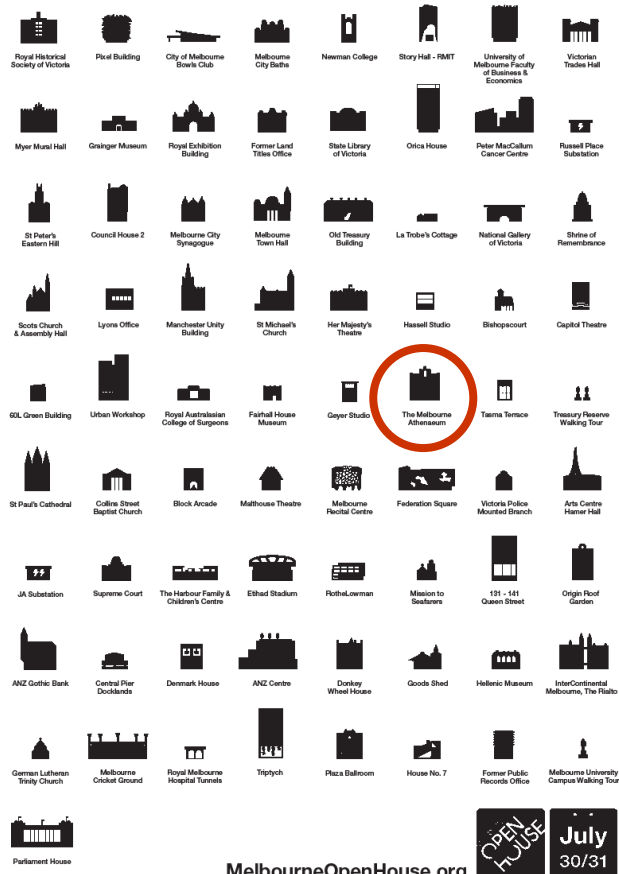


THE MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM LIBRARY

THE PLEASURE OF WORDS

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated **ANNUAL REPORT 2013** Presented April 2014





The Melbourne Athenaeum

The Melbourne Athenaeum has always been an important part of the life of Melbourne. It began as the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution 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' Institution 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 1854 when the Town Hall was built.

In 1989, the building was added to Victoria's Register of Historic Buildings. Importantly this section of Collins Street, between Swanston and Russell Street has retained much of its historic charm where other sections of the street have made way for contemporary developments.

The Athenaeum has joined with Reader's Feast at Georges and Kay Craddock Antiquarian Booksellers at the Assembly Hall to promote the Reader's Walk which is a valuable addition to Melbourne's City of Literature status.

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.



The Reading Room by Clifford Orme

President's Report

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated enters its 175th year as a vibrant part of Melbourne's historical and literary history community.

During the year we welcomed Rose Blustein as Librarian. Rose has held senior management positions in a number of government and NGO libraries for over 25 years and in recent years transferred out of libraries to work in operations and human resources. Rose brings a wealth of experience to managing the library and I look forward to working with her in the future.

The library collection continues to be updated and improved and in terms of my favoured genres, provides a crime fiction collection that is unmatched in Victoria.

The building management and our three tenancies continue to be a priority. We have now completed a Conservation Management Plan, with parts of the building dating back to 1842 this is an important document to guide us in maintaining and preserving an historic part of Melbourne. During the last 12 months further work has been completed on electrical switchboards, mechanical systems and plumbing.

The library has benefitted from new shelving, a refurbished office and painting of the water damaged ceiling. The ceiling painting and shelving was undertaken with funds donated by members through the Public Fund. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members who donate to the Annual Giving Appeal. Your donations are used for a variety of specific purposes to improve the amenity of the library. Contributions to the fund are tax deductible and I would encourage all members to consider a donation when letters are sent out in May.

In January the committee held a strategic review to set an agenda for 2014 and review our 2013 goals. This session is a valuable mechanism that ensures we are focusing on the right areas. The board charter and sub-committee charters are updated where needed and each provides guidance for the year.

The Athenaeum has a number of successful partnerships in place 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, 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". These partnerships are a great way to further promote the Athenaeum and to play our part in the City of Literature.

Finally I would like to thank all the volunteers that are a vital part of the Athenaeum. They provide a whole range of functions from running the library to archiving to researching our history. Their support is invaluable, and your support as a member, by visiting, attending events, and sharing your love of the library with friends will propel the library towards its 200th anniversary.

Don Smith

President



Business Manager's Report

This is the report on activity around the library and building in 2013. It was a year of transformation and transition, but our objective of offering members a warm, friendly service in the library has been a constant throughout.

So much work is undertaken upstairs in the administration office, and I would like to thank the committee, accountant David Pryor,

bookkeeper Caroline Debevc for their efficiency and good humor in managing our financial affairs. I'm fortunate to share the office with honorary member and archives guru Marjorie Dalvean. The committee and I appreciate her continued effort, with the help of her voluntary team, to reveal the stories behind the Athenaeum. I'd also like to thank the library staff and volunteers for their support during another busy but fulfilling year.

Governance

The Athenaeum committee met 11 times in 2013 (including the Annual General meeting). It formed four sub-committees: library, property, marketing and finance and audit. The management committee and each sub-committee have developed a written charter that outlines its objectives and these will be reviewed annually. The sub-committees reporting mechanisms have improved proceedings at the monthly meetings. Committee members and the sub-committees they serve on are noted elsewhere in the report.

Building

The Athenaeum manages three commercial tenancies in the building. Our tenants provide a stable ongoing income source that supports the Library operation. In 2013 a long term lease was signed with Bistro D'Orsay securing this income source well into the future.

In 2013 the property committee completed a Conservation Management Plan. It is a blueprint for the building's major conservation issues. It identifies the committee's policy priorities for the next five years. While funding has been directed towards electrical wiring and emergency and safety issues during the year, the organisation also partially funded the upgrade of air conditioning units in the main theatre. This was a partnership with tenants AT Management, and its completion over summer has improved the comfort for patrons.

Library

Library Manager Allison Belcher left in March 2013, and a staff review was commenced by the management committee and staff. Staff workshops were held and recruitment priorities determined. The library was fortunate to recruit Honorary Librarian Rose Blustein to the role. A librarian with strong management skills and leadership experience, Rose arrived at the library already knowing many of our volunteer librarians and members through her own professional

networks.

After adopting a single subscription (plus a discounted concession) in 2012, and returning to a membership fee structure that had been place for decades, there was a decrease in subscription income in 2013. It is anticipated with additional marketing support from the sub-committee and volunteers, new strategies to encourage and retain members developed and implemented during 2014.

Physical improvements to the library continue, with new shelving in the “new release” section being completed, the ceiling was painted over Christmas 2013 and the staff room has been renovated.

Archives

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

The collaboration to publish Margaret Bowman’s book on George Gilbert continued with Australian Scholarly Publishing and the State Library of Victoria. With support from the Athenaeum the small publication will be launched in April 2014.

Two portraits of former Secretary RE Wilmot and his wife were hung in the library. These were a donation from his descendants and have been restored and framed.

The Athenaeum is supporting the publication of a second edition of Pam Baragwanath’s remarkable book *If the Walls Could Speak* (published in 2000). With historian Ken James, Pam has collected more than 400 additional entries to create a two volume edition *The Walls Speak Volumes*. It is hoped this publication will be launched during the 17th birthday celebrations.

175th Birthday & Anniversary

Planning is underway to mark this milestone in the organisation’s history. A call for ideas was circulated to members, and plenty of suggestions have been made. The committee is considering a range of proposals – all in keeping with the organisation’s objectives. It is hoped the activities will remind Melbournians of the place this institution has in the cultural development of the city.



Sue Westwood

Business Manager

Library Activity in 2014

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. The institution’s purpose was “the diffusion of literary, scientific and other useful knowledge amongst its members”. This remains the institution’s purpose, and the year commenced with ABC Radio National’s writer, presenter and journalist Ramona Koval in conversation with literary journalist Helen Elliott.

In February the library welcomed Shuk-hing Chan, Senior Librarian, Hong Kong Public Library. She was researching subscription libraries and spent some time with library staff. It was exciting to receive an email from her advising that The Melbourne Athenaeum Journal had been catalogued at the Hong Kong Public Library, where it could be borrowed by one of their 3.3 million users.

Library staff and volunteers commenced a stock-take of the collection in March, and the library hosted a number of visiting groups in April and May, including students from Williamstown High School, and parents of students from Caulfield Grammar.

Once again the library participated in Open House Melbourne, attracting close to 4,000 visitors over the weekend. To celebrate Rare Book Week, the library hosted talks Artist's Books: art and collaboration by Melbourne artist Bruno Leti, and Collecting Poetry by Richard Overell of the Matheson Library, Monash University Richard Overell.

Popular speaker Jessica Adams returned to provide tips and tricks on publishing in the electronic environment, and in September the library was pleased to welcome US author and forensic anthropologist Kathy Reichs. The partnership between the Athenaeum and the Sisters in Crime has been mutually beneficial over the past two years, and further events are planned in 2014.

Melbourne's Lord Mayor Robert Doyle gave an engaging and candid talk about his early life, and how his love of books and reading enhanced his life, education and career.

Some significant upgrades were completed to the physical space in 2013 including the painting of the ceiling in December, repainting the library entrance, and installing new shelving in the "new release" section.

We were pleased to welcome Rose Blustein to the library in late 2013, and here are some of her observations since joining the team.

Welcome Rose Blustein

After an absence of more than 10 years I feel quite privileged to have been given the opportunity to return to working in libraries. In the short time I have been here I have been impressed by the Library's excellent collection particularly in the genres of crime fiction and biography and also by the high quality of customer service displayed by both staff and volunteers.

I am hoping that the next 12 months will see a review of the collection, responding in particular to the requests of our members. We will also be recruiting more library trained volunteers to support our small team of dedicated staff.

Rose Blustein

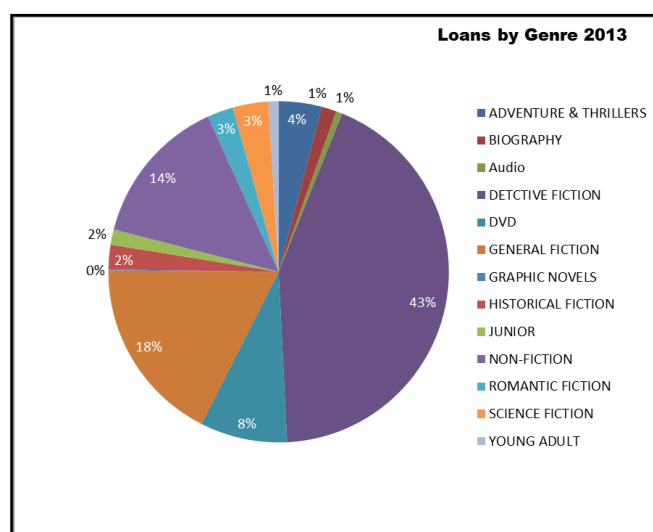
Librarian



Librarian Rose Blustein (right) with honorary member and volunteer Moyra McAllister.



Clare Murayama responsible for acquisitions and Tom Coleman responsible for coordinating library systems and administration.



Library borrowing statistics compiled by Clare Murayama.

Archives Report

Research and visitors

Academics, students, family historians and professional writers from the USA, UK, interstate and from Victoria were welcomed in the new archives room. They were given tours of the library and collections, a background history of the institution and given access to the archives collection free of charge. Special presentations about the library were provided to RMIT students, secondary students and professional librarians in the library.

Robin Wagner, Director of the library of the Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, in town for conference about mechanics institutes, was pleased to hear about the first mechanics institute in Melbourne, her first encounter with this type of institution.

Athenaeum Theatre usherette Coral Degenhardt arrived to talk about her experiences when British films were shown in the theatre, one of seven in Collins Street at the time. She recalled the Cecil Parkes Trio playing before and during intervals of each evening's entertainments. She married Assistant Projectionist Lionel Degenhart as a photograph of the pair is in the Archives.

Extended research was conducted concerning The Athenaeum's association with the Melbourne City Council, the first tenant in 1843 and the Melbourne Cricket Club which was formed in 1838, the year before the Melbourne Mechanics Institution. Sporting equipment for the MCC's first match was purchased by Donald Gordon McArthur, a member of The Athenaeum's first committee. The MCC held many meetings in the Institution's building.

Interviews, talks and publications

A trip to Williamstown was conducted to meet volunteers and give a talk about the Melbourne Athenaeum's building to a large group of members of the Williamstown Historical Society. I was interviewed by Libby Gore on ABC National's Sunday program "Melbourne's Secrets".

Anne Marsden completed her Creative Fellowship at the State Library of Victoria and her essay about the men of the first committee was published in the November 2013 edition of the SLV's *La Trobe Journal*. Anne also gave talks to Historical Societies in Heidelberg and Fitzroy.

Margaret Bowman presented the La Trobe Society's AGL Shaw Lecture at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, about George Alexander Gilbert. Her presentation, *My Life with George*, was transcribed and published in the La Trobe Society's journal, *Latrobeana*.

Donations

The portraits of RWE Wilmot (Secretary 1909-1949) and his wife Jane were cleaned and given special conservation treatments and now hang in the library. The watercolour of Mrs Wilmot was badly foxed, caused by the acidic backing card. The fragile paper was removed and placed on acid-free card and the brown foxing marks were removed. The cost of the conservation work was supported by the generous donation by a member – and greatly appreciated.

The archivist of Her Majesty's Theatre, Mary Murphy sent a box of 60 theatre programs from live performances at the Athenaeum Theatre dating from 1997 to 2007. The collections includes programs for Melbourne Theatre Company productions and solo performers such as Michael Feinstein.

The programs are being added to a state-wide database for small museums managed by Museum Victoria called "Victorian Collections". Work is underway to add the Melbourne Athenaeum's complete database to this website address:

<http://victoriancollections.net.au>
(use search term: "Melbourne Athenaeum").

Marjorie Dalvean

Archivist



Browsing the shelves —1962

The Athenaeum In Pictures



Book Launch Kitchen Table Memoirs



Ramona Koval in conversation with Helen Elliott



**Sisters in Crime & The Athenaeum
Angela Savage with Kathy Reichs**



**State Librarian & CEO
State Library of Victoria, Sue Roberts**



**Barking Spider Visual Theatre
Ex Libris (History Week Performances)
Penelope Bartlau and Leah Scholes**



2013 Highlights

Events Program

Kitchen Table Memoirs Book Launch

Edible Book Festival

Ramona Koval with Helen Elliott

Sue Roberts State Librarian

Richard Overell on Collecting Poetry

Bruno Leti on Artist Books and Collaboration

Open House Melbourne

Jessica Adams on ePublishing

Kathy Reichs with Angela Savage

Barking Spider Visual Theatre

Morning Tea with Lord Mayor Robert Doyle

Partnerships Program

Readers' Walk

- Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller
- Reader's Feast at Georges
- The Melbourne Athenaeum Library

Open House Melbourne

Rare Book Week

Sisters in Crime

Barking Spider Visual Theatre

Mechanics' Institute of Victoria

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 **Dawn Farnham** with **Aoife Clifford** being awarded the runner up prize for the second year.

New Members' evenings

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

2013 Annual Giving Program

The Melbourne 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.

Our member's support helps to improve the library services and facilities. The Melbourne Athenaeum Inc. acknowledge and thanks those members who generously donated to our 2013 appeal. More than \$7,500 was received by 30 June 2013. 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 a funding request in 2013 towards painting the water-damaged ceiling.

The following donations were received:

\$2,000

Mr Peter Lovell

\$200 or more

Nepomuk Investments

Ms Jennifer Talbot

Mr Don Smith

Ms Sue Westwood

Anon x 6

\$100 or more

Ms Sophie Arnold

Ms Susan Brewer

Mr David McLaren

Ms Allison Parr

Anon x 10

Up to \$100

Mrs Pam Baragwanath, Mr Jack Bloustein

Mr Samuel Broughton, Miss J. Crowle

Mr David Chandler, Mr Phillip Charlwood

Mr Graham Duke, Mr William Gray

Mr John Holden, Mr Maurice Joyce

Mr Norman Kennedy, Mr Kosta Kostoski

Ms Enid Lund, Ms Patricia Miller

Ms Caroline O'Connor, Mrs Clare Rush

Ms Dorothy Underwood, Miss Amanda Witt

Ms Susan Wooldridge, Mr Rob Youl

Mr Richard Tait

Anon x 22

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

Management Committee

The following people held Committee positions during 2013.

	Members	Meetings Attended	Sub-Committees
	Don Smith, President	10/11	Property
	Michael Herman, Vice President	11/11	Finance & Audit, Fundraising
	Kevin Quigley, Treasurer	10/11	Finance & Audit, Fundraising
	Sophie Arnold	9/11	Property
	Andrew Barnes	5/11	Marketing & Communications, Finance & Audit
	Agnes Cusack	7/11	Marketing & Communications
	Matthew Gisborne	10/11	Library
	Barbara Gliddon	10/11	Marketing & Communications
	Anne Malloch	8/11	Library
	Athanasios Tsakonas	10/11	Property

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 AC QC, 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
Rose Blustein, Librarian
Allison Belcher (until March 2013)
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
Aaron Mitchell
Vanessa Phillips
Anna Rotar
Andrew Tait
Amanda Witt

Archive volunteers

Marjorie Dalvean
Margaret Bowman
Judith Chivers
Gerry Ely
Ruby Gray
Anne Marsden
Christine Perkins
Anthony Perrin
Karin Zilko

Honorary Members

Marjorie Dalvean
Phyllis Eddy
Moyra McAllister
Leila Winchcombe

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www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au

The Melbourne Athenaeum Library

The pleasure of words

Library Opening Hours 2013

Mon/Tues/Thurs/Fri:	9.30am—5.00pm
Wed:	11.00am—8.00pm
Sat:	10.00am—2.00p,

Annual Membership Subscription

Full:	\$99.00
Concession:	\$89.00

Membership benefits

A historic library located in the heart of Collins Street;
Access to the latest in books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs and audio books;
Victoria's finest Crime Fiction and Biography Collections;
A growing collection of eBooks and free IT help for readers and tablets;
eReaders available for loan
Monthly eNews bulletins advising members of events and new books arriving;
Free internet access;
A warm friendly and quiet retreat;
Access to a number of monthly book clubs where new and old titles are discussed;
A monthly screen club where popular movies are discussed;
Monthly author talks, lectures and other social events for members and guests.



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