



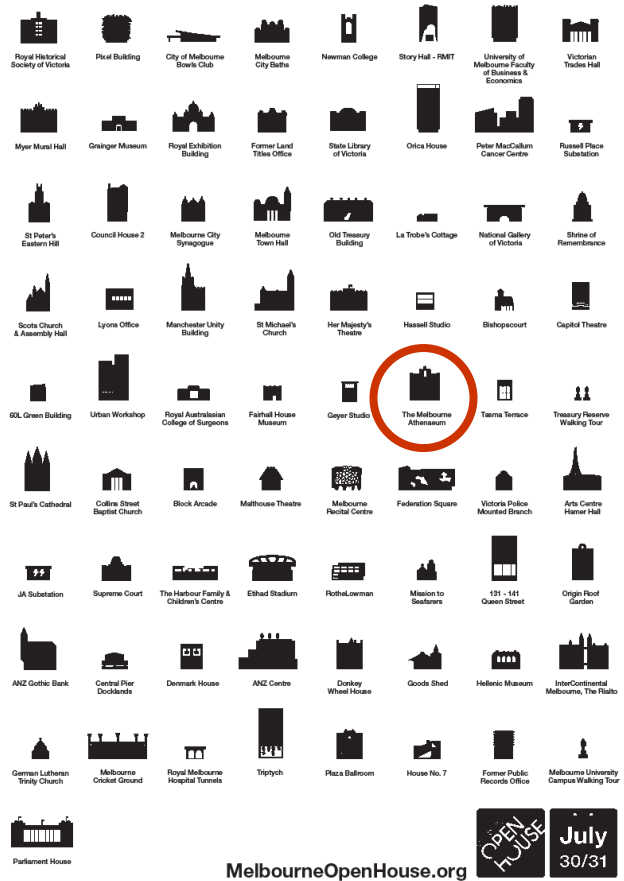
THE MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM LIBRARY

THE PLEASURE OF WORDS

The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc

ANNUAL REPORT 2011
Presented April 2012





The Melbourne Athenaeum

The Melbourne Athenaeum has always been an important part of the life of Melbourne. It began 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 30,000 books and magazines in a

collection that includes classics, contemporary fiction, biography, history and crime 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.

President's Report

2011 has been an interesting year at the Ath. Our Librarian, Jill Bartholomeusz decided it was time to move on and we appointed Allison Belcher Library Manager. Allison and the team have been making their mark on the Library as many of you will have noticed. There is more space and the new book shelves look great.

In January we closed for a couple of weeks so that the collection could be assessed and rearranged. We removed a number of old titles which are rarely used and arranged for replacement or repair of some which had grown tatty from too much use.

Sue Westwood is doing a great job running the office and the financial result for the year is quite pleasing.

After seven years as President, I am stepping down this year. I feel as if I have been there half a lifetime and it is time someone else with fresh ideas and more time takes over. I will not be cutting ties completely though, I have nominated for the Treasurer's job so that I can ease my way out. I have greatly enjoyed my time in the Chair, the members, the staff and the Committee are all highly competent and have made the job a pleasure.

Obviously I have some people to thank. On behalf of the members I want to thank our Library Manager, for the excellent 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 Sue Westwood who is running the office so well. 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



Business Manager's Report

2011 was my first full year as Business Manager, and I would like to thank the committee, accountant David Pryor, bookkeeper Caroline Debevc, library staff and volunteers for their support and effort in the management of the building and the organisation. Special thanks to Allison Belcher who took over from Librarian Jill Bartholomeusz. Her commitment to the Library and her management of staff and volunteers has been exceptional. Thanks also to Archivist Marjorie Dalvean, with whom I share an office. I enjoy themcuttings, snippets of old news print and photos that are often left for me to read.

Governance

The Athenaeum committee meets monthly and in 2011 re-established three active sub-committees. The Library sub-committee supports the Library Manager in the management of the Library facility and the development of the Collection.

The Building sub-committee supports the Business Manager in the management of the building, maintenance and management of the three commercial leases currently held. The Marketing sub-committee oversees the marketing of the Library and is focused on retaining current members and attracting new ones.

The 2011 survey commissioned by the Library sub committee attracted a 25% response rate, providing the committee with valuable feedback on library usage, the collection, activities and events. Many of the suggestions have been successfully adopted. Thank you to those members who took the time to complete the survey.

Building

The Athenaeum manages three commercial tenancies, that are regularly reviewed. The organisation has a responsibility to provide adequate facilities that serve both the tenants and our members.

Ongoing maintenance and repairs to the building's fabric is a time consuming responsibility for the Business Manager. In 2011, further major work was completed to repair the roof and to continue to make the building leak proof. Funding was also allocated to replace the theatre's boilers, and this work was completed in the first quarter of 2012.

The building participated in Melbourne Open House 2011 in July. The Library attracted close to 4,000 visitors and 50 new members joined during that weekend.

Library

The library's annual subscription cost increased slightly in 2011, the first increase for a number of years. New shelving was installed to expand the capacity and improve the collection's display. The Athenaeum received a grant from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, and additional funds were allocated from the Annual Giving appeal.

Most significantly the Library has installed a new catalogue database. This project was undertaken by volunteer Moyra McAlister. The library has benefited enormously from her experience and capacity, and members will have increased access to the catalogue from home, creating some much needed efficiencies in how memberships and access is managed.

Archives

Volunteer archivist Marjorie Dalvean has worked to improve on line access to the documents held in the archive. An archive section is linked to the Athenaeum website and will allow researchers to access the collection remotely.

The Athenaeum supported Dr Margaret Bowman in her successful application for a State Library of Victoria fellowship. The archives team provide considerable support to Dr Bowman as she investigates the life of George Alexander Gilbert, former Secretary Librarian.

Sue Westwood

Business Manager



Library Manager's Report

The Melbourne Athenaeum Library as Victoria's *first* library provides a unique experience linking members with Melbourne's early history and our beginnings as Melbourne's oldest cultural institution while at the same time providing a strong link to the future with electronic services and devices.

2011 was a year of change not only for our library but also for libraries worldwide. Libraries are embracing e-futures in a post PC era where mobile phones and tablets allow us access to information and to our library from anywhere.

The Collection continues to be strengthened in line with the library's Collection Development Policy, especially in our historic strengths of crime fiction and biography. Many wonderful non-fiction folio books in the areas of art, architecture and design have been bought for members to

enjoy in the library. A large number of books have been de-accessioned with plans to repurchase new copies, or a more authoritative or up-to-date version.

To make best use of the physical library space and to provide a better environment for the books, new timber bookshelves have been installed and the layout of the Collection rearranged. The library is now open 7 days. Sunday sees the library open from 11am until 4pm, and we have increased Wednesday evening opening hours until 8pm. Membership numbers remain steady at 800 from 2010 to 2011.

A Screen Club and a Non-Fiction book club, both monthly, have been introduced on a Wednesday evening. Following the success of the talk by the Director of Operations at the MSO, Lou Oppenheim, the events program has been expanded to include a range of speakers. An Art History Lecture and Tour of NGV Federation Square are planned for May. Events this year have included talks by authors Hilary McNevin, Melbourne crime writer Carolyn Morwood, Lyle Courtney, a history lecture 'An afternoon with Henry Lawson', Book Sculptor Nicholas Jones, and Jim Owens' talk on Chicago.

After 7 years at the Athenaeum, Librarian Jill Bartholomeusz left the library in June, along with Acquisitions Officer, Katia Punaro. Apart from being instrumental in lifting membership numbers during her tenure, one of Jill's major contributions was to convert the library catalogue from a card system to an online system. Tom Coleman, Michael Fawaz, Clare Murayama and Elina Rydman form our part-time weekday staff, along with casuals Caroline O'Connor, Katy Li and Jean Murphy on weekends.

Our staff is complemented by volunteers, drawing heavily on retired senior librarians and library student volunteers. They include Moyra McAllister, Carol Andrews, Wallis Gandell, Norma Gates, Pat Miller, Lynne Johnston, Vanessa Phillips, Helen Hellsten, Anna Clatsworthy, Penny Cook, Amanda Witt, and Karen Stephens. Thank you to all staff and volunteers for their ideas, enthusiasm and hard work.

Volunteer and former senior librarian Moyra McAllister changed the face of the library in 2011

by installing a new library management system. Not only has this improved efficiency at the desk, it has given members online library access. A password and login gives you control over your own account should you wish to have this. There is no need to call the library to ask if we have a book, place a book on 'hold', change your address details, recommend a purchase suggestion, or view your reading history. It can all be done online. There is even a virtual shelf which shows what books sit next to the book you've chosen in the library.

Coupled with this, the Library is assisting members with the myriad of tablets and e-reading devices now available. Two i-Pads were bought along with 6 Sony e-readers and our first collection of e-books. This was made possible through a local government grant applied for by the Mechanics Institutes' Inc. Staff are now helping members use these devices. The e-books seamlessly download onto our own catalogue and can be borrowed firstly on our e-readers, and at a later date we will assist members to download e-books from the library onto their own devices.

Finally, to our library members, please ask for help if you need it, and engage with your library, especially in 2012 The National Year of Reading.

Allison Belcher

Library Manager



Archives Report

The organisation is very grateful for the time and interest shown by our loyal band of volunteers who have continued researching, organising, and recording our small but significant collections.

Organising the materials is rewarding but the real thrill is when we can help others with their queries and research projects. During the past year there have been enquiries from lecturers and teachers, academic researchers and family historians. In addition to helping external researchers, the volunteer team conducts its own research.

Margaret Bowman, who writes about our past secretaries, has successfully placed two articles. Her article about John Henry Curtis (1880 – 1909) was accepted last year by the *Victorian Historical Journal*, Vol. 82, No. 2, published by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and another, about Garnet Walch, (Secretary 1874-1879) was accepted for inclusion in the *Journal of Australian Colonial History* published by the University of New England, which will appear in 2012.

Currently, we are all looking for George. As a 2011 recipient of a State Library of Victoria Fellowship, Margaret Bowman's latest project is writing and researching George Alexander Gilbert, Secretary of the Mechanics Institution 1843-1849 (and Vice-President 1850 – 1851) and he proved to be extremely elusive. George, a handsome, young artist, arrived in Melbourne with his new wife Anne, the widow of Sir John Byerley, who came with her two children. Unfortunately, like many who travelled here to make their fortune, George was not able to fulfil his dreams and it seems that he moved on. Our research has ranged over four countries. We have contacted schools, art galleries, libraries, archives and historical societies.

Volunteer Anne Marsden embarked on an ambitious project. Like the other members of the archives team, Anne was curious about the reasons for the successful launch of the Institution in 1839, and began examining the stories of the 50 men elected to the first committee. The intertwining social, cultural and business networks reveal new insights into the establishment of the Mechanics Institution and into Melbourne's past.

Thank you to all the volunteers who arrive on their designated day to contribute to our work, keeping our past for our future; Margaret Bowman, Karin Zilko, Anne Marsden, Norma Gates, Christine Perkins and Gerry Ely.

The board allocated special funding for the conservation and repair of three donated paintings: *Landscape* by John Rowell; *The Ruins of Peronne* by Arthur Streeton and a portrait of John Curtis, Secretary (1880 to 1909) by his son-in-law, artist Sigismondo Zucutti. They are hanging in the library for your enjoyment, now bright and clean.

A major donation was made to the archives in

December when the grandson of RWE Wilmot, Secretary from 1909 to 1949, presented portraits of Wilmot and his wife: a pencil study by well-known artist George Coates and a watercolour of Mrs Wilmot by Coates' wife, Dora Meeson. The two artists held several exhibitions of their works in the 1920s at the Athenaeum Gallery, which Wilmot established in 1911. The gallery reverted to a theatre space in 1971 and is now occupied by the Comedy Club.

A grant from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, in celebration of Melbourne's 175 years of settlement financed a website dedicated to the history of the Melbourne Athenaeum and allowed for annual reports 1840 to 1940 to be digitised. You can watch the pages being added (and corrected) by going to <http://www.mahistory.org.au>

Marjorie Dalvean
Archivist



Exhibition Launch Morning Tea



CORRECTION

The Melbourne Athenaeum: A Journal of the History of the Melbourne Institution

An article honored RWE Wilmot, Secretary to the Athenaeum from 1909 to 1949. In that article there was a mistaken reference to RWE and his wife Jane having an older, disabled son (before the birth of Chester Wilmot) whose existence was kept secret. The Athenaeum regrets that the assertion that such a son existed was not correct. The Athenaeum Incorporated apologises to the Wilmot family for this error.



2011 Highlights

The Melbourne Athenaeum in Pictures

An exhibition of historic images from the Athenaeum's illustrious history, curated by Jenny Davies and archivist Marjorie Dalvean was launched by Professor Geoffrey Blainey AC.

Annual General Meeting

Held on 18 April, members elected Athanasios Tsakonas and Barbara Gliddon to the Committee. Both avid readers and supporters of the Library, Atha is an architect and Barbara is an academic at RMIT. They replaced retiring members Tricia Caswell and Marcus Niski.

Melbourne Open House

The Athenaeum Library again participated in Melbourne Open House in July. With 4,000 visitors to the Library and Theatre over the weekend, the Library also signed up close to 50 new members.

Talks and Events

Authors and other speakers were hosted throughout the year and featured Lyle Courtney, Jenny Davies, Nicholas Jones, Jon Bauer, Hilary McNevin, Susan Priestley, Jim Owens, Lou Oppenheim and Carolyn Morwood.

History Week

Promoted by the Royal Historical Society in October each year, the Athenaeum offered a lunchtime speaker series. Dr Nick Richardson gave a lecture on Melbourne's "pink paper" The Sporting Globe. Dr Bill Garner shared some insights into the history of camping in Australia. Anne Marsden spoke about the members of the Athenaeum's first committee. We also welcomed back Professor Kate Burridge—perennial favourite—who spoke about "language fossils".

New Members' evening

New members were invited to events regularly held on Wednesday evening during the year.

The Edible Books Festival

Hosted by ALIA (Vic Specials) and held in the Library, entrants are required to interpret their favourite book or cover using edible ingredients. Entries are often remarkable, entertaining and tasty, as once voting is completed, the gathered party must then "eat their words". For more information go to <http://www.books2eat.com/>

2011 Annual Giving Program

The Athenaeum Incorporated has Deductible Gift Recipient status awarded by the Australian Taxation Office. This enables the organisation to seek tax deductible donations and grants from individuals and organisations. The donations are held in a public fund according to Tax Office requirements. Funds are allocated to improve library services and facilities.

Thank you to those members who donated so generously to our 2011 appeal. Close to \$5,000 was received in donations from members. Some donors asked to remain anonymous, so the list below reflects this.

The following donations were received:

\$1,000 or more

Lovell Chen Pty Ltd

\$500 or more

Anon x 1

\$100 or more

Anon x 8

Ms S Arnold, Mr J Buhrman, Mr A Charlewood, Ms J Hades, Mr I Llewellyn, Mrs E Lund, Mrs G O'Day, Ms J Talbot, Miss L Taylor, Ms S Westwood

\$20 or more

Anon x 20

Ms J Blomfield, Mr P Charlwood, Mr M Churchyard, Mr G Duke, Mr J Holden, Prof W Kirsop, Ms L Robertson, Ms J Thompson, Ms C Williams



The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc.

2011 Committee

The following people held Committee positions during 2011.

	Members	Meetings Attended	Apology
	Kevin Quigley, President	9/11	June, July
	Michael Herman, Vice President	10/11	December
	Agnes Cusack, Treasurer	9/11	November, December
	Sophie Arnold	10/11	November
	Andrew Barnes	6/11	February, April, May, June, September
#	Tricia Caswell	2/2	
	Matthew Gisborne	9/11	June, July
*	Barbara Gliddon	8/8	
	Anne Malloch	11/11	
#	Marcus Niski	0/2	February, March
	Don Smith	8/11	AGM, August, September
*	Athanasios Tsakonas	7/8	August

- Eleven meetings were held during the year including the AGM in April 2011
- No meeting was held in January or October 2011
- # retired at the AGM
- * was elected at the AGM



The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

Patron: The Hon Alex Chernov QC AC, Governor of Victoria

Committee of Management

President: Kevin Quigley
Vice President: Michael Herman
Treasurer: Agnes Cusack
Committee: Sophie Arnold
Andrew Barnes
Matthew Gisborne
Barbara Gliddon
Anne Malloch
Don Smith
Athanasios Tsakonas

Athenaeum Staff Sue Westwood, Business Manager
Allison Belcher, Library Manager (from June 2011)
Jill Bartholomeusz, Librarian (to June 2011)
Tom Coleman
Michael Fawaz
Clare Murayama
Caroline O'Connor
Katy Li
Elina Rydman
David Pryor (Accountant)
Caroline Debevc (Bookkeeper)

Library volunteers

Moyra McAllister
Carol Andrews
Anna Clatsworthy
Penny Cook
Wallis Gandell
Norma Gates
Helen Hellsten
Lynne Johnston
Pat Miller
Vanessa Phillips
Karen Stephens
Amanda Witt

Archive volunteers

Marjorie Dalvean
Margaret Bowman
Karin Zilko
Anne Marsden
Norma Gates
Christine Perkins
Gerry Ely

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
www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au