

KEYS TO SUCCESS

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The Friends of the State Library of South Australia came into existence for the best of reasons. During the Great Depression the state government cut off funding to the Public Library, as it was then known, to the extent that the only way in which the Library could buy books was to draw on bequest funds. In the first three months of 1929 the grant for new books was £259; in 1932 it was 13s 6d. Acting on an idea from a young Adelaide University English lecturer, R.C. Bald, a group of citizens called a public meeting on 25 July 1932 which resulted in the formation of Australia's first library support group. The initial task was to buy for the general stock, and over the next two years the Friends donated 704 books to the Library. But the Society was never intended to take the place of the Government Grant and, following the policy of the Friends of the Bodleian Library, which had been formed in 1924, it was resolved in 1936 that the Society's funds be used 'to help the Library by acquiring manuscripts and other unique pieces, books of exceptional rarity or beauty or interest, which could not be obtained in the ordinary way' (cited, Ian Buttrose, *The Friends of the Public Library of South Australia*, Adelaide (1950), p. 4). By 1950 the Friends had added 872 titles to the collections, but that number includes 732 mainly ordinary works bought between 1932 and 1935.

Until the mid-eighties the Friends was an entirely voluntary body. It arranged lectures and other events for members, and organized special fundraising efforts. In 1982, for instance, it conducted a successful appeal to raise \$100,000 to purchase *Banks' Florilegium*, a publication in 34 parts of 738 copperplate engravings of plants collected on Captain Cook's first voyage around the world in the Endeavour (1768-71). Banks spent £7,000 in the money of those times to have sketches of the plants worked up into detailed water-colour drawings, which were then engraved on large copper plates; but publication did not proceed. The plates went into the British Museum and the 1982 publication by Alecto was the first of the complete work, and the first of any of the plates in colour. The edition was limited to 110 sets, of which the State Library's is No. 12.

As well as those first 732 books, many of which can no longer be identified, over 700 other items have been presented to the Library either by or through the Friends in the past 68 years — a total exceeding 1400. They range from a Graeco-Egyptian papyrus of the third century AD and a vibrant little French book of hours to a leaf from Caxton's Chaucer (1476) and a rare children's jigsaw of the 1840s. Then there is a copy of Nicolaus Jenson's superb Pliny of 1472, an 18th-century palm leaf book from Sri Lanka, and a water colour of Paringa Station on the Murray. Each year an equal sum of money is earmarked for each of three divisions of the Library — Rare Books and Named Collections, the Children's Literature Research Collection and the Mortlock Library of South Australia — and the Friends Acquisitions Subcommittee consults with division heads on purchases. It has recently been decided that \$20,000 will be raised for a special gift to mark the opening in 2003 of the State Library's redevelopment which has just begun, and we already have a particular purchase under consideration.

In 1989 the Friends were instrumental in setting up the State Library Foundation, and that organization, which since 1996 has had a full time salaried manager and assistant, has raised funds through attracting corporate sponsorship and holding fund-raising events for special projects such as the permanent exhibition of the Bradman Collection.

The Foundation could well be considered the Friends' most significant gift to the Library; in the last five years alone it has raised \$2.5m. Its current target is to raise \$600,000 to display the Library's Wine Literature Collection, which is the largest in Australia and among the world's finest, and to digitize certain sections of it.

The Friends also count corporate sponsors among their sources of revenue, if not on the large scale of the Foundation. A stationery firm gives us a healthy discount on our envelopes, for example, in return for its name being on the back; wine firms are generous when we approach them when we are holding functions; printers discount costs in return for their names on our journal *Bibliofile*; a real estate firm gives us \$1000 a year for one

of our regular talks programs, and will also give a percentage on its commission to the State Library on transactions made involving users of the Library.

For over 20 years the Friends received income, and a great deal of it there eventually was, from those new wonders, the photocopying machines which been installed in the Library. Then in 1992 this income stream disappeared when it was transferred directly to the Library itself. However, the Libraries Board of South Australia agreed to begin funding a salary for a part-time Executive Officer for the Friends, and this is now confirmed on a triennial basis. During the past six years we have developed a program which produces income from three main areas apart from subscriptions and donations. These are: talks and Library events, excursions, and publications.

The series of lunchtime talks Wednesdays at One, given on the first Wednesday of every month except January, presents distinguished people, usually speaking on the topic 'Books in My Life' — a title that we have been delighted and flattered to see now being used by a number of other organizations, hoping no doubt to emulate our success. The series, which began in September 1995, has included people as diverse as the then Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia, epidemiologist Basil Hetzel AC, composer Graeme Koehne, architect Guy Maron, authors including Mem Fox, Max Fatchen, Peter Goldsworthy, Brian Matthews, Tom Shapcott and Eva Sallis, all of whom have won prestigious awards, Adelaide Festival directors Barrie Kosky and Robyn Archer, footballer and businessman Graham Cornes, university chancellors and vice-chancellors, winemakers, photographers, company directors, artists, booksellers, even librarians! We end the year with a chef — Maggie Beer was the first. There were 54 people to hear our first speaker, Archbishop Ian George, but we soon had to move to a larger room, and that room's capacity of 150 has been tested more than once; the audience now averages about 100. Although the admission charge began at \$3 and \$2 for Friends, and has risen to a still-modest \$6.60 (\$4.40 for Friends) including GST, in its first five years Wednesdays at One has made \$15,009. The most important contributing factor to the success of this series is the quality of the speakers, all of whom have given their services free, and have agreed to their talks being recorded for the Library's sound archives; most of them have also let us have their notes or scripts for the collections. We now have people asking if they can be appear, but we have a policy of only inviting speakers, and also of never inviting current politicians.

Two or three times a year we hold evening talks, with a very special speaker, drinks and light supper and a higher admission charge. Last September, for example, in conjunction with the Book of Kells exhibition at the National Gallery, the State Library of South Australia put on show the facsimile edition presented by the Friends in 1990 — \$18,000 was raised with the help of the South Australian Irish community for its purchase — and the Friends presented a slide lecture by Vincent Megaw, Professor of Visual Arts and Archaeology at Flinders University; disappointed people were turned away at the door because all seats had been sold. The first evening talk in 2001 will be in March, with our Patron, the Governor of South Australia, Sir Eric Neal, as the speaker.

Library events include, for example, regular free Library tours conducted by trained guides from the Friends, and visits to Library exhibitions with talks by curators and others closely connected with the materials; some visits are restricted to members only. The Society has a long association with exhibitions. It arranged its first, a display of rare books and fine bookplates, from 15 to 26 May 1933. This included books from the University and Public Libraries and from the collections of 53 members. It drew 3000 visitors, in a city of only 313,000 (*Australian Demographic Trends*, 1997).

Excursions, some of which are for members only and free, have recently included visits to the South Australian Parliamentary Library and the Barr Smith Library of the University of Adelaide. This year we organized the first literary excursion, a pilgrimage to Auburn, Laura and other places associated with C.J. Dennis; the excellent guide was the president of the regional historical society, readings of Dennis's poetry were given as we travelled along, and scrumptious morning and afternoon teas were provided by local service groups. The trip was so successful that two repeat tours have had to be arranged. This popularity has led to a decision to make such literary pilgrimages a permanent feature of the Friends' program. The next, in March 2001, over three days and two nights, will cover the state's South East, and include places associated with writers including Adam Lindsay Gordon, Will Ogilvie, John Shaw Neilson and Max Harris. Such excursions not only provide satisfaction and enjoyment for the Friends, they raise the profile of the Library outside the state capital, they inject money into rural communities and they raise funds.

The third area of fund-raising, publication, at present makes the most money for us through our Australiana facsimile series, which in 1995 reactivated the program run from 1962 to 1979 by the Libraries Board of South Australia. This is the largest part of our publishing program, and in 1999 earned us a net income of \$27,683. We publish limited editions of usually 500 or 600 copies, 99 numbered and in a de luxe binding, which often sell out quickly, the rest in a standard cloth binding. Prices range from \$27 for the standard edition of *Who killed Cockatoo?* by W.A. Cawthorne (1862), the first picture book produced in Australia for young children, to \$275 for the de luxe edition of *Zoology of New Holland* by George Shaw and J. Sowerby (1794), the first book ever published on Australian fauna and one of the rarest of Australian colour-plate books — probably fewer than twenty copies have survived. The de luxe version came with a boxed set of the twelve plates. I say 'came' because the de luxe edition sold out before publication. Accounts of explorations are particularly popular, and in 1999 we created a new series, Australian Parliamentary Editions, which are not facsimiles but reports of expeditions from government papers republished in a new format — the first of these was *John McKinlay's Northern Territory Explorations, 1866*, which complements John Davis's *Tracks of McKinlay across Australia* (1863) which we published in facsimile in 1996.

Then there are also occasional publications such as *The Glorious Antiphonal*, which describes one of the Library's greatest treasures, a 13th-century Italian manuscript book presented by the Friends in 1945, and the centre-piece of the Library's Adelaide Festival exhibition in 1998; the booklet discusses the conservation of this magnificent book and how it was digitized and put on the world wide web — we believe it to be the first complete medieval manuscript in the world to be made available in this way. We also produce a bi-monthly *Newsletter* and an annual journal, *Bibliofile*, which is free to members, but available for sale at \$11, and greeting cards, postcards and bookmarks. Details of our publications are available on our web site — click on www.slsa.gov.au/library then go to Friends, or straight to www.slsa.sa.gov.au/library/sup_org/friend/friends.htm.

As well as being able to buy facsimiles and other Friends' publications at special prices, members also benefit from discounts at a variety of retailers, including of course the State Library's shop.

From time to time we run raffles, too — the last, for a magnum of Cabernet Shiraz donated to us by Kingston Estate, raised over \$1000.

Good marketing is an essential key to success, and the Committee member in charge of publicity ensures we get as much free publicity as we can, especially through local free newspapers (in South Australia this is the Messenger Press), the radio, brochures and flyers. We have occasional contra deals with other organizations, including the Library Society (NSW), the State Library of Victoria and a couple of Adelaide bookshops whereby we send out information for each other in our respective mailouts. Our paid advertisements are in the monthly *Adelaide Review*, which gives us a discounted rate, and in the *Australian Book Collector*. We have a close and fruitful relationship with the State Library — the Director is an ex officio member of our Committee, as is a representative of the Libraries Board — and Friends' activities are advertised and written up in the Library's journal, *Extra Extra*, produced by the Communications unit.

Earlier I remarked that altogether more than 1400 items have been presented to the Library either by or through the Friends since 1932. A significant aspect of the Society is the way it can be a channel for gifts, both monetary and in kind. We recently had a most pleasant evening gathering to mark the presentation to the Library of the third and final volume of *The Banksias*, the magnificent set of books illustrated by Celia Rosser with text by Alex George. Beginning with the publication of the first volume in 1981, one of our members has donated all three, costing above \$5,600. By holding a function to celebrate both his generosity and the Library's good fortune, the Friends were able to acknowledge the gift and the giver, bring them and the Library to wider notice, and, one hopes, encourage gift-giving in others.

These elements in our program which I have been discussing represent some of the means by which we raise funds to purchase special items for the Library and to interest people in the Library and the Friends, so that they want to join us. And there is a steady stream of people who do; from some 300 members five years ago, including family members, the number has increased to about 600.

But we all must be aware of the changing aspects of memberships of organizations like Friends groups. Though the impetus to form the Friends had come from academics, the first committee was composed mainly of men, at

Public recognition gives encouragement to volunteers, and in South Australia it is given in several ways. In particular, the Library, which has a volunteer program separate from the Friends, holds an annual party for its volunteers, the Minister for the Arts has hosted 'thank you' gatherings, and the state Governor invites representatives from each of the more than 200 organizations of which he and his wife between them are patrons to an annual garden party. At the national level, a great number of awards in the Order of Australia are made for voluntary work in the community, and, as we know, some of that is significant work done for libraries.

While fund-raising is important, because it is the most obvious way in which we support our own institutions, it is essential that we give our members the feeling that we can provide them with unique experiences that they want to have. The opportunities we can offer for volunteering in these and other ways are a significant part of the appeal of our organizations. Many people are sceptical about values these days — the value of products they buy, the values that public leaders are throwing overboard, the value of life itself — but we can convince them that what we can give them is real and valuable, and real and valuable not only for them, but for others as well; because it is still a human characteristic to gain satisfaction and contentment from helping others towards those same feelings. We can convince people, particularly by example, that their own lives can be richer by joining us and supporting the libraries that are the very reason for our existence.