

Rare Australian birds found in New Zealand

Donald Kerr is elated by the Australian treasure re-discovered in Auckland.

At the end of last year, a previously unknown copy of one of the rarest and arguably the most desirable of all Australian books was found in the George Grey Rare Books Room of the Auckland City Library.

The work, John William Lewin's *Birds of New South Wales, with their Natural History*, was published in Sydney in 1813. Prior to the re-discovery of the Auckland Grey copy, only twelve copies were known to exist. The Grey copy is now one of thirteen copies extant

and is one of nine complete copies. It also has the distinction of being the tallest and cleanest copy.

Lewin's *Birds of New South Wales* may be the most valuable Australian book around. It was the first bird book or natural history book of any kind, printed in the colony of New South Wales, produced entirely locally in 1813.

In fact, it was the first private publication of any kind produced in Australia and those few official or semi-official publications which preceded it were also extremely rare

and virtually or completely procurable. The entire edition was probably only a couple of dozen or so copies. Of these, very few copies are known to have survived, many of them incomplete.

As the first illustrated book produced in the colony, containing eighteen etchings of Australian birds, all hand-painted by Lewin, it held—and still does hold—enormous visual appeal and charm. The re-discovery of Grey's own copy of this book is an exciting find, both nationally and internationally. Even at the time Sir George Grey himself recognised its importance as a rarity, noting on the title-page of his own copy: "This is the only copy I have seen. I value it highly." ■

Where do Australian libraries buy their books?

Maggie Newman and Derek Whitehead want some answers

The Victorian Group of the Acquisitions Section of ALIA has recently commissioned a major research study, intended to answer this question, as well as others.

It has long been a contentious issue. Australian booksellers and library suppliers sometimes accuse libraries of buying mainly from overseas library suppliers rather than Australian. The libraries reply that their first responsibility is to buy books where they are cheapest, and that they are not funded to prop up the Australian bookselling industry. But no one really knows what proportion of the Australian library dollar is spent overseas.

The Acquisitions Section is funding a research study to find out the answer to the question: *Where do Australian libraries buy their books?*

After seeking submissions from institutions interested in conducting the research, the Section awarded the project to the Centre for Information Studies at Charles Sturt University, Riverina. Dr Gary Gorman of the School will lead a research team examining this issue.

Some of the goals of the project are to determine:

- the total funds expended by the major library sectors on monographs, serials and other published library materials;

- the proportions spent with Australian-based suppliers and with overseas-based suppliers;
- the reasons for these buying patterns.

Australian library suppliers obtain their books in different ways too. Some suppliers source their stock from Australian publishers and stockholders, while others, assisted by recent amendments to the Copyright Act, import direct in response to orders. So the survey will also determine:

- the extent to which Australian library suppliers source their material from Australian and from overseas sources.

One of the main reasons for supporting this research is to assist the Australian library supply and bookselling industry; so another goal is to provide:

- information to assist the Australian book trade in enhancing its services to the Australian library market.

The survey will cover national/state, university, public and special libraries, and will be limited to printed serials and monographs. It will distinguish between four main sources of material: North America, UK/Europe, Australia, and other countries.

For the purposes of the study, an Australian library supplier is any

supplier based in Australian and supplying libraries directly—we are not interested in whether the supplier is Australian-owned, but only whether they create Australian jobs.

The survey will commence in June, and will be overseen by a steering committee based on the committee of the Victorian Group of the Acquisitions Section. It consists of Maggie Newman, Derek Whitehead, Joy Sheehan, Richard Siegersma, Beverly Forsyth and John Horacek. However, detailed results will not be made available to the steering committee, and information about specific institutions and firms will be subject to the strict confidentiality requirements of Charles Sturt University.

If you would like to know more about the survey, or provide suggestions regarding it, please contact Dr Gary Gorman at the Centre for Information Studies, CSU, on telephone (069) 22 2536; or fax (069) 22 2733. ■

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