



THE
MELBOURNE
ATHENÆUM
LIBRARY

THE PLEASURE OF WORDS

175
YEARS
SINCE 1839

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated
ANNUAL REPORT 2014
Presented May 2015





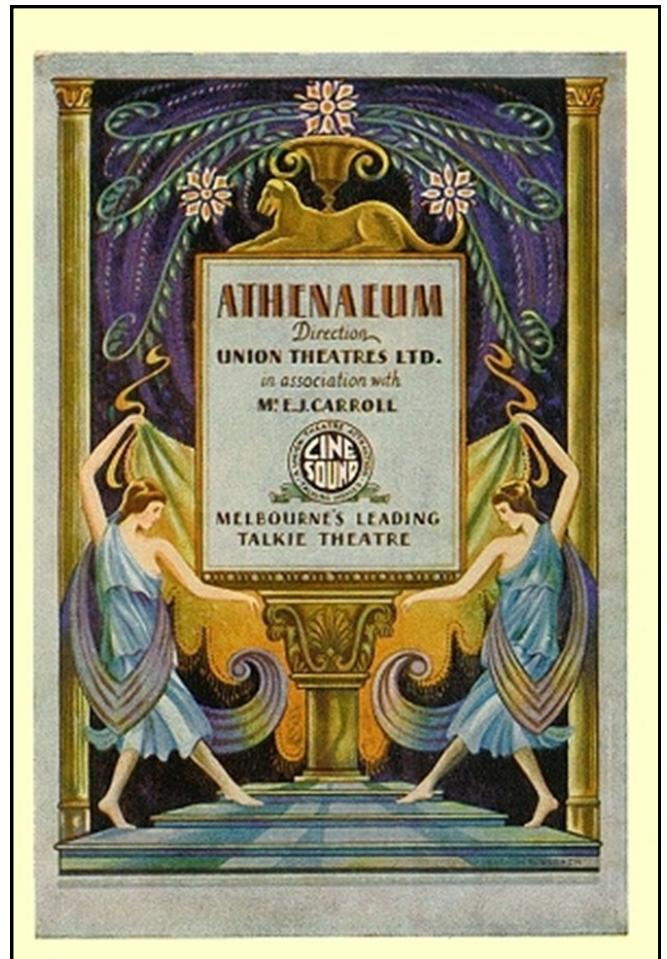
THE BULB SHOW AT THE ATHENAEUM HALL.

Melbourne's Cultural Heart:

Bulb Show at the Athenaeum Hall, Illustrated Australian News, 1892
(Pictures Collection State Library of Victoria).

The Athenaeum, Melbourne's Leading Talkie Theatre, 1929

Illuminate—Athena³ Installation for White Night 2015.
Created by Lisa Anderson for The Melbourne Athenaeum



The Melbourne Athenaeum

The Melbourne Athenaeum is 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 Melbourne 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.

It is a vibrant city, culturally rich and the Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated, celebrating its 175th birthday in 2015 has been instrumental in its development.



The Reading Room by Clifford Orme

President's Report

November 2015 marks The Melbourne Athenaeum's 175th year of continuous operation in Melbourne, a remarkable achievement by any measure, but particularly for a non-profit cultural organisation.

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated, through the operation of its recreational library has seen membership grow and decline, financial hardship, political wrangling, membership manipulation, tenant and building issues, and even the expulsion of rogue members. However, the foresight of the institution's founders to provide a funding source independent of government and others through the commercial leasing of space within its building has enabled the Melbourne Athenaeum to continue offering a quality library service and cultural experience for members and a venue for theatre goers.

Not only is it a good time to reflect on our history but also to look forward to our 200th anniversary. The management committee has been reviewing what we want the Melbourne Athenaeum to be at that time and establishing long term goals. The goals include funding targets for major capital projects. The Melbourne Athenaeum's financial position remains strong with growing cash reserves providing the opportunity to put in place a program to identify and fund major capital expenditure items. The committee looks forward to engaging members in this discussion.

Throughout the year the library has continued to expand its services with a comprehensive speaker series that will culminate later this year with the introduction of the Marcus Clark lectures. This will be a series of six lectures by some of Australia's most significant and interesting cultural and social thinkers. The series will address issues around urban planning, sustainability, cultural engagement and science. The organisation is supporting the 2nd edition of Pam Baragwanath's publication documenting the history of Victoria's Mechanics Institutes.

Pam was a guest speaker at our 175th anniversary morning tea and shared some of her research with members. Her publication *These Walls Speak Volumes* is co-authored with Ken James and will be launched in November 2015 to coincide with our birthday celebrations.

We have been looking to expand the services offered to members and a recent Friday night chamber music performance was a great success, booking out in a few days. The success of this event and with the encouragement of members we will be scheduling further performances during the year. I would urge all members to come along to these events, they are a great place to mingle and hear some world class performers.

The success of The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated and the services offered are due in a large part to our volunteers and dedicated staff, and included in that is Margaret Bowman who was presented with a 2014 Community History Award in a



ceremony at the State Library for her publication about former secretary/librarian George Alexander Gilbert, congratulations Margaret.

I look forward to continuing our 175th anniversary celebrations and to seeing library members at some of these events in the coming months.

Don Smith
President

Business Manager's Report

The continuous operation of a non-profit organisation in Australia for 175 years is a remarkable achievement. This is a milestone year and few are more significant in our city's rich history as The Melbourne Athenaeum's 175th birthday.

For our neighbor and friend Kay Craddock of Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller this year marks her 50th year in business, 48 of which have been in the CBD. At a recent volunteer's morning tea, the organisation celebrated the service of some of our longstanding volunteers. Librarian Rose Blustein presented longer serving volunteers with a badge in acknowledgement of their service. On a personal level, September this year marks my 5th anniversary as Business Manager, and I continue to find the role particularly rewarding. The variety of projects undertaken with the collaborative support of the committee, library and administration staff and our committed and capable volunteers is challenging, rewarding and enriching.

The 175th birthday is an opportunity to celebrate and share the story of the Melbourne Athenaeum to promote it to the wider community with the purpose of raising awareness, encouraging membership growth and acknowledging its remarkable history.

175th Birthday

A new logo design and branding was developed and approved in 2014. The logo has been designed to promote the 175th during 2015. New membership cards with special reference to 175 were sent to current members. Bookmarks, postcards and greeting cards featuring historic images and can be purchased at the library desk.

An artwork featuring 16 of the library's colorful quarterly list booklets dating from the early 20th century was commissioned and created by Nicholas Jones. It is hanging in the library. With support from the City of Melbourne and White Night Melbourne, the Athenaeum commissioned a projection installation that was set up on the building's canopy during White Night 2015.

The organisation is continuing the celebrations this year with small chamber and acoustic performances appropriate to an intimate venue. The inaugural Marcus Clarke lectures will be announced later this year.

Governance

The Melbourne Athenaeum committee met 11 times in 2014 (including the Annual General meeting). It formed 4 sub-committees: library, property, marketing and finance and audit. The management committee and each sub-committee reviewed and endorsed each written charter that outlines its objectives. 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 Melbourne Athenaeum manages three commercial tenancies in the building providing a stable ongoing income source that supports the Library operation. In 2014 a long term lease was finalized with HH Jewelry securing this income source well into the future.

The property sub committee's role in 2014 was primarily to manage tenant relationships, determine maintenance priorities, manage capital expenditure and oversee compliance issues.

Planning commenced to paint the building's façade, once again to celebrate the organisation's 175th birthday and is expected to be completed by November 2015. Discussion with the theatre operators to improve façade signage continues.

Donations and Grants

With Deductible Gift Recipient status, the organisation seeks tax deductible donations from members and friends through its Annual Giving Appeal. Through their generous support, The Melbourne Athenaeum Library received over \$7,000 in 2014 which contributes to improving the facilities and amenities of the library. The organisation will continue to upgrade the library shelving to the recycled Tasmanian oak in order to retain the



library's wonderful historic ambience with the (non-financial) support of Heritage Victoria. Thank you for your support.

The organisation is providing administrative and financial support to Pam Baragwanath's landmark history *These Walls Speak Volumes*. This second edition has received funding support from:

- RE Ross Charitable Trust
- Public Record Office Victoria
- Mechanics' Institute of Victoria
- The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated.

City of Melbourne and the Besen Family Foundation awarded grants towards the installation of *Illuminate - Athena*³ during White Night Melbourne 2015.

The Bistro D'Orsay has been a tenant in the building for close to 25 years. This year owners Ken Meere and John Tully have provided \$100 dining vouchers as lucky door prizes to some of our member events. They have also offered, on presentation of a current membership card, 10% off the total price of a dining bill to library members. The food is exceptional and we'd like to thank Ken and John for their support.

Indeed thank you to all our donors, funding partners and financial supporters.

The Readers' Walk

With our neighbors **Reader's Feast** and **Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller**, The Melbourne Athenaeum Library is promoting the precinct between Swanston and Russell

Street as *The Readers' Walk*. A website promoting events and activities by each organisation, as well as a unique installation titled *The Hands in Print* all serve to promote this booklover's precinct in Melbourne: City of Literature.

Our thanks also go to Kay Craddock and Mary Dalmau for their support and assistance in loaning equipment and for promoting library activities throughout the year.

Sue Westwood
Business Manager



Staff from left: Clare Murayama, James Baker, Tom Coleman, Sue Westwood, Rose Blustein, Lawana Coulson. Absent: Penny Cook, Katy Li, Anna Clatworthy

Loans by Genre 2014

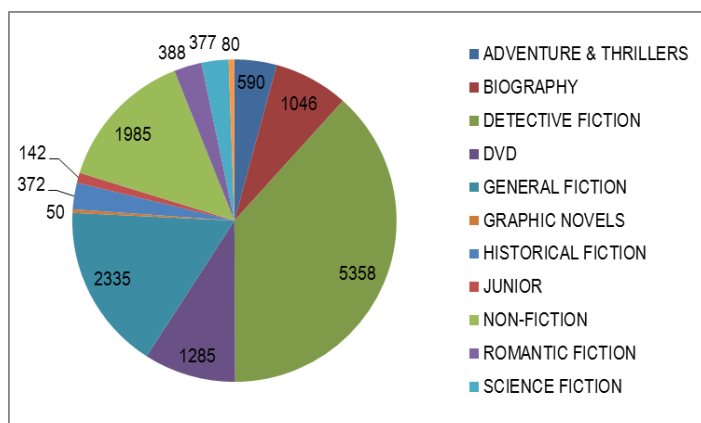


Image by Peter Ittak

Library Report

It has been a very busy year for the library. Once again Melbourne Open House held in July hosted over 3,400 visitors and also resulted in 22 new memberships.

Other events included the launch of Margaret Bowman's book 'Cultured Colonists: George Alexander Gilbert and his family, settlers in Port Phillip' in April hosted by ABC Radio National's Michael Cathcart with over 100 guests attending. In July we celebrated Nite Art and opened the library until 11.00 pm to showcase Kyoko Imazu's 'Tunnel Books & Illuminations' with over 250 people visiting the library during this time.

In August, an event in the Comedy Club co-hosted with 'Sisters in Crime' saw US crime writer Karin Slaughter speak about her writing to over 100 attendees. Later that month the library was overwhelmed by the book launch of 'Melbourne Subjective' with over 135 attendees.

On a practical note new procedures for the Circulation Desk were implemented and will now form the basis of training for all new staff and volunteers; a new Membership application form was been printed; crime and adventure fiction books were integrated into one sequence with separate genre stickers displayed on the spine labels for ease of browsing; and Saturday library hours were extended. We also continued weeding of the fiction collections to ensure that only the most relevant titles remain in the collection. In the latter part of the year we began gathering statistics around loans and member attendance with the view of extending library hours in the New Year. Also of interest has been our permanent trolley of discarded books for sale. Over \$500 has been generated with over 400 visitors looking for book bargains, some of whom have since become library members.

Library staff extended their professional development when they attended the Australian Library and Information Association Conference in September. This was a great opportunity to network with other librarians and to keep up to date with developments in mainstream libraries.

In November, I presented a paper to the Library History Forum at the State Library of New South Wales on the history of the Melbourne Athenaeum Library.

A decision was made by the Board to invest in a new eBook software program called Overdrive, used by most Australian public libraries providing access to a vast range of eBooks from popular Australian and overseas publishers. This will be launched in the library in February 2015.

Lastly I would like to take this opportunity to thank our professional and dedicated staff on their commitment and support throughout the year and also to our ever growing and professional group of volunteers who have done a magnificent job supporting all aspects of the library

Rose Blustein

Librarian



Celebrating her 2014 Community History Award for the Best Small Publication, from right Margaret Bowman, Marjorie Dalvean and Anne Marsden.



Archives volunteers Gerry Ely, Anne Marsden, Christine Perkins, Marjorie Dalvean, Anthony Perrins, Ruby Gray, Judy Chivers.

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 entertainment. She married Assistant Projectionist Lionel Degenhart.

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.

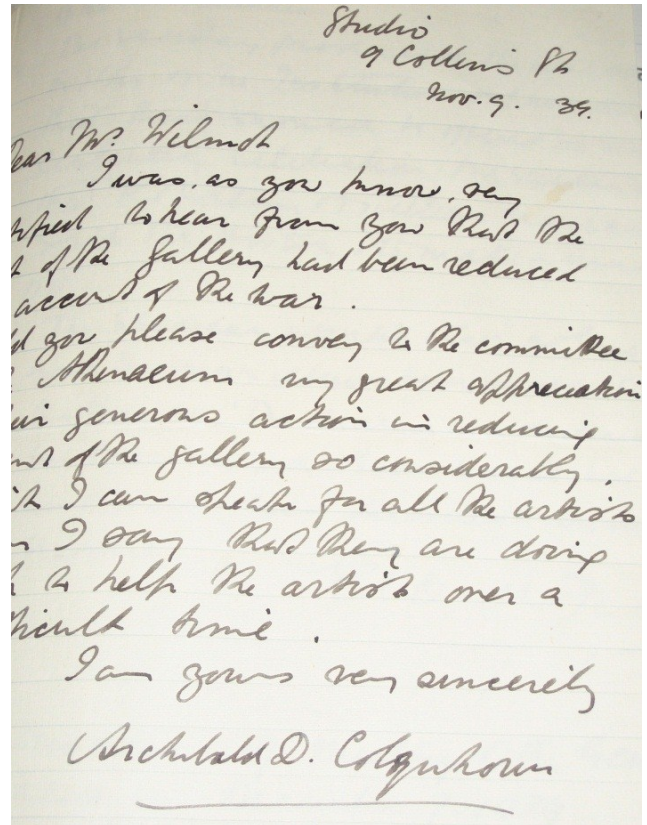
The archivist of Her Majesty's Theatre, Mary Murphy sent a box of 60 theatre programs from live performances at the Athenaeum Theatre dating from 1997 to 2007. The collection includes programs for Melbourne Theatre Company productions and solo performers such as Michael Feinstein.

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:

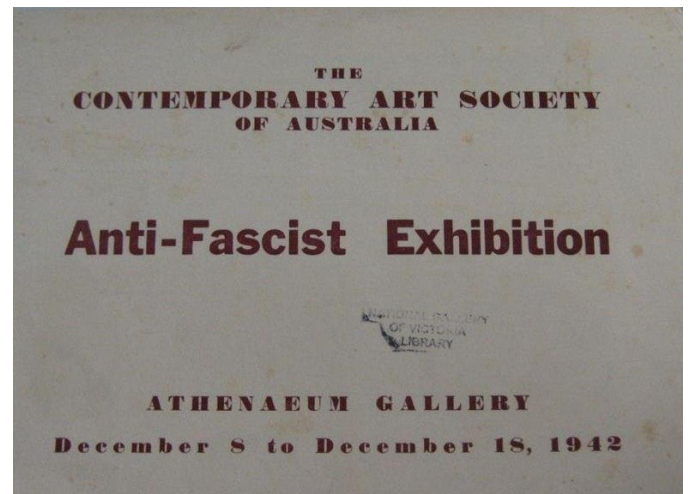
<http://victoriancollections.net.au>
(use search term: "Melbourne Athenaeum").

Marjorie Dalvean

Archivist

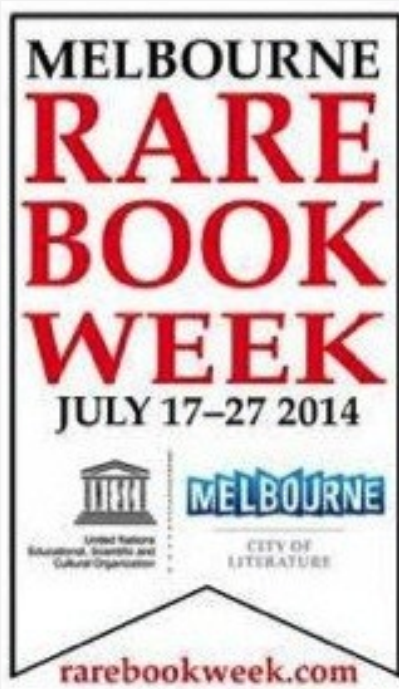
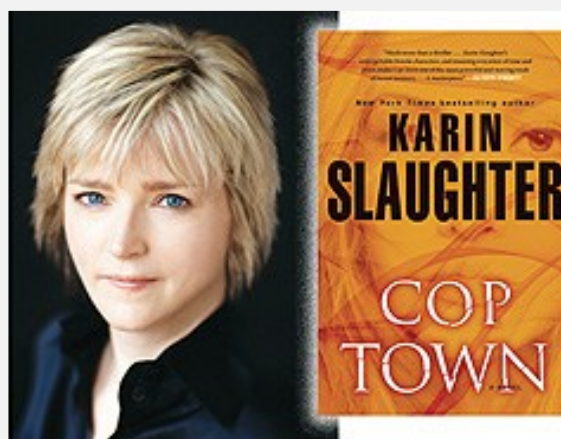
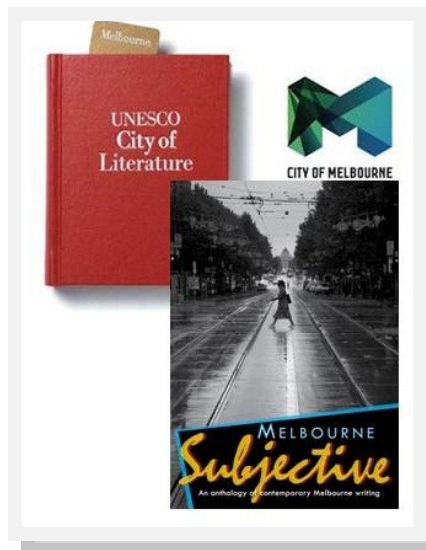


Letter from artist and teacher Archibald Colquhoun 1894—1983. He wrote to thank RWE Wilmot for the rental reduction "on account of the war". Exhibition catalogue and gallery (now Athenaeum 2).



THE MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM IN PICTURES 2014

Monthly events and activities included Kyoko Imazu artist residency, a book launch for Margaret Bowman's history of George Alexander Gilbert and the Cartridge Family's Melbourne Subjective, author talks and participation in major city events.



2014 Highlights

Events Program

George Alexander Gilbert and his Family: Settlers in Port Phillip Book Launch

Christine Durham “Unlocking My Brain”

Richard Overell—Rare Book Event on collecting Dust Jackets

Kyoko Imazu—Artist in Residence, exhibition and talks

Karin Slaughter in conversation with Vicki Petraitis and Sisters in Crime

Melbourne Subjective Book Launch

Mary Gaunt: Independent Colonial Woman Book Launch

Val McDermid in conversation with Angela Savage and Sisters in Crime

Launch of 175th Birthday Celebrations with Pam Baragwanath

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 Melbourne Athenaeum continues to sponsor a category in the Sisters in Crime 2014 Scarlett Stiletto Awards. Promoting women's crime writing, **“The Body in the Library”** category first prize was awarded to **Natalie Conyer** with **Fin J Ross** awarded the runner up prize. The stories can be accessed at www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au

2014 Annual Giving Appeal

Financial support by members and friends helps to improve our library services and facilities. The current program aims to upgrade the shelving facilities improving display and access while retaining the library's historic ambience.

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated acknowledges and thanks those members and friends who generously donated to our 2014 appeal. More than \$7,000 was received by 30 June 2014. Some donors asked to remain anonymous, and the list below reflects this.

The Public Fund Trustees are Mr Kevin Quigley, Mr Frank Hurley and Mr Esmond Pitt. Funding towards new shelving was approved.

The following donations were received:

\$500 or more

Mr Ian McBeath

Anon x 1

\$200 or more

Ms Jennifer Talbot

Mr Don Smith

Mrs Jean Hedges

Dr Harry Imber

Ms Sue Westwood

Anon x 3

\$100 or more

Ms Sophie Arnold, Mrs Pam Baragwanath,

Ms Susan Brewer, Mr Brian Salter-Duke

Mr David McLaren, Ms Lynette Payne, Mr

John Weickhardt, Anon x 12

Up to \$100

Ms Margaret Blackburn, Miss Jennifer

Blomfield, Mrs Janet Bond, Ms Lesley

Borland, Ms Louise Box, Mrs Mary Kay

Brown, Mr David Chandler, Miss J Crowle,

Ms Jo Dalvean, Mr Graeme Duke, Mr John

Holden, Ms Marilyn Jones, Ms Ruth

Leonards, Ms Effie Lisgaras, Mrs Joan

Robinson, Mr Richard Tate, Miss June

Thompson, Miss Amanda Witt, Ms Susan

Wooldridge, Anon x 32

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

Management Committee

The following people held Committee positions during 2014. Eleven meetings were held during 2014. No meeting was held in November 2014.

Members	Meetings Attended	Sub-Committees
Don Smith, President	9/11	Executive, Property
Michael Herman, Vice President Resigned April 2014	1/5	Executive, Property
Kevin Quigley, Treasurer	7/11	Executive, Finance & Audit
Sophie Arnold	5/11	Property
Andrew Barnes	7/11	Executive, Marketing & Communications, Finance & Audit
Agnes Cusack	10/11	Marketing & Communications
Christine Gibbs Appointed to casual vacancy April	4/6	Marketing & Communications
Matthew Gisborne	7/11	Library
Barbara Gliddon	9/11	Marketing & Communications
Anne Malloch	11/11	Library
Athanasios Tsakonas	6/11	Property



The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

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

Committee of Management

President: Don Smith
Vice President: Andrew Barnes
Treasurer: Kevin Quigley
Committee: Sophie Arnold
Agnes Cusack
Christine Gibbs
Matthew Gisborne
Barbara Gliddon
Michael Herman (resigned April 2014)
Anne Malloch
Athanasios Tsakonas

Athenaeum Staff Sue Westwood, Business Manager
Rose Blustein, Librarian
James Baker
Tom Coleman
Clare Murayama
Anna Clatworthy
Penny Cook
Katy Li
David Pryor (Accountant)
Caroline Debevc (Senior Bookkeeper)

Library volunteers

Aaron Cook
Norma Gates
Wallis Gandell
Emily Hyland
Lynne Johnson
Marilyn Jones
Joanna Kenny
Moyra McAllister
Anne Malloch
Pat Miller
Aaron Mitchel
Naomi Orr

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

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated
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Email: library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au
www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au

The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

Celebrating 175 years in 2015

Library Opening Hours 2015

Mon/Tues/Thurs	10.00am—6.00pm
Wed:	10.00am—8.00pm
Fri	10.00am—4.00pm
Sat:	10.00am—2.00pm

Annual Membership Subscription

Full:	\$99.00
Concession:	\$89.00

Membership benefits:

- A historic library located in the heart of Collins Street;
- The latest books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs;
- Victoria's finest Crime Fiction and Biography Collections;
- A growing collection of eBooks and free IT help for readers and tablets;
- Monthly member events including launches, talks and music programs;
- Free internet access;
- Friendly staff and a welcoming retreat.



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