

Friends Newsletter

June 2023

A Quarterly Newsletter Publication of The Friends of the
State Library of South Australia.
Edited by Jane Walkley.



A Note from the President Professor Rick Sarre

“May you live in interesting times” is an English expression that is wrongly claimed to be a translation of a traditional Chinese curse. Wikipedia asserts that the expression is normally used ironically, insofar as life is better in uninteresting times of peace and tranquillity than in interesting ones, which are usually times of trouble. I prefer to think of “interesting times” as portents of opportunity. I would rather watch an interesting world than an uninteresting one! Indeed, the Adelaide Festival in March was interesting. My wife Debra and I saw ten shows. Three of them had naked men doing extraordinary things, and in two of these shows (Dogs of Europe, and Sheep Song) for reasons that completely escaped me. Our paths kept crossing with the Governor, the peripatetic Frances Adamson AC, our patron. There may be something propitious for the Friends about those encounters (absent the ungarmented thespians).

I was at Writers Week in March this year, too, and it was wonderful. The podcasts of all of the talks are available via the internet (I listen on Spotify).

Search [Spotify here](#)

You can also hear what I had to offer on Breakfast With the Papers on Wednesday March 15 with Frances Nelson KC and journalist with InDaily, Stephanie Richards.

[Listen here](#)

A Note from the President continued...

Writers' Week provided lots of highlights. I saw a dozen very good panels in person and watched another couple online. My two favourite sessions were playwright David Hare with Bob Carr, and American financier (and anti-Putin author) Bill Browder with Monica Attard. Monica pushed back, admirably, and that allowed Bill to answer his critics. It did give rise to a rather vapid question from an audience member who asked Monica why she was being so hostile!

Another highlight was when Adelaide author Jane Turner Goldsmith read from her forthcoming book of short stories, *The Essential Worker: Psychological First Aid and the Composite Novel*. One story described a teacher's interaction with an exasperated (and exasperating) autistic child that brought me to tears.

I very much enjoyed the excellent Sir Hubert Wilkins Oration on April 13, delivered by our very own Emma McEwin, author of *The Many Lives of Douglas Mawson* and *An Antarctic Affair*. Emma, great-granddaughter of Sir Douglas, not only spoke of her travels to the Antarctic, and the lives of both Wilkins and Mawson, but also of their wives, Francisca (Paquita) Mawson and Suzanne Bennett Wilkins. Indeed, a fire alarm from an adjacent building that persisted for a few minutes could not shake the erudition of Emma's delivery. Bravo to our esteemed Board member!

*Pictured here at the Sir
Hubert Wilkins Oration
are Carolyn Spooner,
Mark Pharaoh and Emma
McEwin*



April also gave us the welcome news from the Director General of the National Library that there is now the certainty of future funding for Trove. The Library can now provide this essential service well into the future. Indeed, the Albanese government is showing its formidable literary and cultural colours, with additional strong support for the National Library of Australia, Old Parliament House Museum of Democracy, and the National Archives.

The fabulous History Festival dominated Adelaide's interest in May, and our famous annual book sale came and went very successfully.

A Note from the President continued...

I was away for all of May, in Kansas City, Ottawa, London, Umeå, Sweden (where my wife and our children spent a sabbatical with me in 2004), Norway and France. Speaking of Sweden, I remember well waking up one morning and listening to the second half of the 2004 Grand Final (via internet) to hear the Power prevail. It does seem a long time ago. It probably seems longer for Port fans!

I will speak of my experiences (and the many libraries that I visited) in the next Newsletter. In the meantime, this Newsletter includes a photo from the wonderful Stockholm library, created by world famous architect Gunnar Asplund in 1923. It was gorgeous, pictures below. No wonder the Swedes are so well read!



Future Friends Tours:

**July - SA
Parliamentary Library**



**August - City of
Adelaide Archives**



Check your email for upcoming invitations

The Original Book Club

**Meets on the second Tuesday of the month, 10am to 12pm
Original and different.**

**We have fun discussing a wide range of books on a chosen topic.
There is no pressure and we all just love talking about books.**

Get in touch for further information.

**Enquiries: Diana Chessell 0415 052 174
or Audrey Kent 0401 810 622**



Lester Saegenschmitter: Books in My Life

April 2023

A former science teacher and school principal, Lester is a self-confessed “reading addict”. At home, in the Barossa Valley, he grew up as one of seven children with little else to read except for Readers’ Digest condensed books, until a family friend began to send him regular boxes of books. Early on, he enjoyed the Billabong books by Mary Grant Bruce, and later he was inspired by the books of Richard Feynman, Nobel laureate in Physics in 1965, to study science.

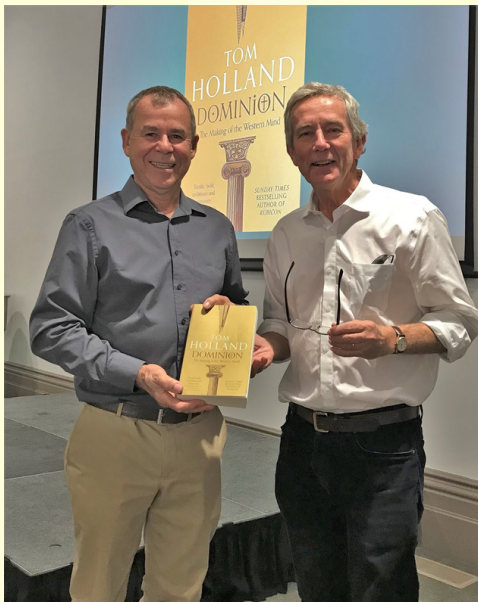
In the course of his talk, Lester discussed 3 books in particular detail: *Oliphant – The life and times of Sir Mark Oliphant* by Stewart Cockburn and David Ellyard (1981). Oliphant was notable for, among other things, helping to develop the atom bomb after 1941, but he warned early on that it would be immoral to use it in a war to kill civilians, and he became a strong advocate for peace for the rest of his life.

Irving Stone’s 1961 novel, *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, is a biographical study of the artist, Michelangelo. Stone spent years living in Italy and “got under the skin” of the place and the artist by apprenticing himself to a marble sculptor. He was also honoured by the Italian government for his inclusion in the book of Italy’s Renaissance history.

Lester’s book 3, a more recent book from 2019, was Tom Holland’s *Dominion – The Making of the Western Mind*. It describes the revolutionary change in values brought to the West by Christianity.

Holland ranges over the history of the world, from BC to the Beatles, in order to clarify, again looking between the lines or under the skin of that history, at the effects both barbaric as well as benign, of this revolution that we mostly take for granted.

We wound up with questions of “wokeness” and the mutilation of children’s books after this very absorbing talk.



A big thank-you to everyone who has renewed their membership. We really value your support.

[Click here to Renew](#)



Dr Peter Goldsworthy: Books in My Life May 2023

It was a delight to hear from Dr Peter Goldsworthy on May 2 this year. His sense of humour shone through as he described his childhood books as "little square pets" and amusing tales of his teen years at the local library. We were treated to a wonderful journey of a very wide selection of the books that have influenced his life.

Here are some of the books referred to by Dr Peter Goldsworthy in his Books in My Life talk:

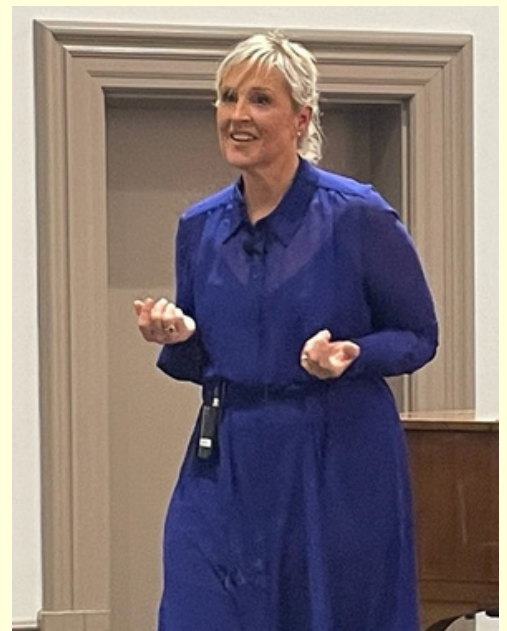
- *Ant and Bee* by Angela Banner
- *The Happy Lion* by Louise Fatio
- *The Poky Little Puppy* by Janette Sebring Lowrey
- Works by Shakespeare - *Hamlet* - "pure genius"
- *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut
- *Dune* by Frank Herbert
- *Shower (poem)* by Les Murray

With many references to:
 Plato
 Bertrand Russell
 The Old Testament
 Lao Tsu
 Bhagavad Gita
 Karma Sutra
 John Keats
 Australian poets

Bringing history to life and demonstrating its relevance and value to the modern world are passions for Dr Kiera Lindsey, appointed as South Australia's History Advocate in November 2022. She has been able to live her vision through her career and thrives on the challenge of recovering 'lost' histories through deep and wide-ranging archival research and adopting a more speculative approach to the past than some historians find comfortable. In a State that tends to over-rely on volunteers to rescue, preserve and manage its movable heritage and under-funds key institutions like the State Library, State Records and History Trust of South Australia that are vital to underpin and support that work, it would be nice to think that Kiera's work could make a difference. Much more about Kiera can be found here – <https://www.history.sa.gov.au/south-australias-history-advocate>

By Brian Samuels

Dr Kiera Lindsey: Books in My Life June 2023



Upcoming Tuesday Talks



[Book here](#)

Professor Chris Daniels Tuesday 4 July 11am

Professor Christopher Daniels has made an extraordinary contribution to science education in Australia. The former university academic and now government scientist educates and communicates through his ABC Radio program and via a host of different modalities and organisations to promote wildlife conservation.



Dr Jane Southwood

Tuesday 1 August 11am

Lecturer in French and Honorary
Research Fellow, European
Languages and Studies,
University of Western Australia

Areas I will touch on in this presentation include the richness of the sixteenth-century in France; the inclusion in the ranks of one of the most prestigious institutions in France of a woman after 346 years; the art and medicine of the expedition of 1800-1804 to 'les terres australes' (the south lands) led, until his death in September 1803 on Ile de France (Mauritius), by Nicolas Baudin of France; translation into French of Australian authors. Other areas will also inform my talk.

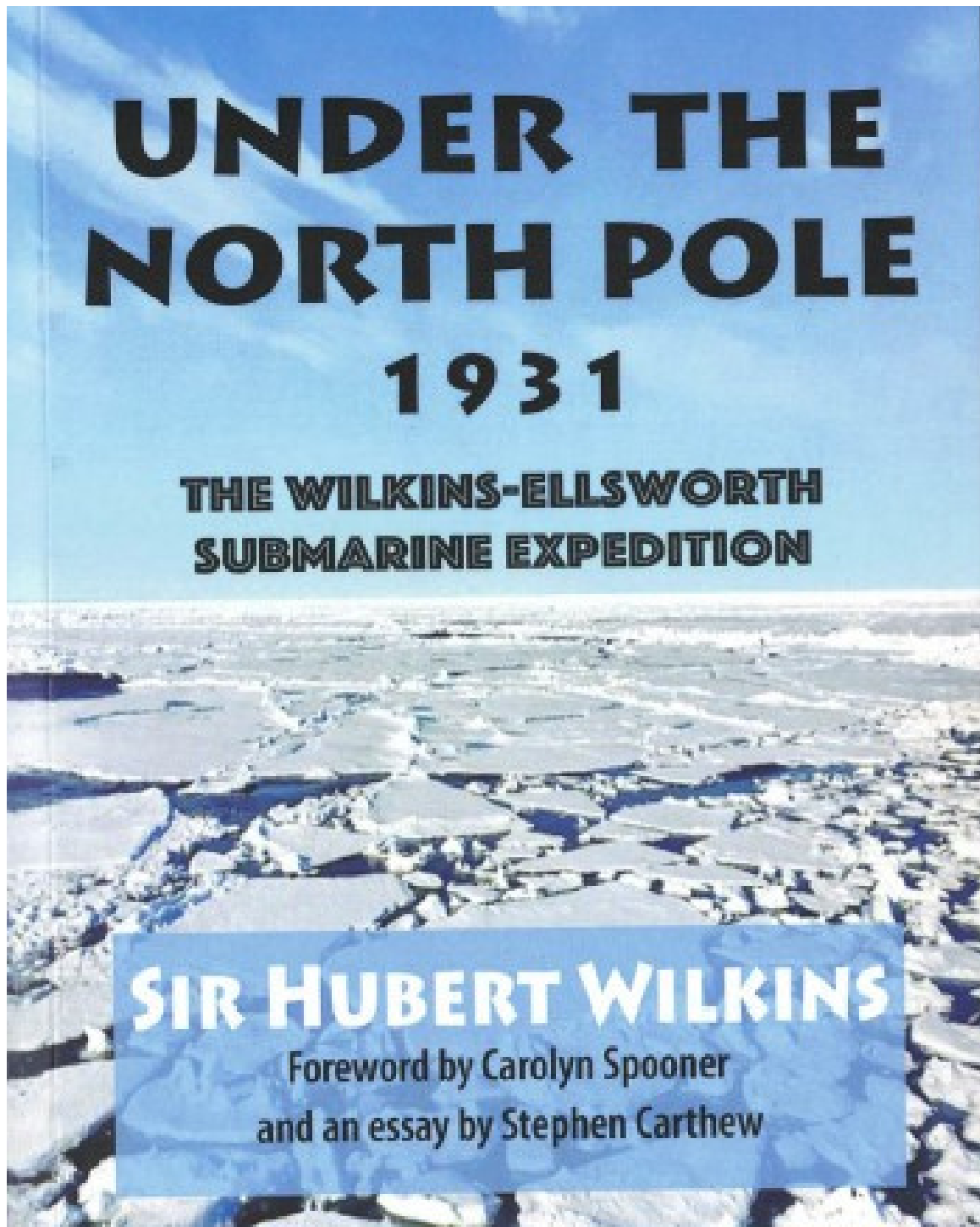
I will mention people who have been very influential in my life. I will also mention friends and colleagues with whom I have delighted in working collaboratively on research and publication projects. Like-minded colleagues in Australia and overseas. Generous people who don't seek to 'colonise' areas of research, but who, on the contrary, make up what I call 'the community or commonwealth of scholars' around the world.

Bookings for Dr Southwood's talk coming soon

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AUSTRALIANA PUBLICATIONS

Adelaide



[Buy your copy here](#)

**Book Launch - Wednesday 28th June
5.30pm Mortlock Library**

Since 1995 the Friends' *Australiana Publications* sub-committee has produced over thirty high quality titles, including reproductions of important Australian works that help chart our history.

Elegantly produced and highly collectible, these superbly illustrated hard-cover limited editions make our history available to local, national and international audiences. Paperback versions of most titles are also available, and Friends, of course, get advance notice of each title's publication, as well as discounts.

Well known local artist Stephen Bowers has created attractive individual artworks for special sponsorship copies of our publications. Sometimes there are small paintings which are incorporated into the binding as a "doublure," and, when the size of the books allows, he makes a fore-edge painting. Pictured below is a fore-edge painting created for *Under the North Pole*. Each Sponsor receives a unique copy of the book, bound in full leather by local expert Anthony Zammit, with an individual artwork by Stephen Bowers. Watch a video of this meticulous work on our website [here](#).



The Spiritual Life of Wilkins

It is not surprising that everyone seems to have a different take on Wilkins. The diversity of interests and activities across so many domains made Wilkins hard to pigeonhole in any one discipline; the polymathic breadth of his life makes it almost impossible to become an 'expert' on the whole life of this extraordinary person. My speciality has always been the spiritual life and character of this remarkable South Australian.

In 1971, as a twenty-three year old, I was told that Wilkins had made a fifteen-year-study of the manuscript of *The Urantia Book* (published in 1955). For many it is a monumentally enigmatic tome of almost 2,100 pages – best used as a doorstop. However, it has been translated into 17 languages, and many readers find it hard not to see it as a revelation to the people of our wonderful, but woebegone world: Urantia. The book presents a positive picture of existence; both for today and when we cark it. Unlike many sacred texts, the language is modern – but thankfully it does not employ inappropriate Aussie slang like I just did.

Anyway, an open agile mind, able to cope with 'out-there' propositions is definitely an advantage when appraising *The Urantia Book*. The Wilkins imagination, intuition and experientially-informed faith saw Wilkins become *The Urantia Book's* first celebrity reader. He donated \$USD 1,000 to the cost of its printing (\$AUD 17,000 in today's money).

The book describes how the Universe works, the beings who run it, the purpose of having it, and an abridged history of our planet: Urantia. While little in the book could be called light reading, its extraordinarily detailed account of the life and teachings of Jesus (almost 800 pages) contains the most inspiring biography I have ever read – and Wilkins evidently felt much the same.

Over the last decade, with the help of Wilkins family members and our main sponsor, 57 Films, an interest group, followed by the Wilkins Foundation developed. Thankfully, the HTSA is evolving a Wilkins Project, to further understand the breadth and depth of Wilkins's life – along with the remarkable lives of fellow South Australians in many domains.

For those with an interest in the philosophy, spirituality and character of Wilkins, I draw your attention to a monograph which extends the Afterword I wrote for the Friends new publication of *Under the North Pole*. This can be seen here along with other shorter articles and a short [video](#).

Subscribe to the Wilkins Project here:

[Join us at the Wilkins Project newsletter.history.sa.gov.au](http://www.history.sa.gov.au/wilkins-project-newsletter)

There are some exciting initiatives in the pipeline.

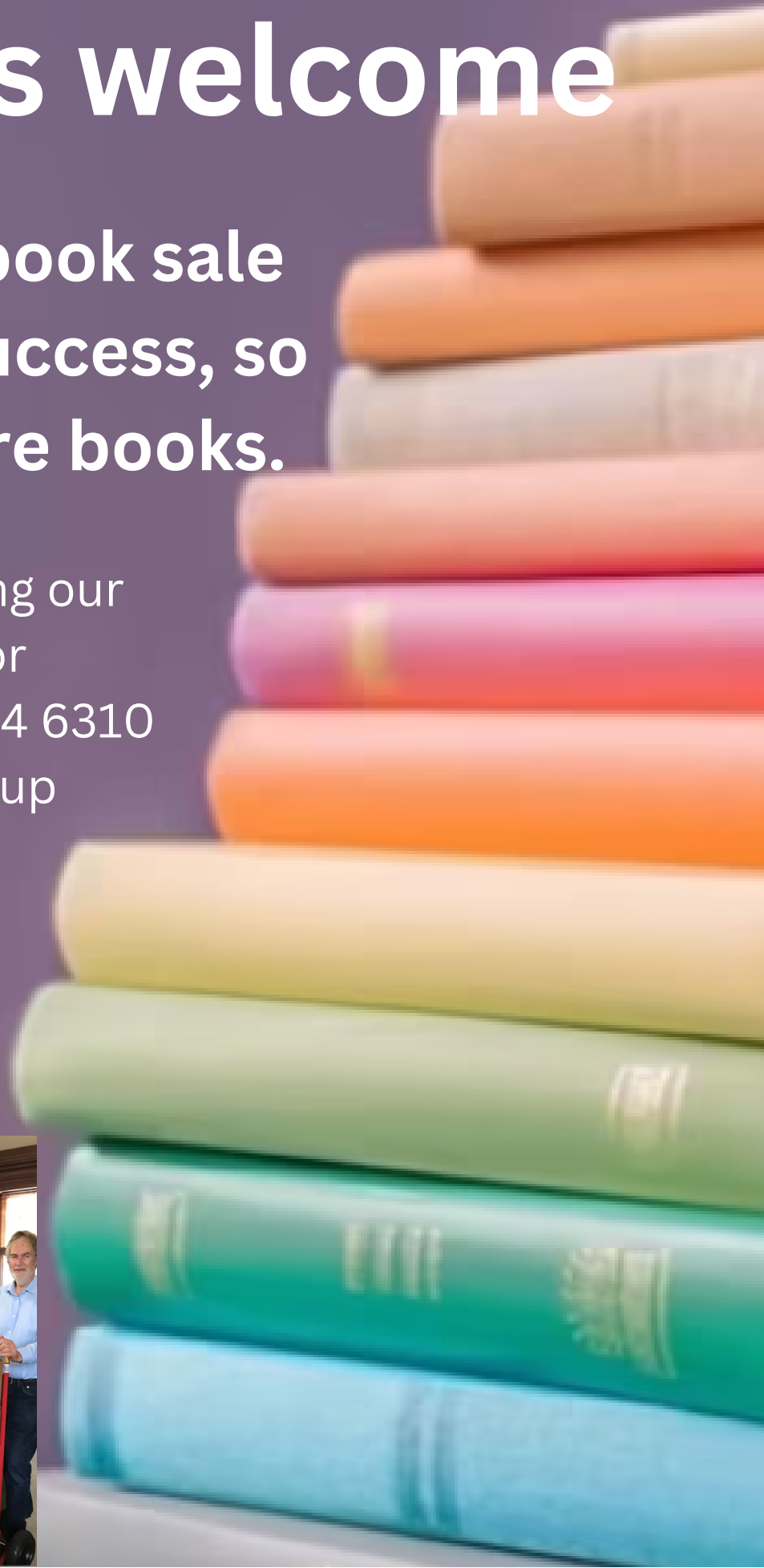
By Stephen Carthew

Book Donations are always welcome

Our annual book sale
was a huge success, so
we need more books.

Drop them off during our
opening hours or
ring the office on 7424 6310
to arrange a pick up

Thanks to all our
book sale volunteers
(couldn't include
everyone in this
picture)



“I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.”

-Groucho Marx



Friends

STATE LIBRARY
South Australia

Normal opening hours for the Friends Office:

Monday - Thursday

10am - 2pm

Not open public holidays

Friends of the State Library of SA - GPO Box 419 Adelaide SA 5001

Institute Building, State Library, North Tce, Adelaide

Ph: 08 7424 6310 – slsafriends@libraries.sa.gov.au

[Friends website](#)

