



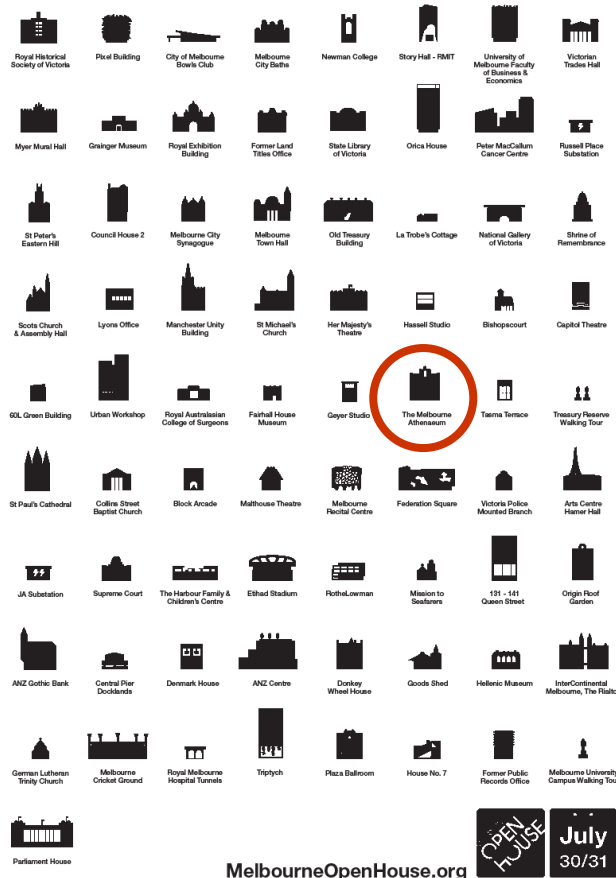
THE MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM LIBRARY

THE PLEASURE OF WORDS

The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc

ANNUAL REPORT 2012
Presented May 2013





MelbourneOpenHouse.org



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.

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.

Its 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

This is my first report as President of the Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated and it is a pleasure to be able to report that the organisation continues to thrive as part of Melbourne's literary landscape. The Athenaeum has been part of Melbourne for 174 years and I am looking forward to celebrating our 175th anniversary.

Over the past 12 months the library under Allison Belcher continued to make significant improvements in access, services and operations. Our e-book program is continuing to expand and the number of book clubs meeting in the library ever growing. Allison resigned in March and I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work she has done over more than five years, first as a volunteer and then ultimately as library manager.

The committee, members, volunteers and staff were sorry to see her go, and we wish her well in the future.

An operational review of the library is being undertaken by the committee before any new appointments are made. Tom, Anna and Michael with the support of casual staff and volunteers will continue to ensure the smooth operation of the library for members.

Part of running the Athenaeum is balancing the resources of the institution to ensure that we provide a great library service for members, but also continue to make much-needed improvements to the building. A review of the building maintenance and a conservation management plan is being completed. These reports will provide a foundation for the committee to seek funding beyond our own resources. With secure income from three stable tenants with leases in place extending to 2020 and beyond, it is on this basis that increased funds are being directed to the maintenance and repair of the building. Some of the most recent work has been to replace 90 year old wiring and commence an upgrade of emergency lighting and fire safety

systems.

The committee has undertaken a lot of work around corporate governance. We had a strategic review that looked at our own performance and responsibilities and set an agenda for reviewing the committee's performance over the next year. The business plan has been updated and new sub-committees established with clear charters and reporting requirements. Sub-committees are in place to support the library, marketing and fund raising, building and audit and risk.

A number of successful external partnerships were developed in 2012 to assist in building the profile of the Athenaeum and Library including promotion of the Reader's Walk, the Crime and Justice Festival (hosted in collaboration with Readers Feast), Rare Book Week and Open House Melbourne in June, State Library of Victoria, Sisters in Crime, and also sponsorship of a short story category in the Scarlet Stiletto Awards called "Body in the Library".

I look forward to 2013 as a year to strengthen and consolidate The Athenaeum's place in Melbourne's cultural life. With a stable staff and committee, and a growing number of willing volunteers in the library and archive, the organisation is well placed to celebrate the 175th anniversary of its founding in 1839.

Don Smith

President



Business Manager's Report

I would like to thank the committee, accountant David Pryor, senior bookkeeper Caroline Debevc, library staff and volunteers for their support during what was an exceptionally busy year, both in the Library and around the building.

Special thanks to Allison Belcher who worked tirelessly throughout the year to make improvements in the library facilities and member services. Thanks also to archivist Marjorie Dalvean, who has provided much support to our two State Library Honorary Fellows Dr Margaret Bowman and Anne Marsden, both of whom continue to uncover important information about our institution's history. I continue to enjoy the cuttings, snippets of old news print and photos that are often left for me to read. More of their work will be featured in our eNewsletter in 2013.

Governance

The Athenaeum committee meets monthly and this year commenced a corporate governance review that has involved reviewing the committee structure, sub committees and the Institution's business plan due this year. The organisation is now operating under the new Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, and although unnecessary under this Act will continue to have its accounts audited annually.

Building

The Athenaeum manages three commercial tenancies that provide a stable, ongoing income source that supports the Library operation.

The organisation has a responsibility to provide adequate facilities that serve both the tenants and our members. Maintenance and repairs to the building's fabric is the primary responsibility for the Business Manager. In 2012, major work was completed to house lighting and heating in the theatre, and shelving in the Library with the support of donations from the organisation's Public Fund. We acknowledge our generous donors within this report.

Once again with support of volunteers, the Library and building participated in Open House Melbourne in July. The Library attracted close to 4,000 visitors and was in the top 10 of buildings visited during the weekend.

Library

After an request from the Library Manager, the committee adopted a single subscription (plus a discounted concession) in 2012, returning to a membership fee structure that had been place for decades. A membership drive and competition was promoted in the second half of the year.

As well as new shelving being installed, the committee approved a significant upgrade of the organisation's IT facilities. A new server, updated software and reconditioned, but better computers and were purchased and installed, all of which helps to support our Library management system Koha.

Volunteer archivist Marjorie Dalvean continues to assist with many enquiries from both members, researchers and the general public about their history and ours.

The library hosted 19 events with over 700 members and guests attending. Highlights included the Crime and Justice Festival hosted by Readers Feast that brought Ian Rankin into our Library; Rare Book Week in partnership with Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller with Artist in Residence, book sculptor Nicholas Jones, Australia's most prolific author Di Morrissey amongst the impressive line up.

It is hoped that 2013 will be a year of consolidation and planning for our 175th anniversary celebration in November 2014. I look forward to seeing you at the library.

Sue Westwood

Business Manager



Library staff members Tom Coleman and Anna Clatworthy.

Absent Michael Fawaz, Penny Cook, Katy Li.

Library 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.

This year the library launched itself into the information systems age with increased emphasis on using technology to better serve our members and improve services. The eBook collection continues to grow, and borrowing for eReaders has been steady. It is gratifying to see members using iPads in the library and borrowing eBooks for their electronic devices.

Due to ill health, long serving staff member Elina Rydman returned to Finland, but the library welcomed two new additions to Library with Clare Murayama and Caroline O'Connor both giving birth to their second children.

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. The Australian collection continues to be featured and folio books in the areas of art, architecture and design have been bought for members to enjoy in the library.

At the end of the year, a review of the stacks collection was undertaken, and a large number of those books were in poor condition. The collection continues to be reviewed, and in 2013 a much needed stock-take commenced.

Following Elina's departure, volunteer Lynne Johnston agreed to coordinate the Book Clubs and has continued this into 2013. The library's clubs continue to expand, with an Australian Classic and BYO book club commencing in earnest. Joining one of our many book clubs is a great way to make good use of the library.

This year's program of events was extremely full offering a variety of speakers. Authors dominated the list, and included Jessica Adams, Kerry Greenwood, Carolyn Morwood and Di Morrissey. Historians including Dr Robin Hirst from the Melbourne Museum and Dr Gary Presland gave fascinating lectures on Melbourne's early life. An IT support lecture "iPad therefore I am" was

extremely well received. A member tour to the National Gallery of Victoria and lecture in the library hosted by NGV guide Robyn Cass was extremely successful.

Participating in a book group or attending one of the many activities provides a great opportunity to socialize with members as well as provide much needed support of these services.

The library's most valuable asset is its staff and with them our volunteers. This library attracts highly qualified professionals, retired senior librarians and library student volunteers to both work and volunteer. They provide a level of personal attention that many municipal libraries are simply unable to give, not only to members, but to our collection. Every book purchased for this library is individually selected following the guidelines set out in the library collection policy, through suggestions from members, and by reviewing book pages, and talking to booksellers and readers.

This focus on the collection and personal attention to members is rare in an age where self service is king. Thank you to all staff and volunteers for their ideas, enthusiasm and hard work.

Archives Report

Volunteers' research

Dr Margaret Bowman's gave an account of her activities, "Life with George" during October's History Week events held in the Library. She combed the State Library of Victoria's manuscripts and pictures collections researching our previous secretary George Alexander Gilbert (1843-1850). Business Manager, Sue Westwood is negotiating the publication of Margaret's work as a monograph with coloured illustrations. Volunteer Anne Marsden was awarded a creative fellowship from the State Library of Victoria to investigate the men of the Mechanics' Institution's founding committee, looking for reasons why and how, an institution whose aims was "the diffusion of scientific and other knowledge" could be established in a small colony in 1839.



Members of the Heidelberg Historical Society recently attended Anne's presentation on one of these committee members, Heidelberg settler Thomas Wills.

Exhibition

Three items were lent to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for Mimi Colligan's exhibition on early Melbourne theatre. The items Mimi chose were: framed silk programs dated 1872 and 1886 and a leather wallet once owned by actor Harry Green who performed in the 1920s at the Athenaeum Theatre. The wallet was donated by his son in 2008.

Visitors

Marcus Langdon, a descendant of founding member George Porter, met with Anne Marsden. Jim Pearce visited to share his grandfather's story (he was also called Jim Pearce). The older Jim had lost his left hand in WW1 but enlisted in the WW2 after arriving in Australia. He was later employed at the Melbourne Athenaeum, first as the lift operator and then as a handyman.

Digitised catalogues

A grant to Mechanics' Institutes Victoria Inc. from the Victorian government facilitated scanning of documents and reports from Victorian Mechanics' Institutes. Four catalogues from the late 1800s were loaned for this project.

New Archives room

The Board room has been rearranged to accommodate the archives collection, now stored in large shelving and a compactus.

Donations

The grandson of RWE Wilmot (Secretary 1909 to 1949) visited from London, with his family to present portraits of both Wilmot and his wife. The pencil sketch of Mr Wilmot by George Coates and a watercolour portrait of Mrs Wilmot by Dora Meeson have been treated by our conservator, with financial assistance from a generous donor through our Public Fund. The artworks are doubly significant because both artists exhibited several times in the Athenaeum Art Gallery in the 1920s.

Margaret Anderson presented the Athenaeum with a fringed silk program from a variety performance, including tableaux dated October 1884. The performance was in aid of the

Episcopalian Church and the Sick Children's Hospital.

Research

There were many requests about family members, past events and library history. Deaf Children Australia, celebrating their 150th anniversary of their first meeting at the Mechanics Institution in 1862 asked if the members of their first committee were members of the Mechanics' Institution. We found several including Sir W.F. Stawell. There are requests about artefacts from the Athenaeum's original museum collection, but there is little information about the items in our archive or indeed at the Melbourne Museum, where the first collection was sent.

Dr Ross Thorne, theatre historian asked about pictures of the theatre which could be published in his new book about the architect Henry White, who designed the new Athenaeum theatre in 1924.

Marjorie Dalvean

Archivist



Marjorie Dalvean and Business Manager Sue Westwood on the roof.



Volunteer Timothy Gillis-Jones assisting a member to use eReaders and download books from the collection.



Book sculptor Nicholas Jones set up his studio in the Library during Rare Book Week in July.



Di Morrissey visited the Library in October and talked about her novel "The Golden Land".

2012 Highlights

Program Launch

Close to 20 events were held in 2012 and included talks by Dr Anne Longmire, Dr Robin Hirst, Dr Gary Presland, Dr Susan Martin and Dr Kylie Mirmohamadi; author talks by Dr Brigid Maher, Kerry Greenwood, Carolyn Morwood, Di Morrissey and Jessica Adams. A lecture in new technology was presented by Philip Jackson and an art history lecture and tour to the NGV was hosted by Robyn Cass.

Partnerships

Establishment of the **Readers' Walk** in collaboration with Readers Feast and Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller. Participation in **Open House Melbourne** and **Rare Book Week** in July, and the **Crime & Justice Festival** in November. Co-hosted a **Crime Fiction Forum** in the Athenaeum 2 with the Sisters in Crime featuring Carmel Shute, Kerry Greenwood and Carolyn Morwood.

The Athenaeum sponsored a short story competition category in the Sisters in Crime 2012 Scarlett Stiletto Awards. "**The Body in the Library**" category first prize was awarded to Kath Harper with Aoife Clifford being awarded the runner up prize.

New Members' evenings

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

Improved facilities and services

IT hardware and software purchased through a non-profit charity operated in conjunction with Microsoft. **New shelving** added to the library. **New heating boilers** installed in the theatre.

Monthly eNewsletter developed with the assistance of volunteer Vanessa Phillips, and is now the primary means of communication with members. **New website developed** by staff member Michael Fawaz. **Sony eReaders purchased** and **eBook collection commenced**.

Three objects were loaned to the Royal Historical Society for an exhibition about Melbourne theatre titled *Melbourne Theatres in Transition 1840s—1940s: An idiosyncratic view*.

2012 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. 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 2012 appeal. More than \$5,000 was received in donations from members. Some donors asked to remain anonymous, so the list below reflects this.

The Public Fund Trustees are Mr Kevin Quigley, Mr Frank Hurley and Mr Esmond Pitt. They approved two funding requests in 2012 towards library shelving and the conservation of donated artworks.

The following donations were received:

\$500 or more

Anon x 2

\$100 or more

Anon x 5

Mr John (Jack) Jones, Mr Maurice Joyce, Mr Norman Kennedy, Ms Allison Parr, Mr Kevin Quigley, Mr Don Smith, Ms Jennifer Talbot, Miss Lois Taylor, Ms Sue Westwood

Up to \$100

Anon x 24

Mrs Pam Baragwanath, Mr Mark Churchyard, Mr Graeme Duke, Mrs Hazel Hajdu, Mrs Gloria Knight, Mrs Judith Koch, Mr Dane Morrissy, Mrs Caroline O'Connor, Mrs Valmai Patterson, Ms Allison Reynolds, Ms Louise Robertson, Mrs Joan Robinson, Miss Amanda Witt



The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc.

2012 Committee

The following people held Committee positions during 2012.

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

Eleven meetings were held during the year including the AGM in April 2012

- No meeting was held in January or October 2012



The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

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

Committee of Management

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

Athenaeum Staff Sue Westwood, Business Manager
Allison Belcher, Library Manager
Tom Coleman
Michael Fawaz
Clare Murayama
Anna Clatworthy
Penny Cook
Caroline O'Connor
Katy Li
David Pryor (Accountant)
Caroline Debevc (Senior Bookkeeper)

Library volunteers

Moyra McAllister
Carol Andrews
Wallis Gandell
Norma Gates
Timothy Gillis-Jones
Helen Hellsten
Lynne Johnson
Kirsty Lock
Louise McInerney
Anne Malloch
Pat Miller
Vanessa Phillips
Anna Rotar
Andrew Tait
Amanda Witt

Archive volunteers

Marjorie Dalvean
Margaret Bowman
Gerry Ely
Anne Marsden
Christine Perkins
Anthony Perrin
Karin Zilko

Honorary Members

Marjorie Dalvean
Phyllis Eddy
Moyra McAllister
Leila Winchcombe

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