

Sydney University and the Mitchell Library

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Last year marked the centenary of the death of David Scott Mitchell on 24 July 1907. His death enabled the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales to acquire the magnificent collection of Australiana and south-west Pacific material that he had bequeathed to them. Effectively it marked the point at which the Mitchell Library began its illustrious existence, although the actual building was not opened until 1910. The State Library took a number of steps in 2007 to commemorate Mitchell's death. A superb exhibition focusing on Mitchell was followed in December by the launch of the centenary history of the Mitchell Library by Barry Jones, the historian and former federal minister.¹ Curiously, these events escaped the attention of the University of Sydney, despite its close connections with Mitchell himself, and with the Library that he brought into being. This paper provides an opportunity to repair this omission and I would like to thank the Arts Association for giving me the opportunity to do so.

It is appropriate that the Sydney University Arts Association should have taken such an initiative because the relationship between the Mitchell and the University revolved above all around the Faculty of Arts. Indeed, it might have been appropriate to substitute the name of the Faculty for that of the University in the title of this talk. It was from the staff of this Faculty, more than any other, that academic members of the Library Board which had responsibilities for the Mitchell were drawn. Arts graduates were also numbered among the Mitchell's staff. Moreover, countless Arts students spent long hours in the reading rooms, as did academics. Board members, Library staff

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and readers, each in a different way, brought the two institutions together and I propose in this talk to examine their contributions, focusing initially on the years up to the 1960s.

Before doing so it needs to be remembered that the Mitchell Library's founder, the complex and not fully understandable David Scott Mitchell, had close connections with Sydney University.² Indeed, he fills a position of historical significance in the annals of the University. In October 1852, along with 24 other students, he became one of its first matriculants.³ After narrowly escaping being sent down in first year for performing poorly in classics and mathematics and answering no questions in physics, he went on to complete his B.A. degree, making up for his initial adolescent errancy by gaining results of a relatively high order. He thus earned a place among the first batch of seven students who graduated in February 1856.

Mitchell, however, could scarcely be regarded as one of the University's typical products. A self-indulgent man, he managed throughout his life to escape the burdens of paid employment. He fitted the original definition of 'gentleman' and lived on wealth inherited from his father, Dr James Mitchell, a well-known Sydney medical practitioner and Hunter River entrepreneur. His was a leisured existence and for long he enjoyed the pleasures of high society in Sydney, playing cards at the Australian Club, dining at Government House and watching cricket. His life-style changed following the deaths, first of his father, then of his mother, and the breaking of his engagement to Emily Manning, daughter of Sir William Manning, the prominent judge and Chancellor of Sydney University from 1878 to 1895.⁴ Deeply hurt by these and other misfortunes, David retired to his house at 17 Darlinghurst Road, where he found solace and security in the protective world of books that had always interested him. He became a bibliophile and began purchasing rare works, mainly of English literature, before concentrating exclusively on much prized printed works and manuscripts relating to Australia and the south-west Pacific. While not a complete recluse he centred his life on his collections, which gradually took possession of him.

Mitchell's acquisitive instincts were fostered from 1893 by H. C. L. Anderson, the newly appointed Principal Librarian. His

plans to expand the Library's holdings of Australiana were thwarted by Mitchell, whose financial means exceeded those of the Library. Anderson astutely turned the competitor into a benefactor by withdrawing from the field and encouraging Mitchell's pursuits, in the hope that Mitchell, who had no immediate family, might leave his collections to the Library.⁵ This was a real gamble with potentially serious consequences for the Library if it failed, but Anderson held his nerve and carried off what by any standards was a major coup. In 1898 Mitchell agreed to bequeath his collection to the Library and later provided a capital sum of £70, 000, the interest on which was available for further purchases.

At one stage, however, Anderson feared that Sydney University might prove his undoing. The Mitchell bequest was contingent upon the collection being housed in the proposed National Library building in Sydney. Unfortunately, successive governments refused to provide the necessary funding and Mitchell grew increasingly restive, threatening to withdraw his offer unless his wishes were honoured. Rumours circulated that he contemplated giving his collection to the Fisher Library, which was completed in 1910. It was said that he was encouraged by Sir Normand MacLaurin, Chancellor from 1896 until 1914. The thought may well have crossed Mitchell's mind, for he viewed the University with affection, but there is no evidence to suggest that a formal approach was made, or that the matter came before Senate.⁶ In the event, the day was saved by another distinguished Sydney graduate, Sir Joseph Carruthers, who was keenly interested in Australian history and wrote a book on Captain James Cook. It was he, while Premier of New South Wales, who intervened at a critical moment, found a site for the Mitchell and arranged for the construction of a building designed solely for the Mitchell collection.⁷

Meanwhile, links of another kind were in process of being forged between University and Library thanks to the presence of professors on the Library Board. Particularly important was Professor (later Sir) Mungo MacCallum, a graduate of the University of Glasgow, in which city, interestingly enough, there existed another, but quite different, Mitchell Library. He began his illustrious career at Sydney

University in 1887 when he occupied the foundation Chair of Modern Language and Literature.⁸ A Trustee of the Public Library from 1890, MacCallum became President in 1906, the year in which work began on the Mitchell Library building. MacCallum was acquainted personally with Mitchell and was one of the few to be admitted to his hallowed possessions. It was MacCallum who, in July 1907, helped oversee the acquisition of Mitchell's library and its placement in secure accommodation pending the completion of the building. Cataloguing was entrusted to members of staff, but there was one part of the collection from which MacCallum paternalistically decided to exclude the predominantly female staff. This was a relatively small assemblage of erotica that Mitchell, like many bibliophiles, had built up over the years, although whether for sexual gratification or investment purposes, is unknown. MacCallum took charge of this material and having prepared a list, placed the collection in a brown paper parcel that was deposited in a safe and discovered only in the 1950s, although it was not released to the public until later.⁹

These tasks were carried out by MacCallum in his capacity as President of the Trustees and chair of the small *ad hoc* Committee for the Control of the Mitchell Library which was established in 1907 to undertake preliminary planning. In March 1909 the committee was enlarged, placed on a formal footing and renamed the Mitchell Library Committee. It made recommendations to the Board, drafted the first regulations governing the running of the reading rooms and, in accordance with Mitchell's wishes, stipulated that admission should be by means of a reader's tickets issued on restrictive terms similar to those of the British Museum. The whole object was to protect the holdings and create an atmosphere favourable to scholarship. MacCallum played an important role in all of this and in October 1909 helped select Hugh Wright as the foundation Mitchell Librarian.¹⁰

MacCallum also safeguarded the interests of university students, insisting that adequate staff were available for the Library to remain open at night, thus allowing access to evening students. A towering figure, his influence was increased by the fact that the Principal Librarian, F. M. Bladen, who had replaced Anderson in 1906, found it increasingly difficult to stand up to him. A talented man who had

made his mark as editor of the eight-volume *Historical Records of New South Wales*, Bladen later developed a drink problem possibly brought on by overwork. This forced MacCallum, in association with his fellow Trustees, to tighten the regulations governing both the Mitchell and the Public Library and in 1911 to remove Bladen. This event came a year after MacCallum had presided over the opening of the new Mitchell building in March 1910. His speech cast interesting light on Mitchell, whom he praised for his ability instantly to remember the location and content of the material in his possession.¹¹

The role of the University in the foundation of the Mitchell, therefore, was highly significant. Its progenitor, David Scott Mitchell, was a graduate, as was its saviour, Joseph Carruthers. Mungo MacCallum profoundly influenced the shape of the Library and in doing so helped lay foundations for what was to come. This prompts the question as to how the relationship developed once the Library was functioning. What happened in its foundation years was largely due to the presence of three Sydney University men, each in a position of influence. Such a conjuncture did not occur again. MacCallum resigned in November 1912 following a clash with the Minister for Public Instruction over issues connected with both the University and the Library. Not until 1968 was another Sydney University professor, John Dunston, elected president. Nevertheless, during the interim, Sydney University was represented on the Board. The 1899 Library Act, passed so that the Trustees could legally handle the capital sum bequeathed by Mitchell, opened the way for Chancellors to sit *ex officio* on the Board. A succession of professors was nominated by the University. They fell into several categories. First were the Challis Professors of History: George Arnold Wood was a Trustee from May 1916 until 1929, when Professor Stephen (later Sir Stephen) Roberts took over. Second were a number of classical scholars, beginning with Professor Thomas Butler, a Board member from 1880 until 1912. He was followed in April 1913 by W. J. Woodhouse, who continued in office until October 1937. His successor, A. D. Trendall, was appointed in December 1939 after Enoch Powell, his immediate predecessor, returned to England to join his regiment. Trendall in turn was replaced in April 1954 by A. J. Dunston, Professor of Latin. Science was a

third category to be represented, initially by the geologist, Professor Edgeworth David, who in 1915 was succeeded by the agricultural scientist, Professor Sir Robert Watt, a Trustee from 1916 until 1950.¹² He was replaced by Professor J. R. A. McMillan, who had been appointed to the Chair vacated by Watt in 1946. All of these men were eminent in their chosen fields and added lustre to the Board. Most had little direct interest in the Mitchell, but others like the two Challis Professors of History, together with W. J. Woodhouse and A. D. Trendall, served on the Mitchell Library Committee. Before evaluating their contribution to the Mitchell, however, it is well to look more closely at how the Library was structured.

It is important to stress that the Mitchell existed not as an independent entity that was free to go its own way, but as a library within a library. Admittedly, it was headed by a Mitchell Librarian, but the occupant of that position was also Deputy Principal Librarian and was answerable to the Trustees and the Principal Librarian. Although the Mitchell had its own staff none worked solely for that library. All were appointed to the Public Library and could be employed anywhere within its precincts. The Principal Librarian, who allocated staff, was a member of the Mitchell Library Committee and where necessary intervened in the administration of the Mitchell. A specialist library, the Mitchell, therefore, was subordinate to the general reference library.

Such was the structure within which University representatives functioned. Inevitably there were limitations to what they could achieve. Admittedly, as professors they enjoyed substantial prestige, stemming from their standing as international scholars and their high profile in the community. They belonged to an era when occupants of university chairs not only behaved like deities but were treated as such. This was made evident by W. H. Ifould, who replaced Bladen as Principal Librarian in 1912.¹³ He acted in a placatory way when George Arnold Wood tendered his resignation from the Board soon after joining it because of an inability to attend meetings, particularly during vacations, which he spent at his house at Blackheath. Ifould informed Wood that there must always be a Professor of History on the Board, and offered to rearrange the agenda to suit his needs. He

also assured Wood that 'One does not expect University Professors to break their vacations ...'.¹⁴ On another occasion Ifould informed a professor that it was the library's duty to prepare bibliographies when new courses were mounted at the University. A high level of mutual respect existed between the 'God Professor', and the Princely Librarian, who found common ground in a love of learning.

Even so there were limits to what professors could achieve for the Mitchell. They were always in a minority on the Board and served alongside strong-willed politicians and professional men with ideas of their own about the Library. Cast in a similar mould were the Principal Librarians, beginning with W.H. Ifould, who officiated for 30 years. Formerly head of the State Library of South Australia, he was small in stature but high in status, professionally as well as socially. Fondness for sport and expertise as a horticulturalist combined with his numerous intellectual pursuits to widen his contacts, as did his standing as a foundation member of the prestigious Rotary Club of Sydney.¹⁵ He ran the Library like a fiefdom and was certainly not someone with whom to trifle. His willingness to accommodate the needs of professors was a sign not of feelings of inferiority, but of his desire to capitalise on their expertise. He watched closely over the Mitchell, intervening when anything aroused his displeasure.¹⁶ His successor and protégé, John Metcalfe, Principal Librarian from 1942 until 1959, was also a dominant figure. Eccentricities of manner, dress and motor-car driving habits, together with a laid-back approach, concealed a brilliant mind and a steely determination to fulfil his aspirations for the Library.¹⁷ Both men kept the Trustees at arm's length and provided directions of their own.

Nor should one overlook the Mitchell Librarians, each of whom had a clear idea of how that Library should develop. The first, Hugh Wright, was a pliant, gentle, scholarly man who coped admirably with Ifould's authoritarianism.¹⁸ The second, Ida Leeson, was a formidable lady who cultivated a mannish appearance and stood up to her superior. Her qualifications as a Sydney University honours history graduate gave her access to the world of scholarship in Australia and overseas.¹⁹ Her successor, Phyllis Mander-Jones, was an outstanding linguist with first class honours in German and a second in French,

as well as a reading knowledge of Italian, Dutch and Russian. She came from the patrician world of the biscuit-manufacturing Arnotts on her maternal side and the prestigious retailing firm of David Jones on her paternal side. An outstanding librarian and a fine scholar, she was a natural leader who commanded respect intermingled with affection.²⁰ Like her predecessors she greatly influenced the history of the Mitchell.

There were, therefore, real restraints on the capacity of the Trustees to influence what went on in the Mitchell. The task of evaluating the role of University representatives is complicated by the fact that Board and Mitchell Library Committee minutes do not contain accounts of discussions. There were, however, some occasions on which the views of professors were recorded. The first was in September 1923 when the kindly George Arnold Wood intervened to save Hugh Wright, the Mitchell Librarian, from public reprimand by the Trustees after he had mildly criticised David Scott Mitchell when delivering a lecture.²¹ The second involved the classicist, Professor Woodhouse, and involved the 1932 controversy surrounding Ida Leeson's appointment as Hugh Wright's successor. The Minister for Public Instruction objected to a woman filling the post, partly on grounds of principle, partly because he feared that, as Deputy Principal Librarian, she might succeed Ifould. The Trustees had earlier agreed that a woman should never run the Public Library, but they did want Leeson as Mitchell Librarian. Eventually it was decided to appoint her, but create the new position of Deputy Principal Librarian and vest it in a man who could expect to succeed Ifould.²² Woodhouse spoke out against his fellow Trustees, affirming the right of a woman, provided she was suitably qualified, to become Principal, as well as Mitchell, Librarian.²³ To stand up for the rights of women spoke of an enlightened mind well in advance of his times.

Even more important was a series of events that occurred in the 1950s, this time involving a Sydney University historian who, while not a Trustee, had close connections with the Mitchell. The academic was Professor Marjorie Jacobs, then Senior Lecturer in History, and the events revolved around the question of who should have charge of the State archives. Since 1912, departmental heads had been instructed

to consult the Principal Librarian before destroying historical documents. Substantial collections of government records were handed over to the Mitchell, which was in effect the State Archives. With the passage of time, however, the handling of archives became a speciality requiring skills different from those of librarians. After World War II the question arose in New South Wales as to whether librarians were equipped to cope adequately with archives or whether, as was the case overseas, government records should be entrusted to a separate authority. The issue emerged in acute form after it became evident that departmental heads were disregarding government instructions. In the early 1950s Marjorie Jacobs located a disused storehouse near Circular Quay where records were haphazardly deposited and destroyed once space ran out.²⁴ The Library had for some time sought legislation forcing government departments to hand material over and in 1955 submitted a draft bill to the Minister of Education. Significantly, it provided for the archives to remain in the Library's hands.

This raised the concern of a number of experts including Marjorie Jacobs, who earlier had angered John Metcalfe by calling for the separation of archives from the Library and the establishment of a proper system of records management. Worried by the contents of the draft bill, she organised a deputation to the Director-General of Education, Harold (later Sir Harold) Wyndham, whose department bore responsibility for the Public Library. Wyndham was also a Trustee and had been unhappy with the bill. He arranged for the preparation of a fresh draft establishing a separate Archives Authority. This was eventually accepted by the Minister and became law in 1961. Here was a truly historic event but Professor Jacobs' role in it remained concealed until she placed it on record early in 2006.²⁵

It was not only in the spheres thus far mentioned that Sydney University academics made a mark. Noteworthy too was the part they played in the Mitchell's efforts to expand its holdings. No other aspect of its work was so important because its reputation and capacity to sustain research rested on the quality of the collections. Unlike other state libraries, the Mitchell saw itself as a national repository and continued to do so until the National Library of Australia in Canberra

forged ahead after World War II. In the meantime the Mitchell, through donation and purchase, had acquired material from all over Australia as well as overseas. It was here that academics could play a vital role for they had the expertise to identify what was important historically and to guide the staff. Librarians turned to the professorial Trustees, but they also sought assistance from outside the Board, in one case paying for the services of a university professor.

The first such expert was George Arnold Wood, an authority on British and European history, who, after dismissing Australian history as unimportant on taking up duties in 1891, became engrossed in the subject. His interest arose from involvement, first in the publication of the *Historical Records of New South Wales*, and then in that of the *Historical Records of Australia*.²⁶ Both projects made available original sources, the critical evaluation of which to his mind lay at the heart of the discipline of history. He became an authority on eighteenth-century Pacific exploration and early New South Wales, making extensive use of the Mitchell. He established a close relationship with Hugh Wright, frequently asking him to purchase books and other material required for his purposes and those of his students. Wright in turn consulted him regularly on such matters.

Wood came even more into his own in 1923 when some of Captain James Cook's papers, including the *Endeavour* journal, were offered for auction at Sotheby's in London. The Library saw itself as the rightful repository, partly because it already held numerous Cook documents, partly because it believed that Sydney, part of the region discovered by Cook, was the natural home for his papers. Ifould turned for advice to Wood, who responded enthusiastically, claiming that 'no event of greater interest' to patriotic Australians 'has happened, nor can ever happen than the sale in London ... of very valuable manuscripts by or relating to Captain James Cook, explorer'.²⁷ Other Trustees agreed, but in Ifould's view none was so determined to acquire Cook's journal. In the event, the Federal Parliamentary Library acquired the papers but Wood, at the invitation of the Trustees, wrote a school text based on them and unsuccessfully tried to persuade the Commonwealth Government to publish a facsimile of parts of the Journal.²⁸

Another Trustee, to whom the Library turned when negotiating

for original sources, was Professor W. J. Woodhouse, who, although not an historian, gave freely of his time to the Mitchell – a point which has not received adequate attention.²⁹ He was a member of the sub-committee which successfully negotiated for the acquisition of Matthew Flinders' papers, then held by the explorer's grandson, Professor Sir Flinders-Petrie. Woodhouse was overseas on study leave when the Cook papers were auctioned and interviewed the owner, H. W. F. Bolckow, performing what was described as 'a very important piece of work'.³⁰ In 1935 he found himself on leave in England at a time when the Library was endeavouring to acquire official documents relating to the Pacific Islands. This involved negotiations with senior officials in the Foreign Office. Woodhouse knew many of them from his student days at Cambridge and the Library urged him to turn this to advantage and to exploit the fact that Dr Stephen Gasselos, Librarian and Keeper of the Foreign Office Papers, was a classical scholar. Woodhouse willingly acted as an intermediary, urging Ifould to ensure that the Foreign Office was fully acquainted with details of the Mitchell Library.³¹

Besides turning to the Trustees, the Library also benefited from the expertise of other Sydney University academics, among them Professor Marjorie Jacobs, who in 1950 offered to classify archival 'records already transferred to the Mitchell Library' and search 'for the location of others still retained in the departments'.³² Over the next three years, assisted successively by two Sydney University history honours graduates who were funded by the University, she carried out important work. In the mid 1950s and 1960s she was also instrumental in obtaining microfilm copies of records relating to pre-World War I German activities in the Pacific. Acquiring the second batch of documents, which were located in Potsdam, involved a visit to eastern Germany, carried out at some personal risk.³³

A variety of other formal and informal contacts between librarians and academics also bore fruit, as did the part-time employment of Professor G. C. Henderson, one of G. A. Wood's earliest history honours students. He graduated in 1893 and nine years later was appointed to the newly established Chair of History and English Language and Literature at the University of Adelaide. He retired

for health reasons in 1923 and later returned to Sydney, bringing with him expertise in Australian and Pacific history and a keen interest in archives.³⁴ He resolved to devote the rest of his life 'to the study of the Pacific' and in 1927 Professor S. H. Roberts, who was himself interested in Pacific history, appointed him Visiting Research Professor.³⁵ Henderson researched in the Mitchell, where he renewed acquaintance with Ifould, who in September 1926 invited him to survey the Library's Pacific collections.³⁶ Earlier, in his biography of Governor Sir George Grey, Henderson had insisted that 'historical documents could not be studied to the best advantage without visiting the country or districts to which they belonged'. Ifould capitalised on this by commissioning Henderson, when researching overseas, to work for the Library.

Henderson's place as an academic historian is well known, but less so are the tasks he carried out for the Mitchell. Working closely with Ifould, Henderson helped acquire important documents while in London and Fiji during 1926 and 1927. In the 1930s he again visited London, this time at the behest of Ida Leeson, who was keen on augmenting the Library's Pacific holdings. He obtained the London Missionary Society's correspondence relating to the Southern Pacific and in 1933 helped verify the authenticity of the famous Tasman Map of 1664.³⁷ This was donated to the Library and a replica was incorporated into the foyer of the Public Library building that opened in 1942. Following Henderson's suicide in 1944 a substantial collection of his private papers was acquired by the Library. At the University his name is commemorated in the research scholarship made available to anthropology and history graduates with research interests in the Pacific.

Thus far our focus has been on the period up to the 1960s, but before going further it is well briefly to examine some of the other links between University and Library during those years. It is important to remember that some of the key members of staff were Sydney University graduates. Two of G. A. Wood's students, John Metcalfe and Ida Leeson, held honours degrees in history. By contrast, Leeson's successor, Phyllis Mander-Jones, graduated in modern languages. She was one of a number of highly talented women librarians who

were valued not only for their ability but because temperamentally they were considered well suited to the profession and above all earned lower salaries than men.³⁸ Zoe Bertles, who was short-listed for the Mitchell Librarianship vacated by Hugh Wright, had studied Arts and Economics at the University. Heather Sherrie, Deputy Mitchell Librarian from 1946 until 1955, graduated BSc with honours in Botany and Physiology and the University Medal in 1918. Her replacement, Marjorie Hancock, held a Sydney Arts degree and so did Margaret McDonald, who took charge of the Reading Room in 1945.³⁹ Janet Hine, Library Liaison Officer in London from 1954 until 1957 and later Dixon Librarian, was awarded honours in English and Philosophy.⁴⁰

But what effect did their experiences at Sydney University have on the Library staff? At a general level one can reasonably surmise that they regarded with affection what was a small and intimate University. They valued the experience and regarded with reverence the scholars who taught them. At the same time, the University's expectations were high and students were forced to depend on their own resources. Although small-group teaching was available for honours candidates and students of modern and ancient languages, most fended for themselves. Essays were generally unsupervised and examination papers testing and unpredictable. The expectation was that undergraduates had the maturity to behave like adults. This helped develop work habits and powers of initiative that proved of value in later life. Those who became librarians displayed a capacity to appreciate the significance of the material they handled, to analyse documents and summarise their content for inclusion on the card catalogue that remains a prized possession of the Mitchell.

At the same time, the three-term system, interspersed by liberal vacations, allowed students to experience university life to the full and to develop numerous interests. This bore fruit in the Mitchell, whose staff were noted for their love of books and their wide-ranging cultural pursuits. Few did more to broaden the intellectual horizons of students than G. A. Wood, who earned an undying gratitude that found expression in the numerous letters of condolence sent to his wife after his tragic death.⁴¹ His lectures, lucid, challenging and

imbued with the leanings of a late Victorian liberal, left an indelible impression on those who attended them. He had an impact on John Metcalfe and on Ida Leeson, who was attracted by his belief that the historian needed to possess imaginative powers as well as the ability to locate and critically evaluate documents. The distinction, in Wood's mind, was between the 'artist' and the 'artisan'.

Leeson found Wood's successor, Professor S. H. Roberts, aloof and his approach to history unduly impersonal. It was, as Professor D. M. Schreuder justly observed, 'tough-minded, essentially geopolitical and contemporary'.⁴² More in line with Leeson's thinking was Professor Max Crawford, one of Wood's students, who took the Wood tradition from Sydney to Melbourne University. Leeson offered the Melbourne History Department specialist advice and assisted Crawford and Gwynn James, who had transferred from Sydney to Melbourne, to establish the academic journal *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*. Critical of Roberts' antipathy to the project, she believed that its fulfilment would 'come as a shock' to him.⁴³ None of this meant, however, that under Roberts the Sydney History Department's links with the Mitchell weakened. He had used the Mitchell's resources while a postgraduate student in Melbourne. In 1929 he replaced Wood on the Board, serving as a Trustee for 38 years, five years longer than Professor Watt. Roberts was assiduous in his attendance at Board meetings until war-time demands and appointment in 1947 as Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University made it difficult for him to continue doing so. One wonders why he did not stand aside for J. M. Ward, who filled the Challis Chair of History in 1949.

Academic trustees and librarians formed the basis of the links between University and Library, but important too were the readers. With rare exceptions, only final year honours undergraduates were admitted to the reading rooms. Numbers were at first small, but increased after 1938 when the honours course was expanded from three years to four and a research thesis became part of the final year of study.⁴⁴ So far as the Mitchell was concerned this affected History more than English because Australian literature was still struggling to gain a foothold in the universities.⁴⁵ Admittedly, the

librarian Janet Hine wrote a thesis on the Australian short story in her fourth year of English, but this was unusual.⁴⁶ Australian history was more securely established and was promoted by each of the Challis Professors. Indeed, under Professor J. M. Ward, the writing of a fourth year thesis on Australian history was for long mandatory. In the postgraduate sphere history students since G. A. Wood's day had regularly researched in the Mitchell, and their number grew as the Faculty expanded. Other aspects of Australian culture were explored by students of government, economic history and anthropology, the latter attracted by the Library's collections relating to the indigenous people.

Without the Mitchell, original research would have been difficult, if not impossible. Overseas travel was beyond the means of students and the lack of microfilms impeded access to original material other than that relating to Australia and the Pacific. The presence of the Mitchell gave students experience in the use of documents and expanded the frontiers of scholarship. But for those resources the prospects for scholarly work would have been greatly diminished. At the same time, the fact that so many students used the Mitchell's resources strengthened in yet another way the bonds between University and Library. In the formal but intimate atmosphere of the reading room, students became acquainted with members of the Library staff and formed friendships with each other, creating memories that led them to regard their days in the Mitchell warmly.

Such was the highly positive, productive relationship that developed between University and Library during the first half of the Mitchell's existence. While the Mitchell drew on the skills and advice of academics, students were given the means of developing research skills and undertaking original work. The relationship was often personal and was made more so by the fact that University and Library staff became acquainted with one another through membership of cultural, historical and public affairs organisations. This was also the case so far as another point of contact between University and Library was concerned. Library staff met professionally and on personal terms with their Fisher Library colleagues. More directly, the poet and Professor, Christopher Brennan, was for a time an officer

in the Public Library and catalogued the English literature collection that Mitchell gave the Library in 1899 so as to make space for more Australiana. John Metcalfe, who had worked in the Fisher Library while completing his degree, was seconded to the university in 1957 to report on the future of Fisher and subsequently sought unsuccessfully to become University Librarian.⁴⁷ Fisher Library staff researched in the Mitchell, among them H. M. Green, the literary historian who, after appointment as University Librarian in 1921, built up the Fisher's Australian holdings.⁴⁸

In these varying ways a tradition that persisted after the 1960s was fashioned. Until the late 1980s Sydney University continued to be represented on what in 1969 became the Library of New South Wales. Before that change occurred, L. C. Birch, Professor of Zoology, and Michael Taylor, Professor of Physiology, successively served alongside Professors Dunston and J. M. Ward, who finally replaced Roberts in 1968. The former was President from 1968 until 1973 and the latter Deputy President until 1982 when he was succeeded on the Board by myself, later joined by the historian Dr Heather Radi. Earlier, between 1968 and 1972, Margaret Telfer, the first female Registrar of an Australian university, had become the first woman to represent Sydney University on the Library Board.⁴⁹

From 1959 until 1973 the Public Library came under Gordon Richardson, whose Sydney University Master of Arts thesis examined the Colonial Secretary's In-Letters, a major source for the study of early New South Wales. He was unique in serving simultaneously as Principal and Mitchell Librarian, and from 1961 was a member of the newly created Archives Authority of New South Wales.⁵⁰ In addition, he published articles on the history of the Library and was on close terms with the History Department. His successor, Russell Doust, also a Sydney University graduate, served from 1973 until 1987 and divested himself of all responsibilities except those of Principal Librarian. During his last seven years in office Baiba Berzins, another Sydney graduate, was Mitchell Librarian. She pointed the Mitchell in new directions and was the first fully to ensure that the collections reflected the existence of a multicultural society. This, together with her appreciation of Aboriginal culture, influenced her

book *The Coming of the Strangers* and the exhibition bearing the same name, which commemorated the bicentenary of white settlement in 1988.⁵¹ University representatives on the Library Council contributed to this event.

Important too for both University and Library was the fact that the period between the 1960s and the 1980s was one in which federal funding made possible an unprecedented expansion in the size and number of universities. Sydney University was converted from a struggling, overcrowded and under-staffed institution into a thriving centre of learning. New courses proliferated, honours programmes attracted growing numbers of students and postgraduate enrolments reached new heights.⁵² Subjects such as history, literature, anthropology, education and sociology, which required access to the Mitchell, shared in this expansion, bringing more Sydney students and staff than ever before into the Mitchell's precincts.

Yet, the passage of time made it clear that the relationship between University and Library could not remain unchanged. Russell Doust was the last Sydney University graduate to have charge of the Library and Baiba Berzins was the only such graduate to be Mitchell Librarian between 1973 and 2008. Other developments affected the relationship more directly. The Mitchell Library Committee had been abolished in 1953 and the Mitchell as a whole was brought more fully under the control of the rest of the Library. Its identity was toned down partly to prevent the Mitchell obscuring the existence of the General Reference Library. The process was accompanied by a reduction in the Trustee's capacity to influence what was going on. Moreover, researchers lacking any association with Sydney University filled the reading rooms, whose intimate atmosphere was eroded after 1988 when the opening of the new State Library building allowed the Mitchell to occupy the large room formerly used by the reference library.⁵³

The Library Council's composition also changed during and after the 1960s, initially to accommodate Colleges of Advanced Education and universities other than Sydney. University representation as a whole suffered a severe blow in 1987 when academics largely disappeared from the Council of what in 1975 was re-named the State Library of New South Wales. Sydney University no longer had

any input into the governing body of the Library. Underlying these changes was the need to ensure that the Library met the requirements of a changing society and that the Board was better equipped to raise funds. These developments were accompanied by an increase in Library staff and a decline in the proportion with Sydney University degrees. The ethos of the Library was also affected by the introduction of management structures reminiscent more of the world of business than of scholarship.

Sydney University itself was enlarged, bureaucratised, corporatised and managerialised, reducing the prospects of staff and students viewing it with the same affection as had once been the case and thereby affecting the nature of its relationship with the Library. All, however, was not lost. Closer scrutiny shows that the relationship was still strong. 2008 marked the appointment as Mitchell Librarian of a distinguished Sydney Fine Arts graduate, Richard Neville, successively head of the pictorial collection and of the Original Materials Branch. Other Sydney graduates of note included Paul Brunton, Senior Curator, Mitchell Library, who raised the Library's profile through his historical writings and highly popular public addresses. Prominent too was Anne Robertson, who occupied a number of senior posts and was the author of *Treasures of the State Library of New South Wales*, which the Library published as part of the bicentenary celebrations in 1988. Numerous contacts, all friendly, continued to exist between University and Library and co-operative ventures were undertaken. Moreover, despite all that had happened, the Mitchell remained in essence a centre for scholarly research.⁵⁴ Indeed, the growth in the size and scope of the collections, and the use of modern technology to make them more accessible, allowed the Library to continue playing a vital role, particularly in the life of the Faculty of Arts. Finally, it is worth remembering that the former Bicentennial Professor of Australian History was invited to write the centenary history of the Mitchell, thereby giving a Sydney academic the opportunity to shape its image. Not even Mungo MacCallum at the height of his powers had been in a position to do that.

Notes

- 1 For the exhibition, see Elizabeth Ellis and Paul Brunton, *A Grand Obsession: The D. S. Mitchell Story*, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 2007; also Brian H. Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession: the Story of the Mitchell Library, Sydney*, Sydney, 2007.
- 2 On Mitchell, see especially Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.7–19, Anne Robertson, *Treasures of the State Library: The Australiana Collections*, Sydney, 1988, Anne Robertson, 'David Scott Mitchell: A Passion for Collecting', *Aplis* 2.3 (September 1989): 115–29.
- 3 Peter Chippendale, 'Glimpses of the Early University: Part 1, The First Matriculants', *University of Sydney Record*, 2005, pp.7–9.
- 4 On Manning, see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.5, Melbourne, 1974.
- 5 On Anderson, see J. R. Nelson, 'H. C. L. Anderson, Principal Librarian at the Public Library of New South Wales, 1893–1906: His Achievements and Significance', PhD thesis. University of New South Wales, 1991.
- 6 H. C. L. Anderson, 'Some Reminiscences of David Scott Mitchell, 1920', Mitchell Library (henceforth ML) A1830; Richardson to Macmillan, 17 May 1960, Macmillan to Richardson, 25 May 1960, Richardson papers, Box 6, ML 4257.
- 7 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.29–30.
- 8 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.10, Melbourne, 1980; Clifford Turney, Ursula Bygott and Peter Chippendale, eds, *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, vol.1, 1850–1939*, Sydney, 1991.
- 9 David Scott Mitchell Erotica Collection, ML File 800/1956.
- 10 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.49–54.
- 11 F. M. Bladen, *The Public Library of New South Wales: Historical Notes 1826–1910*, Sydney, 1911.
- 12 Information on membership of the Board comes from the *Annual Reports of the Public Library*.
- 13 On Ifould, see D. Jones, 'William Herbert Ifould and the Development of Library Services in New South Wales 1912–1942', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1993.
- 14 Ifould to Wood, 25 November, 11 December 1916, Public Library Letter Book, NPL 22.
- 15 Brian H. Fletcher, *Achieving for Others: The Rotary Club of Sydney, 1921–2005*, Sydney, 2005.
- 16 Jones, 'William Herbert Ifould'.
- 17 W. Boyd Rayward, *The Variety of Librarianship: Essays in Honour of John Wallace Metcalfe*, Library Association of Australia, 1976.
- 18 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.42–44.

- 19 Sylvia Martin, *Ida Leeson: A Life, Not a Blue Stocking Lady*, Sydney, 2006.
- 20 L. Mander-Jones, 'A World to be Spanned and Enjoyed', *Archives and Manuscripts* 14. 1 (May 1986).
- 21 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.77–79.
- 22 Martin, *Ida Leeson*, pp.98–110. For a different version of events, see Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.103–12.
- 23 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, p.110.
- 24 M. Jacobs, 'Knowing Our Own History: A Further Dimension', *Archives and History* 14.1 (1986): 24–27; 'NSW Archives January 29 1953: Visit to Goldsborough Mort Building', Archives Office of NSW 1953–58, Correspondence to 1965, Box 2, Subject File, State Records of NSW.
- 25 M. Jacobs. 'Lobbyists for the Archives: Some Reminiscences', *The University of Sydney Record*, 2006, pp.7–14.
- 26 On Wood, see especially R. M. Crawford, '*A Bit of a Rebel*': *The Life and Work of George Arnold Wood*, Sydney, 1975; Brian H. Fletcher, 'History as a Moral Force: George Arnold Wood at Sydney University 1891–1928', in Stuart Macintyre and Julian Thomas, eds, *The Discovery of Australian History 1890–1939*, Melbourne, 1995, pp.10–27; Brian H. Fletcher, *The 1888 Centenary Celebrations and New Developments in the Writing of Australian History*, Inaugural Lecture, University of Sydney, 1988.
- 27 Wood to Ifould, undated note, Public Library In-Letters 1923; also Wright to Ifould, 2 November 1920, Wood to Wright, 21 February 1923, Mitchell Library In-Letters 1923.
- 28 Public Library Board Minutes, Meeting 15 October 1923.
- 29 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.12, Melbourne, 1990.
- 30 Mitchell Library Committee August 10 1920–February 9 1926, Meeting of 18 April 1922.
- 31 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, p.124.
- 32 Jacobs, 'Knowing Our Own History'.
- 33 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.184, 250–51.
- 34 E. Kown, 'G. C. Henderson: Advocate of "Systematic and Scientific" in Australian History'; in Macintyre and Thomas, *The Discovery of Australian History*, pp.28ff.
- 35 Henderson to Ifould, 27 September 1926, Public Library In-Letters, NPL 93.
- 36 Henderson to Ifould, 2 September, 8 September 1926.
- 37 For details of Henderson's research activities, see G. C. Henderson File, July 1929–September 1933, ML Ah 108/2; also Mitchell Library Letter Books 1936, 1937.
- 38 J. Cleary, 'Women Librarians in the Public Library of NSW: The First Generation', in Frank Upward and Jean P. Whyte, eds, *Peopling a Profession: Papers from the Fourth Forum on Australian Library History*, Monash

- University, September 1989, Melbourne, 1989.
- 39 Details of those members of staff to whom reference is made will be found in Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*.
 - 40 Janet Hine's Papers are preserved in the Mitchell Library.
 - 41 For an appraisal of Wood's influence on his students see Brian H. Fletcher, *History and Achievement: A Portrait of the Honours Students of Professor George Arnold Wood*, Sydney, 1999, pp.42ff. The letters to Madelaine Wood are preserved in Wood Family Papers located in the Mitchell Library.
 - 42 For an appraisal of Roberts' approach to history, see D. M. Schreuder, 'A "Second Foundation": S. H. Roberts as Challis Professor of History 1929-47', in Barbara Caine *et al*, eds, *History at Sydney, 1891-1991: Centenary Reflections*, Canberra, 1992, pp.36-37.
 - 43 Leeson to Fitzpatrick, 8 December 1939, Mitchell Library Out-Letters 1939.
 - 44 Schreuder, 'A "Second Foundation" ', p.40.
 - 45 W. Milgate, 'Australian Literature and the Universities' *Meanjin* 3 (1954): 49-32; Vance Palmer, 'Australian Literature and the Universities, *Meanjin* 4 (1954): 591-96.
 - 46 Janet Hine, 'An Evaluation of the Australian Short Story before 1880', BA Hons, Sydney University, 1945. A copy of the thesis is in Janet Hine, General File A-C, Janet Hine Papers ML Box 24.
 - 47 Meeting of Trustees 25 March 1957, Minute Book July 1956-June 1961.
 - 48 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.14, Melbourne, 1996.
 - 49 Details of membership of the Library Council will be found in the Library's *Annual Reports*.
 - 50 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.236-38, 242-24.
 - 51 Fletcher, *Magnificent Obsession*, pp.299ff.
 - 52 W. F. Connell *et al*, eds, *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, vol.2, 1940-1990*, Sydney, 1995, pp.54ff.
 - 53 David J. Jones, *A Source of Inspiration and Delight: The Buildings of the State Library of New South Wales Since 1826*, Library Council of NSW, Sydney, 1988.
 - 54 'The Mitchell Library Readers' Research', State Library of NSW; A. Ventress and K. Burgess, 'The Mitchell Library: Finite Spaces, Infinite Demands', *LASIE* 30.4 (1999): 68-77.