



**THE MELBOURNE  
ATHENAEUM LIBRARY**  
THE PLEASURE OF WORDS

**The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2010**

Presented April 2011



# The Melbourne Athenaeum

The Melbourne Athenaeum has always been an important part of the life of Melbourne. It began life as Melbourne's first Mechanics' Institute in 1839—just five years after Melbourne was itself established.

Mechanics' Institutes made major contributions to the cultural and social development of Victorian cities, providing accessible libraries, reading rooms with newspapers, lectures and classes. The Melbourne Mechanics' Institute was the leading cultural establishment of the new colony.

The present site in Collins Street was purchased in 1840 and the original two-storey building was completed in 1842. The Melbourne City Council rented the hall for use as its Council Chamber until 1852 when the Town Hall was built.

After the 1852 gold rush, membership increased dramatically and a new hall was completed in 1872. The next year a name change, to the Melbourne Athenaeum, signaled the community's growing interest in education, culture, literature and the arts.

Classes in art and music were held regularly, and the hall catered to community groups as well as performances and readings. There was even a museum, although eventually the bulk of the museum collection was given to the "new" Melbourne Museum.

In 1910, the Upper Hall became an art gallery, featuring famous Australian artists such as Hans Heysen, Arthur Streeton, Clarice Beckett, Tom Roberts and Albert Namatjira. The gallery was part of the Athenaeum for 55 years.

In 1924, the hall was converted into a theatre showing some of the first films to come to Melbourne, including the first "talkie" in 1929. In the 1970s, the theatre was home to the Melbourne Theatre Company.

In 1989, the building was added to Victoria's Register of Historic Buildings.



Today the building houses a shop and bistro, two theatre spaces and the Athenaeum Library, which holds about 60,000 books and magazines in a collection which includes classics, modern fiction, biography, history and detective fiction.

The Melbourne Athenaeum, with its focus on theatre, literature and the arts, has truly reflected the development of Melbourne as a cultural centre, and grown and changed with the times.

It's story is the story of the growth, maturity and developing cultural tastes of Melbourne as it grew from a "village" to a major international metropolis.



The Melbourne Athenaeum Theatre  
Digital image by Stefan Wilksch

# President's Report

2010 was a year of change and consolidation.

In 2009 we were funded almost \$1million for projects around the Athenaeum building. In 2010 we had to deliver the outcome. The effort and stress of bringing these projects on line was tremendous. The sheer logistics of managing such a large project while the theatre and library were still operational, managing the cash flow and dealing with the reporting to government put a severe strain on all concerned. I am proud to say we came in on time and on budget. Sophie Arnold, Glenn Elston and David Prior all put in tremendous efforts, as did many of the Committee and staff. We are reminded of it all every day as we walk in over the beautiful new carpet, but there are so many other things which are there but not as readily seen. Congratulations to all concerned.

Perhaps it was all that effort, or perhaps the time was right, but Sophie left her position as Executive Officer after the project was complete. She may be gone from that job, but she has joined the Committee, filling the casual vacancy created when George West resigned from the Committee to move to Queensland. George had been a tower of strength on building issues and we miss him greatly.

During the refurbishment project, the Committee became very conscious of the fact that the Ath is much more than a library, we are custodians and landlords of a very significant building. With this in mind, we decided to upgrade the Executive Officer position to Business Manager, to properly reflect what we are doing. We appointed Sue Westwood, who was previously Business Manager of the Australian Tapestry Workshop, with a view to becoming more engaged in raising money to complete restoration of the building.

Our membership continues to slowly rise but despite careful cost management our underlying result is a modest surplus of around \$15,000. For formal accounting purposes however, we appear to have a massive surplus – but that is a result of the treatment of the grant to refurbish parts of the building, required under Australian Accounting Standards. I despair of my profession sometimes!

At this point I have some people to thank. On

behalf of the members I want to thank our Librarian, for the job she is doing and the way she is leading the library team. I also thank the team themselves and not forgetting our volunteers who make so much possible. I thank the Committee for giving so much of their time and their support and particularly their support for me as President. Thanks to Sophie who ran the office so well and for shamelessly exploiting her networks on our behalf. Thanks to Sue Westwood who is making her mark on the place. I thank the retiring Committee members, Tricia Caswell, Marcus Niski and George West. Thank you, the Members, for supporting us and this wonderful institution.

Finally, as always, there is just one other thing I would ask of you as members: support your Library by calling in, borrowing books and telling us what you think. We are here to help and our expert staff like nothing more than the opportunity to be of service.

*Kevin Quigley*

President April 2011



## Business Manager's Report

There have been a number of welcomes and farewells to the Athenaeum in 2010.

During the year the Library welcomed 165 members, and farewelled 176 members. Current membership stands at 812. The Library farewelled Peter Huynh in November, and welcomed many new volunteers who provide immeasurable support to our professional Library staff. George West a long term supporter and committee member of the Athenaeum resigned as he has moved to warmer climes. Sophie Arnold, the Executive Officer for three years was farewelled in September, but was appointed to a casual vacancy on the Committee of Management. I have been given an extremely warm welcome as the

Business Manager. The Committee, Library staff, volunteers and building tenants have been extremely patient, generous and welcoming as I adjust to life in this extraordinary organisation and building.

### ***The Restoration Project***

The major work funded by a Federal Government Heritage grant in 2009 has now been completed, and successfully acquitted. Much of the work completed was essential structural repair work to the building's electrics, plumbing and the roof. Significant work was completed in the theatre to restore the orchestra pit, install a state-of-the-art scenic flying system and provide custom built seating. All the tenants have benefitted from much improved toilet facilities, new carpet and a painted foyer area.

The planned upgrade of our much loved 1930's lift was not able to be completed within this funding, and it is an ongoing issue. A new report on current building maintenance priorities is being prepared for the committee's consideration.

The Athenaeum successfully applied for a number of grants in 2010. Most were to support the important work undertaken by volunteer Archivist Marjorie Dalvean and her team of dedicated volunteers. These projects included conservation of archival items, digitisation of minutes and making them available online, and the development of an exhibition of the changing faces of The Melbourne Athenaeum.

### ***The Melbourne Athenaeum in pictures***

This exhibition was funded through Museums Australia (Victoria) and was curated by Jenny Davies in collaboration with the Archives team. This photographic exhibition was hung in the Athenaeum foyer in December 2010 and has received enormous interest from members and the general public alike. A launch was held in February 2011, hosted by President Kevin Quigley with special guest Professor Geoffrey Blainey officially launching the exhibition and the Athenaeum's 2011 program.

### ***Library Program***

I welcomed Julia Zemiro as a new Library member in 2010. She was here to film a short segment for a documentary to be aired on SBS during 2011.

It was my pleasure to introduce Prof Kate Burridge as she presented a fascinating lecture on the origins of language, and its progress across counties, countries and continents. Her hugely entertaining talk and the many others programmed at the Library were well supported by members and their guests. Librarian Jill Bartholomeusz and the Library staff work hard to present an exciting program of activities each year.

There are many ways to support the Library; by renewing your membership, borrowing regularly, attending functions, making a tax deductible donation, or just popping in to read the journals and magazines for an hour. Whichever suits you, the committee and staff of The Athenaeum welcomes your continued support of this venerable institution.

*Sue Westwood*

**Business Manager**

## **Librarian's Report**

Visitors who enter the library often comment on the familiar smell of the old books the minute they walk through the door. I remember this same thought when I first entered the library nearly 7 years ago. That same smell is still present but as you know, books are continuously being added older and less popular titles removed from the shelves to be donated to charities.

2010 was a very interesting year for the library.

We hosted author talks by Jenny Davies, Gideon Haigh, Kate Burridge, Goldie Alexander, Joan London, Hazel Edwards, Christine Darcas, Deborah Klein and Elizabeth Donaldson. We also held special interest talks: Deborah Thawley spoke about 'A Shelf of books on America'; Jim Owens discussed 'Literature in Washington DC'; Angela Hendrickson gave a comprehensive presentation on 'Conservation and preservation of family archives and treasures' and, a series of three presentations, about book collecting, by Kay Craddock and Jonathan Burdon proved to be very popular.

Five writer's groups meet on a regular basis in the library, some weekly, some monthly. Some of our members have become published authors, including Steve Jovanoski who launched his first novel 'The brotherhood' in the library.

The library runs two book clubs, that meet monthly, and two book clubs run by members themselves. A third book club will be introduced in 2011. This will be held monthly on a Wednesday evening, and will be looked after by one of our members.

We continue to support the Library Student Program with students from Box Hill Tafe, Swinburne University and RMIT. The students complete their Industry Placement training in the library, over a 3-4 week period.

Librarians from ALIA Vic (Australian Library and Information Association) continue to hold their committee meetings in the library, and also held their evening session on 'Addressing selection criteria for special libraries', attended by 40 librarians from around Victoria.

We strongly support the Mechanics' Institutes Victoria (MIV) in hosting their committee meetings during the year, and their AGM. Jill is currently the Vice President of the MIV.

The library became a temporary TV studio when an interview was conducted with the Marngrook Footy Show for Channel 31; author and Human Rights activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali was interviewed by Jennifer Byrne (ABC TV), and Julia Zemiro filmed a segment for an SBS documentary that she is presenting.

We hosted our 2nd 'International Edible Book Festival' celebrating Melbourne's comedy culture as well as held some special events for members: a morning tea for Australia's Biggest Cuppa; New Member evenings; our 171st Birthday event, and our annual Christmas morning tea. Children were entertained with themed Story time sessions.

Personally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the professional, ongoing support provided by our staff, casuals and volunteers whose valued contribution to the objectives of the effective and smooth running of the library is just so important.

Most of all, thanks to our library members for your continuing support, understanding and appreciation.

*Jill Bartholomeusz*

**Librarian**

## Archives Report

By joining the Melbourne Athenaeum, members become part of Melbourne's history. Is there any other library that can offer this privilege?

The team has carried out research for 40 general, short research enquiries – mainly family history and academic enquiries and also assisted with many major research projects, among them: electricity usage at the Melbourne Athenaeum; Mr Sleight, the undertaker (Athenaeum Lane was originally called Sleights Lane), traced performers in the theatre, and many more.

Margaret Bowman, using the Melbourne Athenaeum Archives as a foundation for her research, continues to discover the stories of some of the people from our past. Papers about our Secretaries, John Curtis and Garnet Walch have been accepted for publication in historical journals; a short paper about Mrs. Anderson, the first woman subscriber, was published in the newsletter of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria; Margaret wrote a longer paper: "Ladies and Libraries in Victorian Melbourne".

Visiting researchers studying colonial, social and cultural aspects of the people of Melbourne have used the Archives collections, including: a doctoral student from Australian National University; La Trobe University academics and, a fiction writer. The CPSU, on discovering that the first meeting of their original association, the Victorian Public Service Union, was held in the Athenaeum Hall in 1885, requested photographs and information about the building.

The exhibition, "The Melbourne Athenaeum in pictures" was successfully launched in the theatre foyer in February. The exhibition was achieved through a grant from Arts Victoria and Museums Australia. The archives team supported the

curator, Jenny Davies, with her research for this amazing display of photographs. Jenny unerringly chose the most appropriate images to tell our story and found ways to enhance and enlarge them. Compliments have been received from members, staff and passers-by. Stefan Wilksch, who donated the digitised image of his beautiful, coloured photo of the theatre interior, has captured the beauty of the architectural features, to share this with all of us. Stefan visited the building during the Melbourne Open House day last year. The pictures will be displayed in the foyer for a few months before transferring to the Library.

Donations of items relating to the Melbourne Athenaeum are always appreciated. Media historian, Ina Bertrand donated 29 programs of Melbourne Theatre Company productions, when they leased the theatre. Digitised images of people, programs and the building, have also been donated. Gradually the details of our long, multifaceted story are being revealed.

The Archives team comprises:

Christine Perkins  
Margaret Bowman  
Anne Marsden  
Karin Zilko  
Gerry Ely  
Kaye Goldenberg  
Peter Congedo  
Con Angelatos  
Norma Gates  
Kathy Paris

The Archives team has more exciting projects planned for 2011 -2012, so keep in touch.

*Marjorie Dalvean*  
**Archivist**

## 2010 Annual Giving Program

Thank you to everyone who donated so generously to our 2010 appeal. Some \$3500 was received in donations from members. Some donors asked to remain anonymous, so the list below reflects this.

The following donations were received:

### Donations of more than \$100

J. Buhrman  
J. Hedges  
T. McAllister  
J. Talbot

### Donations of \$100 or less

P. Baragwanath  
A. Cook  
D. Chandler  
J. Churchyard  
G. Duke  
C. Hamilton  
A. Hardie  
J. Holden  
M. Holt  
J. Lynch  
A. Maclean  
B. Knights  
K. Makim  
P. Maxfield  
C. O'Connor  
C. Perkins  
W. Rehill  
G. Smyth  
R. Tate  
J. Thompson  
S. Westwood

# What's On



## 2010 LIBRARY PROGRAM



### September

#### 6pm, Wednesday 20 October - Author Talk: Gideon Haigh

In the last three years, cricket has been transformed by the power of the Indian economy, the politicisation of the country's board of control, and the television- and corporate- powered rise of Twenty20 cricket.

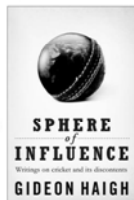
Gideon will be talking about his new book *Sphere of Influence*, which is a collection of his writings over the past three years which examine the impact of these new forces in cricket, in particular the all-pervading whiff of scandal around the game's new order.

Gideon Haigh has been a journalist for 27 years and is featured in newspapers and magazines around the world. He has also written 23 books and won several prizes.

His book will be available for purchase and signing after the talk.

This event will be very popular so please reserve your place early.

**COST:** Free for members, \$5 for non-members.



### November

#### SPECIAL EVENT: 11.30am, Friday 12 November - Kate Burridge Returns for our 171st!

We are thrilled to welcome Kate Burridge back again after she delighted members during last year's 170th celebrations. Kate will again provide some fascinating information about the development of language.

Come along for our **171st morning tea from 11am** before Kate speaks at 11.30am.

This event will be very popular so please reserve your place early.

**COST:** Free for members, \$5 for non-members.

### The Ath Kids Club

**Saturday 2 October, 11.00am-12.00pm**

Grandparents/parents, take the children to the Ath for School Holiday Reading and Activities

Free admission. Book & tell us your children's age.

**Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.**



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## The Melbourne Athenaeum Library in 2010

### September

#### 1pm, Wednesday 22 September - Author Talk: Deborah Klein

For several years Melbourne-based artist Deborah Klein has been researching fairy tales and folk tales. Her latest exhibition *Natural Histories* will be held at Chrysalis Gallery, East Melbourne from 7 - 30 October 2010.

As Deborah expanded her personal mythology, she also began to write some fairy tales of her own. Initially these were suggested by her imagery. Later tales appeared quite independently of the new work. Some are contemporary takes on traditional fairy tales.

This small anthology, *There was once... The collected fairy tales*, is published by Moth Woman Press and is limited to an edition of 1000. It is illustrated with Deborah's distinctive paintings, relief prints and drawings. Deborah's studio is a block away from the Athenaeum Library. She has discovered numerous books there that became essential references for the development of this project.

In an informal illustrated talk Deborah will discuss her ideas and the evolution of the imagery into text and finally into a self-published book. Her book will be available for purchase and signing after the talk.

**COST:** Free for members, \$5 for non-members.



### October

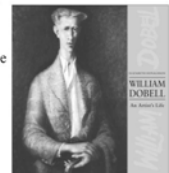
#### 1pm, Friday 15 October - Author Talk: Elizabeth Donaldson

After retiring from a rewarding teaching career, Elizabeth Donaldson became an active volunteer at Dobell House, the home and studio of the late Sir William Dobell. After a decade of research with unprecedented access to archival materials, Liz produced *William Dobell: An Artist's Life*, about one of Australia's most iconic artists.

*William Dobell* tells the story of the artist, his life and his work, without explicitly being a biography or art critique. The book shows Dobell in both the public arena and in private.

The book features the paintings that played a pivotal role in Dobell's life or were the product of his activities and surroundings, and it will be available for purchase and signing after the talk.

**COST:** Free for members, \$5 for non-members.



## The Ath Library Diary 2010

### SEPTEMBER

#### Wednesday 22nd

1pm Author Talk: Deborah Klein, the author and artist of *There was once... The collected Fairy Tales*

### NOVEMBER

#### Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd

Library closed for Melbourne Cup weekend

#### Friday 12th, 171st Anniversary

11.30 am: Kate Burridge returns. Join us for morning tea from 11am before Kate speaks.

### OCTOBER

#### Saturday 2nd

11am The Ath Kids Club: School Holiday Reading and Activities.

#### Friday 15th

1pm Author Talk: Elizabeth Donaldson, author of *William Dobell: An Artist's Life*.

#### Wednesday 20th

6pm Author Talk: Gideon Haigh, cricket author and commentator.

#### Saturday 30th

Library closed for Melbourne Cup weekend

### DECEMBER

#### Wednesday 15th

Member Christmas Morning Tea

#### Thursday 23rd

Library closed for Christmas holidays

### LIBRARY OPENING HOURS

Monday - Thursday	9.30 - 6.00pm
Friday	9.30 - 5.00pm
Saturday	9.00 - 1.00pm

All events are held in  
The Melbourne Athenaeum Library,  
Level 1, 188 Collins Street  
Phone 9650 3100  
Fax 9654 9776

[library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au](mailto:library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au)  
[www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au)

Bookings are essential as seats are limited.



# Author Talks and Special Interest Talks



## The Station Turns 100

A talk by

**Jenny Davies**

Author of

*Beyond the Façade*

*Flinders Street, more than just a railway station*

**Wednesday 3 February at 5.15pm**

Due to overwhelming demand, Jenny Davies has kindly accepted to do a second Author Talk at the Ath library.

2010 marks the centenary of the official opening of Flinders Street Station and the Victorian Railways Institute.

Jenny Davies has spent the last two years researching the station's history, and various activities and encounters that have occurred there. The Centenary Edition of her book, *Beyond the Façade - Flinders Street, more than just a railway station* was launched leading up to the centenary in January.

Jenny's *Station Turns 100* presentation and talk will be accompanied by a photographic slide show and anecdotal stories spanning the lifetime of the building.

Jenny's book will be available for purchase and signing after the talk.



**Free admission. Book early. Limited number of seats.**

**1st Floor, 188 Collins Street, Melbourne**

**Bookings: 9650 3100 Fax: 9654 9776**

**E-mail: [library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au](mailto:library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au)**

**[www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au)**

Published January 2009



## A CAPITAL IDEA:

NAVIGATING WASHINGTON DC THROUGH NOVELS

**Jim Owens**

**Wednesday 28 July at 5.30pm**



Jim Owens will talk about the ethnic groups, the diverse classes, and the political pressure cooker of Washington DC that have been the setting for many novels. The presentation will give a brief introduction to the geography of the city through the writers who have focused on different portions of it in fiction. A book list will be handed out during the talk.



Jim is an Ath overseas member and a retiree of the US Department of Health and Human Services.

**Free admission for members. \$5 non-members.**

**Book early. Limited number of seats.**

**1st Floor, 188 Collins Street, Melbourne**

**Bookings: 9650 3100 Fax: 9654 9776**

**E-mail: [library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au](mailto:library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au)**

**[www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au)**

Published June 2010



Above: Kate Burrridge's talk, *Gift of the Gob: When bad language turns good*, at the Athenaeum's 171st Anniversary drew a full house



Left: Jenny Davis, author of *Beyond the Façade: Flinders Street, more than just a railway station*, presented two lectures to a capacity audience

## Filming



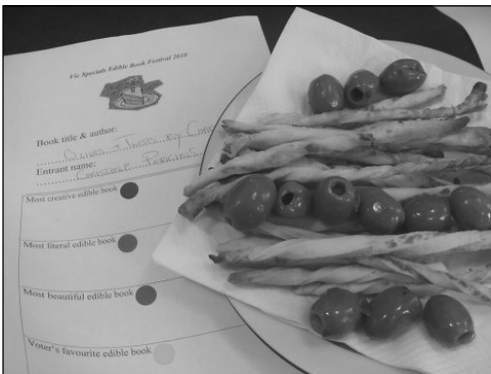
Filming of *Jennifer Byrne Presents Ayaan Hirsi Ali*, author of *The Caged Virgin*, *Infidel* and *Nomad*

Above: Jill and Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Right: Katy, Jill and Jennifer Byrne



## The 2nd International Edible Books Festival on April Fools' Day



Far left: *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens—edible book by Christine Perkins

Left: *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott—edible book by Kathy Simpson

...and afterwards they ate them all



## Renovations



Far above: Scaffolding for painting of the foyer

Above: Maintenance of the lift

Above right: The old theatre seats are removed

Right: Some heavy machinery working in the orchestra pit

# THE MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM INC.

## 2010 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following people held Committee positions during 2010.

	Members	Meetings Attended	Apology
	Kevin Quigley, President	Ten	June
	Michael Herman, Vice President	Ten	May
	Andrew Barnes, Treasurer	Ten	June
×	Sophie Arnold (from 17/8/10)	Four	No Apologies
	Tricia Caswell	Nine	May, November
	Agnes Cusack	Nine	May, July
	Matthew Gisborne	Ten	May
#	Anne Malloch	Eight	May, September, December
	Marcus Niski	Nine	February, August
#	Don Smith	Eight	February, June, September
*	George West (resigned 17/8/10)	Six	February, June

- Eleven meetings were held during the year including the AGM in April 2010
- No meeting was held in January or October 2010
- # retired and re-elected at the AGM
- × Was eligible to attend four meetings
- \* Was eligible to attend eight meetings

# The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

**Patron:** Professor David De Kretser, Governor of Victoria

## **Committee of Management**

**President:** Kevin Quigley  
**Vice President:** Michael Herman  
**Treasurer:** Andrew Barnes  
**Committee:** Sophie Arnold (from August 2010)  
Tricia Caswell  
Agnes Cusack  
Matthew Gisborne  
Anne Malloch  
Marcus Niski  
Don Smith  
George West (to August 2010)

## **Athenaeum Staff**

Sophie Arnold, Executive Officer (to September 2010)  
Sue Westwood, Business Manager (from September 2010)  
Jill Bartholomeusz, Librarian  
Allison Belcher  
Peter Huynh (to November 2010)  
Katia Punaro  
Elina Rydman

## **Library volunteers**

Carol Andrews  
Tom Coleman  
Andrew Finegan  
Wallis Gandell  
Jonas Lea  
Moyra McAllister  
Abby Mosley  
Clare Murayama

## **Casual staff**

Peter Congedo  
Grace Ho  
Peter Huynh (from November 2010)  
Anna Layton  
Emerald Leung  
Katy Li  
Abby Mosley (from August 2010)

## **Archive volunteers**

Marjorie Dalvean  
Con Angelatos  
Margaret Bowman  
Peter Congedo  
Gerald Ely  
Norma Gates  
Kaye Goldenberg  
Anne Marsden  
Kathy Paris  
Christine Perkins  
Karin Zilko

## **Work experience students**

Allannah Stone  
- Our Lady of Sion College  
- Secondary School Student  
  
Mithra Tootoonkouban  
- Box Hill Institute

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated  
188 Collins Street  
Melbourne Victoria 3000  
P O Box 225 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 8009  
Telephone: (03) 9650 3100 Fax (03) 9654 9776  
Email: [library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au](mailto:library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au)  
[www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au)