

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends

The appointment of a new Director-General is an important milestone in the life of the National Library. We are pleased to include in this edition of the Friends newsletter a profile of our new 'DG', Dr Marie-Louise Ayres, who commenced her new role on 2 March 2017.

In recognition of her sterling service to the Library and the Friends, your Committee has conferred Life Membership of the Friends on our previous DG, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich AM. Anne-Marie has shown unceasing support for the Friends over many years, both in her capacity as Director-General and as a member of the Friends since the launch of the organisation in 1990.

Attracting new and retaining existing members is a challenge for any organisation and the Friends is no different. In February this year, the Friends Committee adopted a membership strategy that focuses, in addition to our valued existing members, on new member target groups (such as students using the Library, visiting researchers, Special Collections readers, people who attend Library events and Library staff).

Other groups we hope to attract include family and local history researchers, people interested in oral history and individuals from the broader ACT region and interstate.

We will also implement a broad promotional campaign. This will include a Friends Facebook page, special events for Friends and new event partnerships with other cultural organisations.

Of course, the main incentive for membership continues to be the support the Friends give to the Library in fulfilling its important role in Australia's cultural life.

Best wishes

Gary Kent  
Chair

## FRIENDS NEWS



Dr Marie-Louise Ayres

### Introducing Dr Marie-Louise Ayres

The National Library of Australia approaches the third decade of the century in remarkably good shape.

The new Director-General of the Library, Dr Marie-Louise Ayres, attributes the Library's success in very large part to its talented and committed staff, and the exceptional Library workplace culture and values, nurtured over a long period.

Marie-Louise has herself made a very significant contribution to the Library's achievements over many years, especially in harnessing the enormous opportunities presented by digitisation and the internet.

The Arts Minister acknowledged Marie-Louise's work when announcing her five-year appointment. He remarked that Marie-Louise had 'led the development of transformative digital services' and 'worked to increase the prominence of the National Library's collection by leading its online archive, Trove'.

Marie-Louise says that the Library has a long history of pioneering the delivery of library services, and that she was lucky to arrive just when an understanding of the potential of digitisation was developing a head of steam.

Marie-Louise was born in Perth and moved with her family to Canberra in 1967. Marie-Louise received all her schooling in Canberra, first at Holy Trinity, Curtin, and then St Clare's College. She describes herself as a bookish child, who enjoyed writing and reading, spending many happy hours in the local Curtin Library. She completed years 11 and 12 at Stirling College, where she met her future husband, Russell Ayres.

Marie-Louise obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of New England, focusing on women writers, including Jane Austen and George Eliot. Marie-Louise completed the Honours component of her degree at the Australian National University, basing her thesis on another woman writer, Emily Dickinson.

In 1989, Marie-Louise embarked on a scholarship PhD on Australian women poets. She chose as her subjects Rosemary Dobson (who became a close friend), Dorothy Green, Dorothy Hewett and J.S. Harry. During her PhD, she lectured, tutored, and was the sole researcher for Susan Lever's *Oxford Anthology of Women's Verse*, spending many happy hours in the Petherick Reading Room scouring anthologies and journals for forgotten poets.

While she relished these research opportunities, she also realised that a long-term research career was not for her. Serendipitously, her doctoral supervisor, David Brook, put her in touch with the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) librarian, Lynn Hard, who was seeking a curator for the ADFA collection, which had a strong focus on modern Australian literature.

After one week in this role, Marie-Louise knew that this was a job tailor-made for her. She remained at ADFA for eight years, heading the contemporary Australian writers/poets collection, also working in library management and curating other special collections. Marie-Louise completed an ADFA General Staff Fellowship, resulting in her monograph on 13 special collections libraries in the US, UK and Ireland, published in 1999.

While at ADFA, Marie-Louise played a major role as Executive Officer directing the development of AustLit, which brought together more than a dozen literary databases. It was her first real foray into the type of work that would subsequently define her career: helping the National Library promote and expand broad and easy access to major national collections of Australian literature. This required strong project-management and organisational skills, which Marie-Louise considers she inherited from her engineer father, as well as his passion for fixing and building.

In early 2002, Marie-Louise commenced work at the Library, as project manager for the online Music Australia service, launched in 2004. She also worked on many of the Library's first-generation digital delivery systems. She was appointed Assistant Curator in the Manuscripts section in 2005, under the leadership of Graeme Powell. Marie-Louise succeeded Graeme as Curator when he retired in 2006, also assuming responsibility for the Pictures collection when the two branches merged in 2010.

In 2007, Marie-Louise travelled to North America courtesy of a Friends of the National Library Travelling Fellowship to investigate new developments in archival collection management. She remains grateful to the Friends for sponsoring this trip. It did indeed contribute, as she foreshadowed at the time, to 'real plans and achievements in our collection management over the next few years'.

Following the retirement of Warwick Cathro in 2011, Marie-Louise became Head of the Resource Sharing Division,

later renamed National Collections Access Division. In this capacity, she helped pioneer the development of Trove.

Marie-Louise loves every aspect of the Library's work and considers herself privileged to have been part of the institution's management team for five years under Anne-Marie Schwirtlich's leadership.

Marie-Louise recognises the challenges posed by the current climate of restrained government expenditure. She points to the personal toll this has taken on individual Library staff, and acknowledges the need to extract more and more value from existing resources.

Key among Marie-Louise's priorities over the next few years is the further enhancement and expansion of Trove. She is naturally delighted with the government's recent decision to provide additional funding for the Library's digital endeavours.

Marie-Louise's other ambitions for the Library are too numerous to list here. They include continuing to increase the accessibility of the collections to those who cannot come to the Library in person and the ongoing task of filling important collection gaps, including the papers and other records of community groups (and their leaders) currently under-represented in the collection.

Marie-Louise considers herself fortunate to be at the helm during the celebrations in 2018 of the fiftieth anniversary of the Library building, and the associated major exhibition commemorating Captain James Cook.

From there, the Director-General and her professional and committed staff will take on the challenges of charting the Library's course into the next 50 years.

*Gary Kent*

## Membership Fees

The Committee recently agreed to undertake a review of Friends membership fees. Despite several reviews over the past ten years, membership fees have not increased at all since 2003. With ever increasing administrative costs, balancing the annual budget while continuing to support the National Library through our Fellowships and other measures is becoming more difficult. The outcome of this review will be advised in the September issue of the Friends newsletter.

## The Lake View Book Club

The Lake View Book Club meets in the Friends Lounge at the National Library on the last Tuesday of each month from 6.15–7.45pm. It is open to all Friends of the National Library, so feel free to come and join in. If you have any questions, please contact [kathryncole@grapevine.net.au](mailto:kathryncole@grapevine.net.au).

Forthcoming titles for discussion are:

- Tuesday 27 June—*The Good People* by Hannah Kent
- Tuesday 25 July—*Middlemarch* by George Eliot
- Tuesday 29 August—*The Dressmaker* by Rosalie Ham

## RECENT FRIENDS EVENTS

### Révolution Française: A White Gloves Evening

As a history lover, I was delighted to immerse myself in the original French Revolutionary pamphlets, including proclamations, bills, speeches, reports, ordinances, tracts, satires and songs, at the Friends White Gloves evening on 9 February. The occasion brought together people with an interest in French culture and history and particularly the French Revolution. Appropriately, the evening was co-sponsored by the Alliance Française de Canberra.

In August 1789, the National Assembly declared that 'all citizens can speak, write and print freely' and the whole system of state censorship began to break down. A mania to produce and read pamphlets and periodicals swept across France.

The Library's Nikki White explained that, over 50 years, the National Library has acquired one of the most substantial collections of original French Revolutionary pamphlets in the Southern Hemisphere, the core having been bought from a Dutch bookseller in 1963. Cataloguing finished in 2010. As she said:

*Despite their age, the pamphlets are in very good condition, being made of rag or cotton-based paper and printed by the letterpress process. They consist of proclamations, bills, speeches, reports, ordinances, tracts, satires and even songs related to the Revolution, the Convention, the meetings of the various assemblies, currency, education, pensions, the trial of Louis XVI and what to do with the royal family, as well as the Revolution as experienced by France's colonies. There is no comparable collection of original Revolutionary pamphlets in any other Australian library or in the Southern Hemisphere. One of the most appealing things about the collection, which enhances its importance, is the vivid picture of the times that emerges.*

Displayed on eight tables, Library staff had carefully chosen from the abundance of materials to showcase contemporary accounts, satirical cartoons and items about the meeting of the Estates-General and the fall of the Bastille; the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen; the storming of the Tuileries, and related Revolutionary songs, calendars and propaganda; the flight, arrest and trial of the royal family; and key figures in the Revolution.



Collection items on display at Révolution Française



James Ferguson, Tony Koukoulas, Margaret Goode, Judith Eisner and Lyn Adams at Révolution Française

We each received a listing of all the items displayed, with the French title and an English translation, call number and catalogue number. At each table, knowledgeable and friendly staff and volunteers were happy to offer more information on each item and to turn the pages.

I was thrilled to see the documents relating to the Declaration of the Rights of Man, as well as the Minutes of the National Assembly containing the articles from the Declaration it adopted and those for the constitution and organisation of legislative power.

The song sheet for the *Marseillaise* was displayed, originally a song written for the Rhine army. And the volumes of satirical cartoons were confronting, vicious and to the point.

A glass of wine to sip, cheese to nibble and others to talk to in the Friends Lounge—it could not have been a more rewarding evening.

*Ingrid Moses*

To read more about the collection:

[nla.gov.au/selected-library-collections/french-revolutionary-pamphlet-collection](http://nla.gov.au/selected-library-collections/french-revolutionary-pamphlet-collection)

[nla.gov.au/behind-the-scenes/2010/05/25/french-revolutionary-pamphlets-finally-all-catalogued](http://nla.gov.au/behind-the-scenes/2010/05/25/french-revolutionary-pamphlets-finally-all-catalogued)

### Coffee with the Curator: *Athol Shmith Fashion Photographs*

Led by Curator Dr Susannah Helman, about 20 Friends enjoyed a delightful tour of the *Athol Shmith Fashion Photographs* exhibition on display in the Library's Treasures Gallery.

Shmith was born in 1914 in Melbourne. He got his start in photography when his father gave him a camera during his teenage years and a hobby quickly became a career. His early work included wedding photographs, theatre stills and portraits of celebrities visiting the (then) Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Shmith's work appeared in fashion and society magazines and he worked for department store Myer as well as for boutiques. He was also commissioned for private portraits. He was possibly Australia's finest ever fashion photographer.

Athol Shmith donated a substantial body of his work to the National Library in 1979. The Library's collection consists of 350 photographs, 172 negatives and 197 transparencies.

Although the exhibition is quite small, comprising about 20 large prints and five sheets of negatives, it showcases Shmith's fashion photography over three decades, from the 1950s to the 1970s, and is drawn entirely from the Library's collection.

Shmith's subjects are invariably elegant, graceful and sometimes experimental. Over the years, his photos captured a world of fashion: from shirt to shift dresses, miniskirts to wet-look boots.

Shmith's influence on Australian photography was extended when, in the 1970s, he took up a position as Head of the Photography Department at Prahran College of Advanced Education (now Swinburne University of Technology). His students there included eminent photographers Bill Henson and Carol Jerrems.

After the tour, Susannah joined the group in the Friends Lounge for morning tea and continued the discussion informally. We learned that one of the people on the tour had, as a school student, visited Shmith's studio in Collins Street as part of a school excursion in the 1960s!

*Kathryn Cole*

*Athol Shmith Fashion Photographs* is on display in the Library's Treasures Gallery until 17 July 2017.

## FRIENDS DISCOUNT CODE FOR NATIONAL LIBRARY EVENTS

To claim your 15 per cent discount on ticketed National Library events, bookings must be made online at [nla.gov.au/bookings](http://nla.gov.au/bookings) and the discount code **FRWIN17** entered when booking. This code is valid from **1 June to 31 August 2017** and does not need to be entered for Friends events or events that are free of charge.

## NATIONAL LIBRARY BOOKSHOP SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRIENDS

In conjunction with the Library's Bookshop, the Friends are pleased to announce a special offer for members who make a purchase using the National Library's online bookshop.

For any purchase made by a Friend between 1 June 2017 and 31 August 2017, they will receive a free copy of *The Quintessential Bird: The Art of Betty Temple Watts*. This offer is in addition to the usual Friends discount and any other offers advertised on the Bookshop website. To claim your free copy of *The Quintessential Bird* and your 15 per cent discount with all online purchases, use the promotional code **FRWINT17** at checkout. This code is valid from **1 June to 31 August 2017**.



## FRIENDS EVENTS

Bookings: [nla.gov.au/events](http://nla.gov.au/events) or 02 6262 1698



Blenheim Palace, courtesy Sue Ebury

### Visionary or Vandal? Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and the English Landscape

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown is famous for transforming the English landscape. Who was this genius? On the 300th anniversary of his birth, Sue Ebury describes with photographs and documents how the Georgian gentry lived on their estates, spectacularly designed by the most fashionable landscape gardener architect of the times.

*In association with the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS)*

Thursday 6 July, 6pm

Theatre

\$15 Friends and AGHS members, \$20 non-members  
(includes refreshments)



*Children of the New China*, Beijing: People's Fine Art Publishing, 1950, [nla.cat-vn6298256](http://nla.cat-vn6298256)

### Coffee with the Curator: *Waving the Red Flag*

Join Curator Dr Nathan Woolley for a tour of the new Collections-in-Focus display in the Treasures Gallery, *Waving the Red Flag: Chinese Posters, 1949–1976*, followed by morning tea in the Friends Lounge.

Friday 4 August, 10.30am

Treasures Gallery

\$15 members (max. 20 guests)