

Study visit to the UK and Ireland

Marian Jameson, Sir John Morris Memorial Trust Fund Travelling Scholarship winner

The State Library of Tasmania has been fortunate in its benefactors. The heritage collections at the State Library encompass three collections, two of which were donated to the Library by wealthy and prominent Tasmanians. One was a doctor, Sir William Crowther, and the other a lawyer, Henry Allport.

The Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts is an extraordinary collection of 18th and 19th century furniture, silver, glass and porcelain (of mainly English and European origin), colonial paintings, watercolours and drawings and a library of rare and antique books on subjects such as Australian and Pacific exploration, natural history and Tasmanian history.

Another library benefactor was Sir John Morris, a well-respected lawyer and one-time chair of the Tasmanian Library Board. In 1957 the Board established the Sir John Morris trust fund for Tasmanian workers in the library and archives industry to encourage research, professional development and training. A recent innovation by the trust is to award up to two travelling scholarships each financial year, one valued at \$3000 for Australian travel and one valued at \$5000 for overseas travel.

In August 1997, I was awarded a

travelling scholarship to visit collections similar to the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. I chose fourteen collections in order to study their management structure, funding sources, exhibition programs, conservation practices and their use of technology. The institutions included: six in and around London; regional galleries and museums in Bournemouth, Sheffield, County Durham and Wales; the Burrell Collection, part of the Glasgow Museums Service; a University museum in Oxford; a National Trust house in southern Scotland and an independent library in Dublin. I also made unofficial visits to a further thirty museums, galleries, libraries and historic houses and sites during the six weeks of my tour. These included unusual venues such as the National Tank Museum at Bovington and the Scottish Soccer Museum in Glasgow.

The highlights of the visits included:



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a personal guided tour of the new British Library building (with no books or staff in residence); the Wallace Collection, which in the size of its collection and its magnificence is very similar to the Allport; the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, which is an exercise in sheer architectural brilliance; and the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, which contained the most extraordinary and varied collection I have ever seen.

The United Kingdom has the advantage of the Heritage Lottery Fund which is distributing millions of pounds to bring listed buildings and old collections into the 21st century, by installing proper environmental controls, new exhibition areas and education centres, and providing essential maintenance and new buildings for almost all of the major museums and galleries in the country.

The United Kingdom also has an extensive system of signage for tourist attractions — outside the buildings, in neighbouring streets, off main roads and even some on the motorways. This feature is sadly lacking in Hobart. On the other hand, Australia appears more advanced in the use of technology in its cultural institutions to document the collections and to increase visitor access.

It was an enormously rewarding experience. I was able to see current museum and gallery practice in some of the most famous collections in England, combine this knowledge with my course work, and add it to my long experience in librarianship.

I am extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to extend the boundaries of my profession through the generosity of the Sir John Morris Trust Fund. ■

Developments in the library labour market

On 26 March the Western Australian branch's continuing professional development committee organised a talk by Phil Teece, ALIA's manager, personnel and industrial relations, on 'Developments in the library labour market'. The topic was a popular one with members and there was a good turnout from all library sectors to hear what is happening in our industry.

Phil based his talk on the results from the library labour market survey which was conducted for ALIA by the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training. The results from the survey provided fascinating insights into the sectors in which librarians work, their age profile, salaries, length of service and type of employment. Comparisons with the labour market in general and particular sectors were very interesting. The many questions at the end of the talk showed the degree of interest in this topic.

During his visit to Western Australia, Phil also talked to the students at Curtin University's Department of Information Studies. ■