



THE  
MELBOURNE  
ATHENÆUM  
LIBRARY

THE PLEASURE OF WORDS

175  
YEARS  
SINCE 1839

## **The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

Presented May 2016





**Melbourne's Cultural Heart:**

White Library, an installation by artist Ruth Johnstone for Rare Book Week, July 2015 (above)

The first minute book (pictured right), held in the Archives Collection of the Melbourne Athenaeum Inc.

Demonstrations of electricity were held in the Athenaeum Hall c. 1895



# **This Room is Equipped With** ***Edison Electric Light***

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**Do not attempt to light with  
match. Simply press switch  
on wall by the door.**

**The use of Electricity for lighting is in no way harmful  
to health, nor does it affect the soundness of sleep.**



# 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.

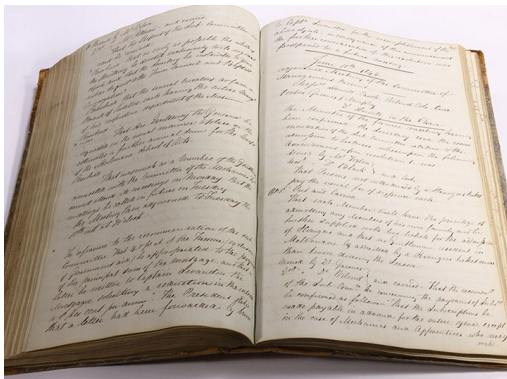
Mechanics' Institutes made major contributions to the cultural and social development of Victorian cities, providing accessible libraries, reading rooms with newspapers, lectures and classes. The Melbourne Mechanics' Institution was the leading cultural establishment of the new colony.

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 streets, has retained much of its historic charm where other sections of the street have made way for contemporary developments.

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

The organisation appreciates the ongoing patronage of the recently appointed Governor of Victoria, The Hon. Linda Dessau AM, continuing a tradition as old as the institution itself.



The first  
Minute Book.  
Photo by  
Peter Ittak

## President's Report

The last year has been one of celebration as the Melbourne Athenaeum reached its 175<sup>th</sup> birthday. The celebrations were many and varied and included the inaugural Marcus Clarke lecture series. The series was a great success with a host of thought-provoking speakers. A Marcus Clarke lecture will be delivered each year during History Week.

Other events and milestones in our 175<sup>th</sup> year include:

- Painting of the façade,
- Rebranding and a new logo,
- New membership cards,
- New greeting cards and postcards that celebrate the organisation's history,
- The development of a successful cultural program including an artist residency,
- Participation in *White Night Melbourne* and a music in the library series.

The expansion of the cultural series has been a highlight for the committee. The Athenaeum is now in a sound financial position, which has allowed a greater focus on expanding activities. The music series has been embraced by members, always booking out quickly and attracting highly-acclaimed musicians. It is rewarding to hear positive feedback about the pleasure of playing at the Ath. If you are planning to come to an event book early!

The library collection has been strengthened under Rose Blustein's direction. She has a clear eye on industry trends and members' reading habits, strengthening the collection based on both demand and market appraisal. This year will see a transformation of the fiction collection from genre-based to alphabetical listings. Genres will continue to be clearly identified with spine labels, but authors writing across genres (such as Alexander McCall Smith) will be shelved together. The committee has given its full support to the transformation and there will be plenty of signage and of course our wonderful staff and volunteers to help readers adapt to the change.

## Business Manager's Report

Retaining members and attracting new ones is front of mind for the committee. The broader cultural program has introduced a new audience to the benefits of membership and other marketing initiatives include:

- Improved and consistent communications to members;
- Expanded coverage of library activities through the city's What's On and media networks;
- Discount partnerships including Bistro d'Orsay.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Anne Malloch and Agnes Cusack, two committee members who have resigned during the year. Anne and Agnes have provided many years of valuable service both on the committee and as volunteers within the library.



As always the Athenaeum relies on a dedicated team of staff and volunteers to run a broad program of events and to all those involved, on behalf of the committee I thank you.

I look forward to the next year as we strengthen our library and cultural program.

*Don Smith*  
**President**

I was at a Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation breakfast event early in 2015 to celebrate its 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. The early start made a crowd warm-up necessary, and the MC devised a game to identify the oldest organisation in the room. All the delegates were asked to stand, then as each decade was announced; "Whose organisation is 90 years or younger?" those delegates had to sit down. As the decades passed, fewer were left standing. By 130 years there were less than 10 standing, but I knew the Melbourne Athenaeum Library had this one in the bag. Many CEOs present were astounded as more decades passed and still I stood. At 160 years the State Library of Victoria delegate sat down. They announced 170 years and, of course, I was the only one left standing. 2015 was a year I spent representing Melbourne's oldest cultural institution. It was a great privilege to support the Melbourne Athenaeum management committee in celebrating this significant milestone.

### **175<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

With support from the City of Melbourne, Besen Family Foundation and White Night Melbourne, the Melbourne Athenaeum commissioned a projection installation that was set up on the building's canopy during White Night 2015. Lisa Anderson and Olaf Meyer from Creative Multi Media created a work that shared the building's history to thousands of spectators for 12 wonderful hours.

A live music series was established in 2015 that has resonated with members and guests alike. Members have embraced the program held on Friday evenings and it books out faster than a Rolling Stones concert.

### **Marcus Clarke Lectures**

Journalist, author and committee member of the Melbourne Athenaeum, Marcus Clarke's place in the Athenaeum's history was recognised with a lecture series named in his honour. Deborah Cheetham AO, Peter Williams, Gilbert Rochecouste and Dr Andrew Lemon were invited to give lectures during October and November and each spoke about aspects of Melbourne's growth and

development including racial inequity, cultural history, community and sport. Thoughtful, passionate and personal, the program was lively and the audience rewarded with rich insights into what makes our remarkable city. A **Marcus Clarke** lecture will be delivered as an annual event.

### **Governance**

The Athenaeum management committee continues to meet and monitor the operation of the building and library through 11 meetings each year and its four sub-committees: property, marketing, library and finance and audit. The sub-committee reporting mechanisms continue to improve proceedings at the monthly meetings.

Committee members and the sub-committees they serve on are noted elsewhere in the report. Committee member Anne Malloch, who had served on the committee for eight years, retired in October. Her professional experience in staff management through her role at the City of Melbourne supported the library operation and the review process that was undertaken in 2010. The management committee thanks Anne for her contribution and is very glad that she has retained her library membership.

### **Building**

The property sub-committee's role in 2015 was to identify maintenance priorities, manage capital expenditure and oversee compliance issues. The program to paint the building's façade was developed and completed just prior to December. This was in effect the Melbourne Athenaeum's gift to the city, and the result, which included the painting and restoration of Athena and adding gold leaf to relief lettering at the top of the building, is a source of some pride. Painting of the foyer and other interior sections will continue throughout 2016.

### **Grants and Project Management**

The Athenaeum contributed financial and project management support to Pam Baragwanath and Ken James' landmark history *These Walls Speak Volumes*.



Funding was provided by the following philanthropic organisations:

- RE Ross Charitable Trust
- Public Record Office Victoria
- Heritage Council of Victoria
- Scottish Cultural Heritage Foundation of Victoria;
- Professor Wallace Kirsop
- Mechanics' Institute of Victoria
- The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

The book, weighing in at just under 3kg and over 700 pages, is the most comprehensive catalogue of the MI movement in Victoria and is a work of commitment, perseverance and dedication by the authors.

### **Annual Giving Appeal**

Members again gave generously to the Athenaeum's annual giving appeal, which raised in excess of \$12,500 in 2015. The tax deductible donations are held separately to the organisation's operational funding. Contributions benefit the library and grants made from the Public Fund are considered by independent Trustees. The library's shelving enhancement project continues, and over the past five years over 800 lineal metres of shelving has been replaced. The staff, volunteers and management committee once again thank all of our valued donors.

*Sue Westwood*

**Business Manager**





#### Library & Administration Staff:

L-R: Clare Murayama, James Baker, Tom Coleman, Sue Westwood, Rose Blustein, Lawana Coulson.

## Library Report

2015 once again proved to be a very busy year for the library.

In February we launched the OverDrive application for eBooks which allows borrowers to download titles via the library's webpage. This application is used by most Australian public libraries and provides access to a vast range of eBooks from popular Australian and overseas publishers.

We also participated in *White Night* – Melbourne's all-night cultural event. Well-known artist Lisa Anderson designed the project, which saw three inflated Athena figures standing on the Athenaeum building canopy.

Through Treasurer Kevin Quigley's initiative we commenced a series of musical performances by recent graduates of the Victorian College of the Arts. Held on a bi-monthly basis, they have proved extremely popular with all performances booked out within hours of their announcement.



As part of Rare Book Week the library launched the *Hands in Print* initiative in July. *Hands in Print* is a series of artworks by Bridget Nicholson, based on casting or drawing the hands of contemporary local and international authors including Mem Fox, Thomas Keneally, Kate Grenville, Michael Connelly, Graeme Base, Geoffrey Blainey, Christos Tsiolkas, Stuart Macbride, Andy Griffiths, David Malouf, Alex Miller, Ian Rankin and Kerry Greenwood.

The full collection of 12 works will be on permanent display at the Melbourne Athenaeum. The initiative was developed by Mary Dalmau of *Readers' Feast* and supported by *Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller* and the *Melbourne Athenaeum Library*.

The library held regular monthly events including '*Collecting Paperbacks*' with Richard Overell; *White Library* with Ruth Johnstone; Jenny Herbert discussing her new book - Jenny Herbert discussing her new book '*In the shadow of a hero*' and the very successful Marcus Clarke lecture series celebrating the Melbourne Athenaeum's 175<sup>th</sup> birthday.

On a practical level 2015 also saw the launch of the new crime fiction book club and the ESmart initiative which has developed protocols for safe online access. We recruited 145 new members and generated 13,000 loans.

Our team of professional and dedicated staff and volunteers have ensured that the library grows from strength to strength each year providing a high quality of service to our members.

*Rose Blustein*

Librarian

## Archives Report

### Enquiries

The Archives volunteers are always pleased to assist anyone who asks for research help because often our detective work reveals new information about the past history of this amazing institution. In 2015 we received

several enquiries from people researching forebears, the most interesting being relatives of Henry Biers who was associated with the committee from 1865 to 1886. Henry became vice-president in 1869 and then President from 1870 to 1873. It was Henry who first moved to have the name changed from Mechanics' Institution to Melbourne Athenaeum in 1872. He laid the foundation stone you see as you walk up the stairs, in 1872. Henry's great-granddaughter visited the archives in December.

A request for information about plays by Arnold Bennett that were performed by the Melbourne Repertory Company and directed by Gregan McMahon at the Athenaeum Theatre in the early 1900s resulted in an article being published in the Arnold Bennett Society's Winter 2015 newsletter.

Visiting groups to the Archives room included students from RMIT and the Berwick Mechanics Institute. For groups a short history about the organisation in general and the special history of the library are usually accompanied by suitable images and a tour of the pictures exhibition in the foyer.

### **Purchases**

The purchase of the five-volume, hard-copy edition of Port Phillip Gazette 1838-1841 has proved to be an invaluable research tool. It was the first mechanically-produced newspaper in the colony and had strong connections to the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution as the printer, Thomas Strode, was a member of the first committee, and its editor, George Arden, one of its first subscribers. Volunteer Gerry Ely is working through the collection recording references to the men who were elected to the first committee.



**Archives Volunteers:** Gerry Ely, Anne Marsden, Christine Perkins, Marjorie Dalvean, Anthony Perrin, Ruby Gray, Judith Chivers (absent: Natalie Chiodo, Margaret Bowman)

### **Archives website**

The Archives website was redesigned and is now more in keeping with the library website. Sections about the Art Gallery and Museum records have been updated. The archives team remain unable to locate the final resting place of the original artefacts. The Archives website can be accessed from the Library website under the "History" menu or directly at [www.mahistory.org.au](http://www.mahistory.org.au)

### **Events for our volunteers**

Our lively volunteer Judy Chivers, who works on the theatre program project, attended a Local History Workshop at the Royal Historical Society of Victoria in November. Our volunteers also enjoyed visits to the Police Museum at the World Trade Centre in Flinders Street.

### **Awards**

The Archives participated in a program managed by Museum Victoria and was short-listed for the Small Museums' awards for our theatre programs collection, which is being gradually added to the Victorian Collection's online database. The work is ongoing. Search using <https://victoriancollections.net.au> and then type "Melbourne Athenaeum".

### **Publications**

Margaret Bowman continues to write about people associated with our past. Her excellent story "Writers and Readers: Melbourne Bohemians and its Athenaeum" describes a period of Melbourne's history known for the creative clubs such as the Yorrick Club, a group of creative writers that included Marcus Clarke (a committee member of the Melbourne Athenaeum from 1876 to 1879).

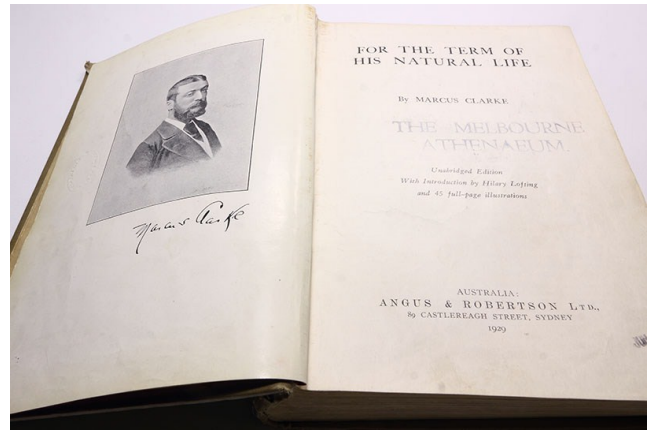
Margaret received a commendation for her article in the Victorian Community History Awards in October. The awards are managed by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.

Anne Marsden, who received a Creative Fellowship from the State Library of Victoria in 2014, continued her research project about each of the fifty men who formed the first committee of the Melbourne Mechanics' Institution in 1839. The publication is due to be published mid-2016.



## Celebrating 175 years

For the 175<sup>th</sup> celebrations the Archives provided background research for the verandah-top projections created by artist-in-residence, Lisa Anderson, as part of Melbourne's White Night celebration. Lisa's inspiration for her dancing ghosts was the silk program from an entertainment of tableaux held in the old hall in 1884. A 175<sup>th</sup> birthday souvenir colouring book includes graphic designs of early programs held in the archives.



## Future projects

The Victorian Collections database, which currently holds records of our theatre programs, will eventually include our complete database. Work is progressing (slowly) to upgrade the records so that everyone will be able to see the entire archives collection online.

We are lucky to have the services of an amazing photographer, Peter Ittak. Peter, who is an experienced and brilliant photographer, visits the archives when he isn't photographing wildflowers or mountains steeped in cloud, to record our strange assortment of artefacts – and anything else we need at times.

## Marjorie Dalvean

### Archivist

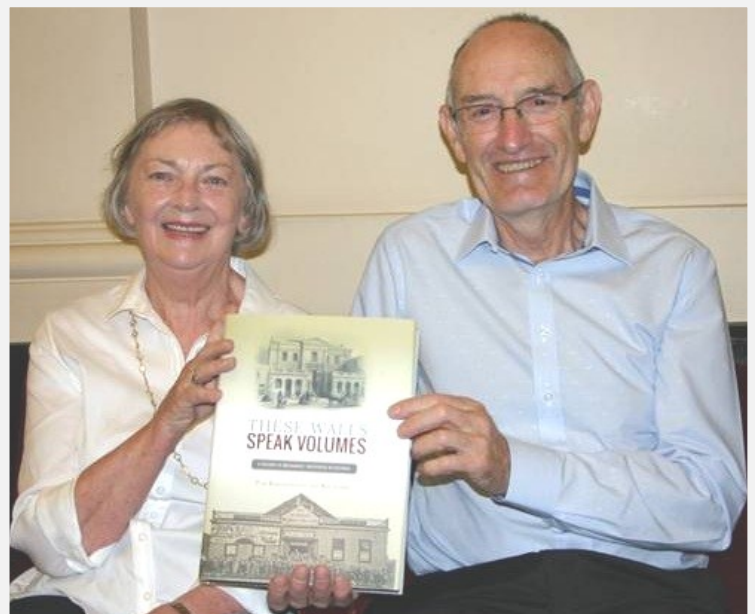
Marcus Clarke book, Gaunt barometer, postal scales, tobacco tin.. All photographed by Peter Ittak.





# THE MELBOURNE ATHENAEUM IN PICTURES 2015

Monthly events and activities included Ruth Johnstone's *White Library* installation, a book launch for *These Walls Speak Volumes* by Pam Baragwanath & Ken James, the Marcus Clarke Lectures and *Illuminate—Athena*<sup>3</sup> by Lisa Anderson, Support for the Sisters in Crime Scarlet Stiletto Awards *Body in the Library*, façade painting.



## 2015 Highlights

*Illuminate—Athena*<sup>3</sup>

White Night Installation by Lisa Anderson

Commissioned artwork by Nicholas Jones  
using historic quarterly book lists

*In the Shadow of a Hero* & writing  
historical fiction by Jenny Herbert

Destinations with a Difference: Travel talk  
with Denise & Rainer Kallender

Hands in Print Launch with Readers Feast,  
Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller and  
special guests Graeme Base, Andy  
Griffiths, Kerry Greenwood

White Library—Artist talk and installation  
with Ruth Johnston for Rare Book Week

Collecting Paperbacks—with Richard  
Overell for Rare Book Week

Music performances featuring, Ultrafox,  
Inventi Ensemble and Saverio Quartet (2)

Marcus Clarke lectures with Deborah  
Cheetham AO, Gilbert Rochcouste, Peter  
Williams, Dr Andrew Lemon

Archives received a nomination for the  
cataloguing award from Museums  
Australia (Vic) Collections.

The Melbourne Athenaeum continues to  
sponsor a category in the Sisters in Crime  
2015 Scarlett Stiletto Awards. Promoting  
women's crime writing, "The Body in the  
Library" category first prize was awarded to  
Jenny Spence with Katie Mills awarded the  
runner up prize. The stories can be accessed  
at [www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au).

## Vale Phyllis Eddy

Honorary member Phyllis Eddy was a  
member from 1944—2015. She was  
Treasurer from 1991—2001, steering the  
organisation through some very difficult  
times. Former president Peter Lovell  
described her contribution as invaluable and  
her counsel wise and cautious.

## 2015 Annual Giving Appeal

Financial support by members and friends  
helps to improve our library services and  
facilities. The ongoing program to upgrade  
shelving has improved the display and  
access to the collection. The Melbourne  
Athenaeum Incorporated acknowledges and  
thanks those members and friends who  
generously donated to our 2015 appeal.  
More than \$12,000 was received by 30 June  
2015.

The Public Fund Trustees are Mr Kevin  
Quigley, Mr Frank Hurley and Mr Esmond  
Pitt. The following donations were received:

\$4,500 or more

Prof Wallace Kirsop

\$1,000 or more

Macquarie Group Foundation

\$500 or more

Anon x 1

\$200 or more

Ms Louise Box

Mrs Jean Hedges

Dr Harry Imber

Mr Ian McBeath

Mr Don Smith

Ms Jennifer Talbot

Ms Sue Westwood

Anon x 3

\$100 or more

Dr Matthew Gisborne, Ms Lynette Payne, Mrs  
Pam Baragwanath, Mr David Chandler, Mr  
David McLaren, Mr Brad Miles, Ms Janet  
O'Hehir, Mr Kenneth Parker, Mrs Victoria  
Prentice, Ms Judith Roberts, Mrs Dorothy  
Underwood, Ms Christine Gibbs, Mr Maurice  
Joyce, Ms Agnes Cusack, Anon x 10

Up to \$100

Ms Jessica Adams, Mr Jack Boustein, Miss  
Charlotte Cameron, Mrs Kylie Cameron, Mrs  
Eileen Cunningham, Mr John Holden, Mr  
Greg Hansen, Mr Graeme Duke, Mr Mark  
Churchyard, Miss June Thompson, Dr  
Therese Keogh, Mr Richard Tate, Miss  
Amanda Witt, Anon x 24



# The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

## Management Committee

The following people held Committee positions and eleven meetings were held during 2015. No meeting was held in February and November 2015.

	Members	Meetings Attended	Sub-Committees
	Don Smith, President	10/11	Executive, Property
	Kevin Quigley, Treasurer	8/11	Executive, Finance & Audit
	Sophie Arnold	5/11	Property
	Andrew Barnes	9/11	Executive, Marketing & Membership, Finance & Audit
	Agnes Cusack	6/11	Marketing & Membership
	Christine Gibbs	10/11	Marketing & Membership
	Matthew Gisborne	8/11	Library
	Barbara Gliddon	8/11	Marketing & Membership
	Anne Malloch	5/9	Library
	Athanasios Tsakonas	4/11	Property



# The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated

**Patron:** The Hon Alex Chernov AC QC, Governor of Victoria  
The Hon Linda Dessaux AM, Governor of Victoria (from July 15)

## Committee of Management

**President:** Don Smith  
**Vice President:** Andrew Barnes  
**Treasurer:** Kevin Quigley  
**Committee:** Sophie Arnold  
Agnes Cusack  
Christine Gibbs  
Matthew Gisborne  
Barbara Gliddon  
Anne Malloch (to October 2015)  
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)  
Lawana Coulson

## Library volunteers

Perry Anderson  
Agnes Cusack  
Aaron Cook  
Norma Gates  
Wallis Gandell  
Emily Hyland  
Lynne Johnson  
Marilyn Jones  
Moyra McAllister  
Pat Miller  
Sophie Wright

## Archive volunteers

**Marjorie Dalvean**  
Margaret Bowman  
Natalie Chiodo  
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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Email: [library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au](mailto:library@melbourneathenaeum.org.au)  
[www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au](http://www.melbourneathenaeum.org.au)



# **The Melbourne Athenaeum Incorporated**

## ***The Pleasure of Words***

### **Library Opening Hours 2016**

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;
- Live music performances, lectures, book clubs held regularly;
- Free internet access;
- Friendly staff and a welcoming retreat.



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