops that were scheduled for NLS8. We say a big thank you to the hardy ALIA Members who spent a good half hour holding their places for the photos. We had a wonderful morning recreating the iconic group shot and we shared a lot of laughs. We wonder if, in 20 years' time, this photo will be brought out of the archives when we are celebrating our centenary? 🌸



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