The University Library

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1. The Setting

'... in Australia, the period that followed the Second World War and ended with the nineteen seventies must be recognised as one of distinctive importance in the formation and development of academic and research libraries ...' — thus the late Sir Peter Crisp, one-time chairman of the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services (AACOBS). Those of us who were privileged to be active librarians in that period have cause to be grateful: we had an opportunity to contribute to the rebirth of librarianship and library service which other generations must envy. Even more thankful were those who were involved in the creation of a new library at a time when national government and local community were seemingly at one in the belief that libraries mattered.

The foundation of La Trobe University fell into that very period. The Act proclaiming its establishment received the Royal Assent on 9 December 1964, about six years after the influential Murray Report which reiterated, as so many had been saying for decades, that a good university can be judged by the quality of its library and library service. In retrospect it has to be acknowledged that La Trobe University's birth occurred when the high wave of popular and governmental support for institutions of higher education had already rolled over and begun its downward turn; but at the moment when this new institution was emerging from its relatively short period of gestation it was not yet evident that the depth of support for national academic development was slackening.

The invitation to join La Trobe came as a surprise. While in Turkey, on a UNESCO assignment in 1964, I received a letter from Mr (as he then was) J.R.A. Glenn asking for my agreement to my name being placed on the short list for the librarianship of a new university to be established in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. I raised no objection — and then forgot all about it. On our return journey by car from Ankara to Paris we (my wife, my son and myself) called at the Faustante in Rome where to my astonishment I found the following telegram on 5 February 1965: ‘Letter written above address inviting you accept appointment as librarian to La Trobe University stop warmest congratulations and hope you can accept. Glenn.’ It amused me to reflect many years later that I only received a formal instrument of appointment some weeks after having taken up duty, a sharp contrast to the approach taken in 1982, when the second incumbent was to be appointed. In 1964-65 the role of university librarian at La Trobe was still somewhat ill-defined; the only clear indication of University policy was contained in the newspaper advertisement which had clearly stated that the position was to be equal to that of a professor in the University. At the time, the equivalent position at the University of Melbourne appeared to be under a cloud of mismanaged personal relations while at Monash University personality issues had soured the claims of that library to lead Australian academic research libraries in the terms and conditions it offered to its staff. Having looked at the Melbourne scene from Tasmania, partly with envy, partly with a good deal of compassion and sympathy, I was anxious and determined not to have a repetition of the unfortunate history of Victorian academic librarianship visited upon me or the institution which I had been asked to join.
2. Library and Academia

Fundamental to the growth and achievements of La Trobe University's Library has been the fact that it was from the beginning recognised as a quasi-independent unit on a par with the various academic Schools. It was regarded as a discrete financial sector with a legitimate claim for financial support not essentially different from that of the Schools or of the administrative sectors of the University.

Two complementary notions followed this. One was that the Library was seen as a service department with the primary obligation to cater for enrolled students as were the departments in their teaching. The other was that the Library was expected to develop collections and services that would support research interests throughout the University, including those of the Library staff itself. This expectation was perhaps not fully understood by all who joined the University in the first few years, but it was clearly the view of the Council, of the senior administrators, and of the foundation deans.

From this view of the role of the Library in the academic community it followed that the Chief Librarian must at all times be fully aware of academic issues and plans. As a result the Chief Librarian was included *ex officio* on all committees and boards where the Library's interests were likely to be discussed. This had far reaching effects and caused a good deal of misunderstanding, jealousy and ill feeling among those members of the teaching staff whose own vision of the role of an academic library was derived from the past. Over the years, much of this feeling disappeared, though it re-emerged from time to time when overall University structure was discussed; however, it must be added at once that, except for one or two isolated instances, there was considerable harmony between the teaching staff and the Library staff.

Even the use of these terms: teaching staff, library staff, academic staff, attained somewhat new dimensions when it was accepted that the professional library staff was as academic as most teaching staff. These matters may seem, in retrospect, to be footling, mean, and irrelevant but at the time they became quasi-philosophical issues when the professionally qualified library staff was granted conditions of appointment substantially equal to those of the teaching staff. This equation brought in its train the presence and acceptance of Library staff on University committees. It also brought with it an obligation — strongly fostered by the administration, the senior librarians, the Library Committee and many others — for the professional Library staff to engage in appropriate research activities, be they related to academic disciplines or to the profession of librarianship.

The Library's main link with the other sectors of the academic community was based on the Chief Librarian's *ex officio* membership of the Academic Board. It is at this supreme academic level that decisions are made and it was quite clearly in the minds of those who drafted the Act that the Chief Librarian should fully participate in that body's deliberation. It should not need spelling out that the purpose of that provision was to ensure that the Library would be at all times well informed of academic plans and policies because all of these do affect the Library's own programs.

Membership of the Academic Board brought in its train participation in other senior committees. By resolution of the Board, early in 1967, the Chief Librarian joined the Deans' Committee and the Budget Advisory Committee. Other *ad hoc* committees also included the Chief Librarian whenever academic policy was likely to impinge upon the Library, a point well noted by the library profession one of whose senior members made the following observation: 'La Trobe has attempted to establish specialties in teaching and study and the position of the librarian is designed to ensure that the proper equipment of the library will both precede and accompany such developments.'

In this context of the relationship between the Library and the academic community, it should be noted that the Library Committee, established in 1967 was made a committee of the University Council. The purpose of this move was to avoid the vicissitudes experienced by the library in other academic institutions where this central university organ...
First Meeting of Third University Committee. May 1964. Clockwise: Emeritus Professor Thomas (later Sir Thomas) Cherry PhD, ScD, FRS; Mr John (later Sir John) Buchan CMG; Dr W.C. Radford MBE, MA, MEd, PhD; Mr F.H. Brookes MSc, DipEd; Mr J.A. Hepburn; Mr C.E. Newman LLB; Mr Henry (later Sir Henry) Bolte (Premier) GCMG, KCMG; Mr J.R.A. (later Sir Archibald) Glenn OBE, BCE; Mr John (later Sir John) Bloomfield MLA, QC, LLB; Mr J.D. Norgard BE (later AO); Professor R. Selby Smith OBE, MA (Oxon), MA (Harvard); Mrs Kathleen Fitzpatrick BA, MA (Oxon); Dr P.G. Law CBE, MSc (later AO). Missing: Sir Michael Chamberlin OBE; Mrs Whitney King BA, LLB.

Looking south-west in December 1966 over Car Park 6 to Glenn College and the Library. Kingsbury Drive and the main sports oval are under construction at the rear of the site.
Looking west-northwest across the University site in July 1965 towards the Preston General Cemetery. These trees still exist and are close to the rear of the present Union Hall. The present central car park area is behind them and the Kingswood Drive/Pretty Royal intersection further behind on the horizon.
Looking north-west from the present Chisholm College site to the Library and Thomas Cherry Building under construction. Taken in 1967.

The first appointments. Staff at the temporary location of the University on St Kilda Road in December 1965. From top: D. Borchardi; F. Barnes; D. Breeton; Dr Myers; J. Quixley; G. Stecher; E. Richardson; E. Small; F. Saul; A. Stengierska; R. Griffiths; D. Lee; H. Landers; P. Breen; J. Scrivener; S. Morton; Mrs McGregor; S. O'Donoghue; C. Davies; S. Boreyev; A. Bush; P. Longley; M. Low; P. Doyle; F. Angus; D. Egan.
Opening of the University and Installation of the Chancellor, 8 March 1967.

Sir Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, congratulates J.R.A. Glenn, the newly-installed Chancellor of La Trobe University, 8 March 1967.
La Trobe's first graduation ceremony held in the Glenn College Dining Hall, December 1969.

Arthur Gray (left) and Les Moon of the Services Branch presenting a 'Battle Honors' banner at the retirement function for the first University Registrar, Major-General T.S. Taylor, 7 November 1974.

Major-General T.S. (Tim) Taylor, the first Registrar of La Trobe University, 1965.
The Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Scott, congratulating Roy Simpson, University Master Planner after he was admitted to the Degree of Doctor of the University during the graduation ceremony on 20 May 1983.

Mr Frank Saul, the University's first Curator, handing out pay slips to landscaping staff shortly before his retirement in 1976.

La Trobe University looking east-south-east, March 1976.
Three La Trobe Chancellors. (L-R): Sir Archibald Glenn, 1st Chancellor of the University (1967-72); Hon. Mr Justice R.E. McGarvie, 3rd Chancellor of the University (1980-); Hon. Mr Justice R.A. Smithers, 2nd Chancellor of the University (1972-80). This photograph was taken at a ceremony on 18 February 1981 when Mr Justice McGarvie was installed as the 3rd Chancellor, and the degree of Doctor of the University was conferred on Sir Archibald Glenn and Mr Justice Smithers.

Dr David Myers, the first Vice- Chancellor, and Mrs Beverley Myers at a farewell dinner held in their honour on 2 December 1976.

The University's first Chief Librarian, Dietrich Borchart, with his H.C.L. Anderson Award from the Library Association of Australia, September 1979.
was given inferior status under some academic body and as a result became the football of the more influential professors whose irrational demands on its services placed the library in a subservient position where it could make no independent contribution to academic life.

At La Trobe, it was agreed from the beginning that the Library Committee, however constituted, would be a source of advice to the Library and its staff. It was firmly precluded, however, from having any direct influence on library administration or indeed on any internal library matters. It was understood, of course, that the Library Committee, representative as it was of the academic community, would be a sounding board and a supportive group for the Chief Librarian who in fact consulted with the Committee on many proposals for actions or changes in the running of the Library, for example hours of opening, reserve book supplies, fines, serials policies, and specific complaints from users. The constitution of the Library Committee, with the Chief Librarian as its ex officio chairman, was laid down early in the Statutes and remained unaltered, except for size, until the end of 1981. On the impending retirement of the foundation Chief Librarian, a Council Committee was set up in 1979 to examine the future role and status of the Chief Librarian in the University. The only major change recommended was that the chairmanship of the Library Committee should be held by a lay-member of Council. The change was to take effect after the retirement of the foundation Chief Librarian. Though possibly coupled with a desire to diminish the Chief Librarian’s role, the proposed change had the advantage of the Library now being directly represented on Council and, thanks to the perception of the new chairman, the relationship between the Library Committee and the Library administration and the general running of the Library remained unaltered.

Lastly, in this context it is important to note that the management of the Library’s financial resources was recognised as being the responsibility of the Chief Librarian and those senior members of the Library staff concerned with acquisitions and services organisation. There was to be no indirect allocation of funds to Schools or Departments to which the label ‘for library purposes’ might be attached — a practice all too common in other Australian universities. During the foundation period it was arranged that the Library had a sufficiently large allocation to meet the University’s aim of having a reasonable collection of books and serials on the shelves on opening day but it had to take its place in the queue once teaching and research got under way.

Fortunately, the foundation Vice-Chancellor had a very clear view of the role and significance of the library in the academic community. Furthermore he had a firm conviction that senior academics would do best if given full responsibility for their respective areas and that government by committee would resolve any difficulties where such responsibilities overlapped or might clash. Consequently a Budget Advisory Committee was established consisting of the heads of all major spending areas — the Deans, the Chief Librarian, the Registrar and the Business Manager — to discuss the Vice-Chancellor’s budget proposals for the ensuing year. While the allocations to Schools were based largely on student numbers (a formula which caused no serious problems during the first ten years but became more and more of a procrustean bed as public and student interest drifted away from the science Schools) the Library’s allocation was set at about nine to ten per cent of the University’s total income from government sources. This figure actually applied from 1972; until then the Library’s percentage had been considerably higher to meet the costs of the establishment years.

The Library was expected to meet the cost of staff, materials, equipment and minor repairs from its allocation. Naturally, the actual payments were made by the Business Manager’s Department as was the case with all other spending areas. This ‘global’ approach to library funding was at the time another innovation in the Australian academic scene. It greatly assisted planning for resources and services. While staff establishments were subject to Council approval, it was relatively easy to arrange transfers of
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funds from one column to another, provided the overall restraints were met. The requisite procedure allowed the University to keep an oversight over monies spent and internal allocations to the Library. In the wake of the federal government's down-grading of universities in 1974/75, certain aspects of these financial arrangements were revised towards the end of the seventies. In particular, stringent controls were imposed upon staffing, especially through restrictions on the filling of vacancies. The effects of this revised policy were not felt seriously until about 1980 and thereafter more severely in the period 1981-85 when non-professional support staff was allowed to be seriously reduced. During the ensuing quinquennium the staff ratios appear to have been returned at least close to the original plans.

At all times it has been University policy to allocate to the Library a sum believed to be sufficient to meet the University's bibliographic needs. This policy was wholly supported by the foundation Chief Librarian on the assumption that the Library would provide services commensurate with the monies allocated; if these were insufficient, the sufferers would be those engaged in teaching and research, not the Library. Consequently, supplementation of financial resources was a very rare exception in the first decade and a half, arising solely from conditions outside the University's control, such as the devaluation of the currency or special decisions of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC). While arrangements were made occasionally to divert money from the Schools to the Library, these were essentially ad hoc arrangements and were never used for purchases involving continuous commitments such as subscriptions to journals. By the mid 80s, in the face of a shrinking library dollar, the University accepted the principle of supplementing library funds in accordance with the CTEC's formula in calculating the amounts due to the universities; that formula took into account the inflation factors affecting the cost of library materials.

3. Library Staff

Each professional appointment made in the foundation period was considered by a selection committee, and this became the established practice. The nature and composition of these committees changed over the years until, in the late 1970s, their constitution and range of control was enshrined in the University's Administrative Handbook. While this later codification of staff selection guidelines attempted to define the hierarchical relationship between staff ranks, a precise and detailed prescription of desired qualifications was found to be as impractical then as it had been in the beginning. For all senior positions, management skills and professional interests were of course rated very high, but evidence was also sought of creative talent and of written contributions made or about to be made to the profession or to some academic disciplines.

Given the University's view of the role of its Library, it will come as no surprise that the conditions of appointment for the professional Library staff were kept very similar to those of tutors, lecturers and professors. This arrangement has been criticised by some university administrators as well as by government authorities at state and federal level. When eventually such criticism from the (as it then was) Australian Universities Commission (AUC) became almost a threat, La Trobe's administration asked for guidance and suggestions for an alternative set of conditions. In its Delphic reply the AUC advised La Trobe that it could and should choose between three possible scales of salary and attendant conditions of employment: the public service schedule as implemented by the State Library of Victoria; a scale and conditions based on those applying to the University's clerical staff; or set up a scale which it determined itself. La Trobe chose the third suggestion and, for better or for worse equated professional Library staff with the teaching staff.

In supporting his recommendation that the equation with the teaching staff should be maintained, the Chief Librarian convinced the University that the activities of the senior Library staff were not essentially different from those of the teaching staff. It was
argued that the choice and preparation for use of library materials as well as helping students to exploit them was different in method but not in nature or purpose from the task in which every lecturer was constantly engaged when facing a class. If teaching skills were to be taken as criteria in the assessment of staff, library activities should be equally respected, and if lecturers were to be rated for their research activities, library staff should also have to engage in similar activities to be considered for promotion or tenure.

The most outstanding characteristic of La Trobe University's Library staff was — and still is — the harmony and co-operation existing between all sections and individuals and this deeply affects staff performance. This co-operative spirit was fostered by a non-traditional practice of democratic organisation which enabled the professional staff to operate and manage their areas of responsibility according to their own lights. Staff meetings would establish policies but there was no paternalistic supervision and no control of day-to-day performance. Results were expected, failure to deliver was noted, but nobody was held to a strict time schedule. This attitude and the personal response to the daily demands of work have made it possible to live as professional family in the best sense of the word.

Staffing at the non-professional level has always seemed very important to the senior professional staff and during my tenure of the post of Chief Librarian care was taken that there was enough support staff to underpin the services the Library was expected to render. Inevitably, there was more coming and going of non-professional staff, many of whom were female clerical assistants whose marriage and family responsibilities caused many changes in personnel. There can be no question however, that it is the clerical and support staff who in the end make library services possible.

Professional staff interested in pursuing research into librarianship, theoretical or applied, were given all possible encouragement. In particular the Library began quite early in its history to issue a series of Library publications which is self financing and provides the staff with a means of getting the results of research into print. The series includes significant bibliographic studies such as Bibliographies on the Australian Aborigine by John Thawley (2d ed., 1987), Nineteenth century plant nursery catalogues by Rosemary Polya (1981), Local history in Victoria ... [and] Victorian directories, 1831-1974 by Carol Beaumont and Margot Hyslop (1980), and the Checklist of Royal Commissions Select Committees of Parliament and Boards of Inquiry, a well known index to Australian public tribunals of inquiry compiled by D.H. Borchardt (Pts. 1-3 published in Sydney; Parts 4 & 5 and supplementary volume for 1960-1980 published in the Library series, 1975-1987).

Numerous other bibliographies and works on librarianship and related topics have been compiled by members of the Library staff. Examples include Australian bibliography by D.H. Borchardt (3d ed. 1979), Librarianship in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania by D.H. Borchardt and J. Horacek (1975), Australian official publications edited by D.H. Borchardt (1979), and Bibliographical services to the nation ... Proceedings of a conference... edited by D.H. Borchardt and John Thawley (1981). D.H. Borchardt and John Horacek have also edited one of Australia's leading scholarly journals for the profession, Australian academic and research libraries (1970- )

4. The Building

The first pencil line for the prospective library building plans was drawn, figuratively speaking, on the day I arrived back in Melbourne from my UNESCO assignment in Turkey, on Saturday 13 March 1965. Arrangements had been made for me on that auspicious day to be collected from the airport and taken almost directly to meet the Chairman of the University's Interim Council, Archibald Glenn, at the house of the Master Planner already appointed by the Council, Roy Simpson. Jet lag and some apprehension made it difficult for me to cope with so important an interview with persons I had never met before and I scarcely took in all the questions to which they wanted answers. One and, in retrospect, clearly the most important issue discussed and solved was that we all
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wanted a centralised library system, a single library building and no nonsense about departmental collections or branch libraries.

To reaffirm that decision it was also agreed that the Library should be at the centre of the academic building complex and that it should be possible for a healthy person to walk from any academic area of the campus to the entrance of the Library within five minutes. Thanks to the Master Planner this has been achieved and has helped to prevent any serious clamour for the establishment of specialist collections on campus. The only exception was made by the Library itself in creating an education curriculum laboratory collection located in the School of Education; the main reason for this exception being the special nature of the material held in that collection.

Stage I of the Library building was one of the first two buildings to be erected on the campus (the other being Glenn College). Both were intended initially to serve multiple purposes and had therefore to be so designed that each could eventually be dedicated solely to its originally intended purpose and also be extended in the fullness of time. The three storied area of ca. 5200 square metres built in 1966-67 was therefore fitted out at first to house not only the Library but also the laboratory-based departments of the University's science Schools. A small lecture room was also provided.

It should be made clear, at this stage, that there were strongly divergent views on the needs of the science Schools. Several of the foundation professors in the sciences and most other senior academics believed that first year science students were not dependent on the traditional laboratory sessions. If that view had been accepted much building expense could have been saved and more attention could have been given to the detailed needs of library services in a building intended to revert to library purposes after twelve to fifteen months. In the event however, the University's chief adviser on science teaching (himself a physicist) persuaded the majority of those concerned to construct first year laboratories and to allow no compromise of traditional science teaching methods. Here, as in most other academic disciplines, La Trobe chose to follow in the well worn path of academic tradition and such innovations as were eventually incorporated in the curricula and teaching methods developed much later. New approaches to academic processes were ah hotly resisted at La Trobe as at any of the older universities and much time was lost in the process of creating a genuinely new academic institution. The reason for this is perhaps not far to seek: every one of the new appointees had been taught and had worked within a traditional setting before joining La Trobe.

It is worth recording briefly that library operations had, of course, started many months before the first building was ready for occupation. Staff began collecting and preparing books and journals from the moment a set of rooms had been assigned to them in the St Kilda Road suites in June 1965 and after a few months boxes of books and journals were sent to a factory building in West Heidelberg. The processing staff — cataloguers and others associated with preparing the books for the shelves — followed and soon the factory building was a hive of activity. All material ready for shelving was placed in boxes which in turn were so stacked that on the appointed day they could be easily transferred by lorry to the new library building and arranged in a meaningful order on the floor near the shelves on to which they were to go.

The refurbishing of the first stage building, when the science Schools had moved into their own quarters, was another traumatic experience. All of a sudden, there was enough space to swing any number of cats; books and periodicals could be housed comfortably and became much more readily accessible to library users. However, some areas still remained sequestered to science teaching for a further twelve months. By 1969, all traces of the science Schools had disappeared from the Library building and the Library's proper functions and services began to develop according to the original plan. In conformity with the Master Planner's overall design for an above ground communication passage throughout and between the academic buildings, the main entrance to the Library was
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placed on the second level of the Library building and protected against inclement weather by Allen David's large and colourful glass screen — intended it was said to symbolise the Australian sun or the sun in Australia.

When the broad plans for the University Library were first being prepared, the Chief Librarian's estimates for the housing of a collection of 1 million volumes and seating for twenty-five per cent of the University's population were scarcely taken seriously by the University Council of the day. Finance had been provided for staff and materials to have a basic collection of 50,000 volumes ready for the first student intake but few could imagine what they meant in terms of shelf space and fewer could envisage the need for a large academic collection. Comparisons with other institutions and perhaps the persuasiveness of those most concerned led to an early extension of the first stage building to more than double its size. Early in 1971 the temporary north wall of the first building was taken down to open up the greatly extended floors. All present were astonished at the considerable distance that had now to be walked from the entrance to the new northern wall of the building, but this was only one consequence of a novel and complex approach to library services offered over three levels on a gross floor area of ca. 11,000 square metres.

One must remember, of course, that an increase of the Library building was not just the result of hopeful thinking. Indeed a great deal of pressure from users and library staff was needed to persuade the authorities that the Library was gradually becoming too small to render quality services. Submissions made by the University to the government eventually reached ears willing to listen and, with the support of CTEC, a leading architect was engaged to prepare first drawings for a magnificent tower-like extension to the Library in 1979/80. Unfortunately the submission was overtaken by a freeze on all new government capital projects and the drawings were set aside. It was not till 1983 that the University's pleas for Library extensions were heeded. Entirely new plans were prepared and accepted leading to the present building. I for one was much more pleased with these new plans, drawn up by a firm widely experienced in library design.

Despite several relocations of functional areas in the course of two major extensions the overall design for the whole Library building and its services has remained much as it was originally planned. To this day, all serials holdings and associated services as well as the bindery and staff areas are on the ground level. To those functional areas a large compactus shelving system was added in 1985/86. The second level contains the main entrance, reader services including a large reference collection, the public catalogues, technical services and the Library administration, as well as, since 1985/86, the microform and music collections and associated services together with general non-book materials. Monographs — split at one stage into a High Use Collection and a Research Collection (more will be found on this point below) — are now all shelved together in one classified sequence on the third level, surrounded by the bulk of reading areas. In all, the Library now offers a total of 1700 seats and forty-nine carrels. The capacity of the Library is now far in excess of 1 million volumes.

On the retirement of the foundation Chief Librarian, the University named the building the Borchardt Library.

5. Collection building

The Chief Librarian's mandate at the time of his appointment was to have ready for use, in a building still to be designed and constructed, a collection of about 50,000 volumes covering a set of University disciplines as yet totally undefined and to be taught at depths which would only be determined by teaching staff still to be appointed. An initial student population of about 500-600 bodies was expected. I have often been asked: 'Where did you start? How did you guess? It has always been difficult to give an answer.

I had a vision of what I wanted, and I could see no other institution offering anything comparable. In my valedictory address, in December 1981, I called it 'The bibliovision
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splendid'. A university library, in my view, is a purposeful assemblage of monographs and serials that meets the needs of its prime users in two ways. On the one hand it offers them, as far as possible, the very text they want at the time they want it; on the other, it provides an unfailing source of information on where to locate any reference not available on the spot. To achieve the first objective, the library needs financial resources that are rarely within its reach. To attain the second, one needs a moderately large but specialised collection of books skilfully brought together to serve as a bibliographic reference collection, particularly in the fields where the library's own holdings are relatively weak.

On this basis I set out to plan an acquisition program which would in the first place, cover the standard disciplines such as English language and literature, history in general and Australian history in particular, geography, economics, social sciences, basic philosophy and psychology, mathematics, biological sciences, chemistry, physics and earth sciences. There would be no doubt that these disciplines would be taught. It was more hazardous to guess which modern languages would be offered and what particular brand of reforming zeal would dominate the disciplines that make up the social sciences.

Another factor influencing the choice of books and journals was the presence of four major collections in Melbourne: the State Library, the Libraries of the University of Melbourne and of Monash University, and the principal library of the CSIRO complex. Ideally it would have been most desirable to ensure that, while each of these institutions offered basic bibliographic fare to its clients, each would also develop excellence and in-depth resources for particular subjects. A few meetings were organised during 1966-68 to discuss this and similar proposals but a marked difference between the university libraries soon became obvious. Though the two older universities, and Monash University in particular, had considerable financial resources, much greater than those of La Trobe, their librarians appeared to have little freedom in using those resources as they thought fit. In the event, no progress of substance was made in the field of co-ordinated acquisition policies and personality problems further bedevilled any future attempts in this direction.

The point has already been made that La Trobe's Chief Librarian had the right and the duty to determine how the money allocated to his area of responsibility was to be spent to bring the maximum benefit to the University. This might be amplified by the simple and categorical statement that the Library would receive requests and suggestions for the acquisition of library materials, but that it would not receive orders or demands. The Library retained at all times, and to this day, the right to reject requests for the purchase of materials considered undesirable, unsuitable or unnecessary. The Library had the obligation, however, to ensure that all reasonable requests were fulfilled — an obligation which became more difficult as the University grew and specialist areas of academic concern needed attention. Nevertheless, the principle has always been honoured as long as the Library's funds could manage it.

Two methods were used to meet these legitimate expectations with respect to monographs. One was for the Selection Librarian to discuss with teaching and research staff in detail their bibliographic needs, refining their areas of interest, pointing out the means of identifying the literature, and exploring the means of supplying the material. The teaching and research staff were asked to supply lists of wants and to identify the subject fields of interest to them. On the basis of this information the Selection Librarian would proceed to search for and order monographs — consulting with the appropriate staff members whenever necessary. The other method was simply to pass on to the interested staff member publishers' advertising leaflets and the like, and let the staff member do all the work of evaluation and choosing and passing his or her recommendations back to the Selection Librarian. Both methods worked reasonably well and allowed the Selection Librarian to exercise considerable discrimination in his efforts to build a strong collection in the various disciplines.
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These recollections need some amplification to explain why La Trobe chose its particular road to collection building. Going back to that question "Where did you start?", it may amuse those who really want to know that among the first books acquired were some standard English and foreign dictionaries. One day very early in the piece, I wandered into the city to pick off Cheshire's shelves a small number of basic reference books; alas, there was nowhere to have them sent until the University took over several offices in St Kilda Road. Eventually the books arrived there, were unwrapped and placed in the Chief Librarian's new office. It was not much to boast of and I became anxious to have before me more substantial evidence of my professional acumen and financial resources. So I sent a cable to Martinus Nijhoff, in The Hague, asking for a first edition of Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*. This was indeed the first major purchase made by La Trobe University Library. It arrived in the fullness of time, much admired to this day as one of the most significant acquisitions made by the Library and treasured in its Rare Books collection.

When La Trobe began its search for a foundation professor in foreign languages, a good deal of discussion took place regarding any specifications the University might set out in its advertisement. Some Council members expressed concern lest the best candidate might turn out to be a specialist in Icelandic or Flemish or Polish, but it was agreed after some lengthy discussions, to have the advertisement phrased quite without bias and prescription. La Trobe wanted the best qualified professor of a foreign language it could get. In the event two persons were chosen, one offering French, the other Spanish. With regard to the latter I was deeply interested when the applicant explained that his particular field was Latin America — and so it happened that La Trobe University Library developed one of the strongest Latin American collections in Australia.

This belies the claims made by most other university libraries that the day-to-day demands for library materials to meet the needs of staff and students in the university's officially recognised disciplines make it impossible for the library to have a specific acquisition policy of its own. La Trobe's Library is no less hard pressed to purchase monographs and serials for its own staff and students than other institutions but an enlightened library policy does make it possible for the Library to have its own acquisition program. This also allows for some continuity of acquisition projects which may be temporarily abandoned, or relegated to a low priority, by changes in the teaching staff.

The policy adopted with regard to library materials for the pure and applied sciences was based on different considerations. Acknowledging the presence in Melbourne of the substantial science collections in the two other universities and of the very extensive holdings of the Head Office Library of CSIRO, it was decided to acquire in the first place only some standard texts and backsets of periodicals going back no more than ten years, to rely on interlibrary loan services to supply materials not yet acquired, and to await the arrival of the foundation professors for a revision of this policy. It turned out, however, that the incoming professors were entirely in agreement with this approach and merely added requests for specialised periodicals and textbooks in their particular fields.

Like other university libraries, La Trobe has found it difficult to set down on paper details of its acquisition policy. It has been easier to define what will not be collected, or at least what subjects and areas the Library will not seek to develop in depth. Thus, a formal decision was made in 1967/68 that the Library would not collect Asian language materials; yet some monographs in Chinese and in some other oriental scripts have been added to the collection on the basis of their being exceptions. The same applies to books printed in Cyrillic characters. It was also decided quite early in the history of the Library that there should be no competition with the Australiana collections in the State Library and elsewhere. However, the development of courses in Australian literature, history, politics and society, on the one hand, and the research interests of the Science-based Schools in Australian earth sciences, flora and fauna have brought with them a need for extended
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collections of Australian publications, including retrospective publications. The increasing availability of relatively cheap reprints has obliged the Library to change this aspect of its policy somewhat. Even so, the acquisition of Australian imprints is restricted to publications required by the user rather than for their rarity or collectors' interest.

The continuous problem of serial subscriptions, their frightening impact on the Library's budget and on its ability to acquire other materials, has brought in its wake some minor level of co-operation between the major Melbourne libraries. A lot remains to be done. As far as periodicals are concerned, regional committees under the auspices of various national and regional organisations have examined the existing level of duplication and some steps have been taken to reduce the number of subscriptions for specialised journals. This has had the sad side-effect of pushing up prices of journal subscriptions. The problem is still with us and the continuing shortage of library funds makes decisions on periodicals even harder. Like other universities, La Trobe has been obliged to resort to the simple rule that requests for new journal subscriptions can be acceded to only if an existing subscription is cancelled. This is a most unsatisfactory way of proceeding but in the interest of maintaining monograph acquisitions programs it in a rough but acceptable economic measure.

Apart from the modest Latin American collection, the Library has developed special strengths only in a few narrow disciplines or areas. The lack of a genuine stimulus from the teaching and research staff and, of course, the lack of substantial financial resources largely explain this limited development. However, the Library did succeed in building up a strong collection of government publications and, perhaps more importantly, in organising and servicing it better than was (or is?) the case in any other academic library in Australia. None would dispute, one hopes, that the output of the country's most prolific publishers — the Commonwealth and state government printers — is of vital interest to the community at large and to academia in particular. Strangely, very few libraries are prepared to spend time and effort on making this vast resource of statistical, legal, social science and particularly economic data available in a manner that facilitates its use. While Australian federal and state documents quite naturally represent the largest portion of the La Trobe collection, there is also quite some strength in documents emanating from the British and Canadian governments, from the European communities and several other national series, with material of parliamentary, legislative and statistical importance dominating.

6. Services

If buildings, books and librarians a library make, they do so only for the benefit of users who consist, of course, of many different types, though in our universities two categories prevail: undergraduate students who need books and occasionally journal articles for basic information and supporting data to compile assignments, and senior students, teaching and research staff with scholarly objectives that require a bibliographic infrastructure to support research at varying levels of sophistication. This section describes our attempts to meet these two requirements and the steps taken to assist in the educational aims of the University.

In spite of the noisy and often immoderate claims made for the new computer-based reference retrieval methods, a rather different cry for help sounded clearly in my ears: it was a cry for help and it came from the ordinary, unsophisticated student. The ordinary student is the daily bread of every academic institution in Australia. It is a figment of librarians' imagination that these students want or need computerised services to pass the first three stages of almost any subject. It seemed to me most important to satisfy the students' needs first. With this attitude, and without shutting our eyes either to the technological evolution in library services or to the numerous failures which accompanied the development of computer-based systems, La Trobe University Library concentrated first on creating quality manual systems which were to meet immediate needs and to lay the

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foundation for the later application of electronic data processing (EDP)."

The advent of computer-based, bibliographic retrieval systems has imposed upon libraries the need to adopt a uniform approach to descriptive cataloguing, an approach taken up at the international level and based to an important degree on Library of Congress practices. These considerations persuaded the senior Library staff to make certain decisions which led to practices now so well established that they are taken for granted.

For instance, the Library adopted the seemingly simple rule: 'No conflict with Library of Congress descriptive cataloguing' - except in the case of Australiana where local knowledge might persuade us to prefer Australian practice should they differ from the Library of Congress. The effect of this decision benefited us when computerisation eventually arrived.

In the choice of a classification system to arrange the books on the shelves, the Dewey Decimal System was adopted, not because it is considered the best, but because it is used in the other major collections in Melbourne and thus would lead to less conflict and confusion in the mind of users.

As the collection grew it became more and more obvious that the bulk of the student population made use only of a relatively small number of volumes — an observation which was neither original nor restricted to Australia. At the time few other Australian libraries had drawn practical conclusions from this fact. The concept of separation, as exemplified at the University of Sydney and the Australian National University, seemed to me an ideal solution — practiced also in many North American universities — and a successful campaign was mounted to have the teaching staff accept a Research Collection clearly separated from an undergraduate collection, with different lending policies and eventually slight variations in access rules. The undergraduate collection, once separated, was dubbed the 'High Use Collection' or HUC for short, to indicate clearly that the material there housed was not only designed for undergraduates' needs, but included all that was in very frequent demand. However, space problems caused by the delay in the construction of the third stage of the Library, a reassessment of educational needs at the retirement of the foundation Chief Librarian, and the rapid growth of the Library's holdings prompted the new Library management in the mid-80s to do away with the division and to re-integrate the HUC collection and the Research Collection into one single sequence.

The appointment of a Reader Education Librarian in the early 1970s focussed attention on how to introduce new students to the Library. A serious effort was made to contact all new students each year and to ensure that they learned to get the most out of 'their' Library. Students in their second and later years were offered library use courses on demand and with special emphasis on their own needs. These sessions were often organised as workshops and carefully prepared in association with the teaching staff who frequently participated. When computer based data retrieval became firmly established, the Library's reference staff organised sessions of instruction and helped senior students and researchers to identify search processes and helped establish bibliographic infrastructures for specific topics. These processes were of course the same in every academic and research institution that had the equipment, so that La Trobe students became properly prepared in the universal information retrieval game.

Conclusion

During the twenty five years since its foundation the Borchardt Library has made significant contributions to the Australian library scene as well as to the international standing of librarianship. The holdings have grown from the 50,000 volume collection on Opening Day to close to 750,000 volumes and over 11,000 serial titles in 1989, all of which can now be identified through the Library's computerised catalogue. Special bibliographic strengths have developed in addition to the few already mentioned — a fact reflected in the increased demand for La
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La Trobe University materials on interlibrary loan. The computer based reference services are being fully used.

Since 1982 two persons have held the post of Chief Librarian. One was Christopher Hunt (1983-85), and the other Earle Gow (1985-). However, I have avoided referring by name to my professional colleagues who helped me to create what is now the Borchardt Library and to the many contributions they have made individually because this account is intended to deal with the development of a section of the University. Most of my colleagues have been deeply involved in the acquisition of the Library's resources and the creation of the Library's services, but the history of the institution's personnel will have to await another historian. The Borchardt Library, as it now stands some ten years after my retirement, has unquestionably grown in all respects but it has retained its standing in the University and continues closely in the image in which it was originally conceived.

I am indebted to friends among the teaching staff, to Earle Gow, and to several of my former colleagues, particularly Jeff Scrivener and John Horacek, who have helped me in verifying my recollections and presenting them here; however, they are in no way responsible for opinions expressed.

ENDNOTES


3. The term Chief Librarian for the principal officer in charge of the Library was written into the La Trobe University Act before an appointment to the post was made. The term has seemed most appropriate to the first incumbent who saw the Library staff as consisting of professional equals — a view not common at the time.

4. The Deans' Committee remained throughout its long life (1967-1982) a rather strange organ; it had no standing under the Act, nor was it recognised as having executive powers and it did not even benefit from a formal secretariat. However every individual member had well defined responsibilities and prerogatives as well as decision making rights. (See chapter 6)


6. Though this volume is primarily concerned with the University's foundation years, it is worth adding here that the decision made in 1983/84 to opt for a turnkey integrated system of computerisation brought the Borchardt Library into the forefront of Australian library automation. Within four years the staff succeeded in implementing all six modules of the system — a feat not accomplished as far as I know by any other institution in Australia. Within La Trobe University, the Library is held up as a model on how to go about the computerisation of operations.