Australian Institute of Librarians 1st Annual Conference, Sydney 13th June 1938

The 5th Conference, Hobart, 1946

W.H. Ifould, 1st President of AIL, 1937–1938

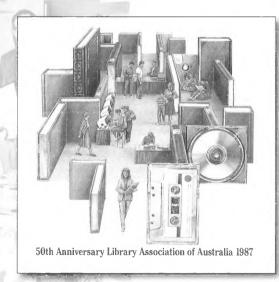*Delegates inside the Adelaide Conference venue, 1940 (detail)*

Ellinor Archer, 1st female President of AIL, 1948–1949

50th Anniversary Library Association of Australia 1987

Artwork celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Library Association of Australia in 1987.

ALIA's role in educatio

ALIA has overseen professional registration and recognition since its formation as the Australian Institute of Librarians in 1937. In 2006, Marie Murphy and Karen McVicker published an article entitled 'ALIA and Education for the Profession', in Education for Library and Information Services : A Festschrift to Celebrate Thirty Years of Library Education at Charles Sturt University. *On this, the occasion of the 70th anniversary of ALIA, their paper is well worth revisiting. Following is an abstract.*

The article outlines the Association's role in education for librarianship. The tension between technical expertise and general education for librarianship has characterised the development of library education. The Association has wished to both control industrial and educational standards while encouraging diversity, particularly in the period since library education has been offered through tertiary institutions. Some historical background is offered on the development of the professional Association for librarians and its concern for educational standards.

As the standards body for the library and information profession in Australia, ALIA has always been involved in

Stories behind the cover photograph

The program for the August 1937 meeting at which the Australian Institute of Librarians (AIL) was founded was very carefully orchestrated to present a sense of unity. The chairman of the main meeting was Frank Tate, then president of the Australian Council for Educational Research. The audience included distinguished overseas visitors for the 1937 New Education Fellowship conference. Greetings came from sister library associations in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the USA.

Photo courtesy of the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South

chief librarians who had done the hard yards and largely put together the AIL's constitution.

As far away as possible from Metcalfe, at the far left of the front row, in characteristic dress, is Ida Leeson, the Mitchell Librarian at the Public Library of NSW. Metcalfe had been appointed Ifould's deputy in 1932 in a manoeuvre to prevent Leeson aspiring to become principal librarian. Circumstances obliged them to work together, but they would not have actively sought out each other's company.

Speaking for the motion founding the new association were four 'elder statesmen': James Sykes Battye, who had been principal librarian of the Public Library of Western Australia since 1894, Kenneth Binns of the National Library, W.H. Ifould of the Public Library of New South Wales, and E.R. Pitt of the Public Library of Victoria. They presented a united front. The motion passed unanimously.

The arrangement of subjects in the photograph was also somewhat choreographed. The elder statesmen, the chair and visitors are in the front row. Ifould, the future first President of the AIL, is next to Rutherford Purnell from the Public Library of South Australia — Ifould had been Purnell's predecessor. On Ifould's right is Morris Miller from the University of Tasmania and formerly from the Public Library of Victoria. Wedged next to Miller is Battye, who in terms of years service as head of a library, was the senior librarian in Australia.

Binns and Pitt are at the other end of the front row. Sydney–Melbourne rivalry, and the growing rivalry between the Mitchell Library and the National Library in collecting Australiana meant that relations between Ifould, Binns and Pitt were sometimes strained. Ifould and Binns had famously argued about a manuscript item which both men wanted for their libraries. In the second row, from the right, are John Metcalfe (Public Library of New South Wales), A.B. Foxcroft (Public Library of Victoria) and H.L. White (Commonwealth National Library), the three deputy

Telling too are some of the missing faces. H.M. Green, for example, librarian of the University of Sydney. He boycotted the conference, avoiding Pitt, whom he had not forgiven for unpleasant things said about Fisher Library in the Munn-Pitt Report. Also absent was the most senior female librarian in Australia, Malvina Wood of the University of Western Australia. No-one — not even Battye — had told her about the meeting and she had only heard about it through the grapevine. In far away Perth, by the time she received a reply to her letter asking for further information, it was too late to attend.

There are many more stories behind the 1937 photograph. Some emerge in Jean P. Whyte and David J. Jones' forthcoming book *Uniting a Profession*. Others will spring from the work of future library historians. If an ordinary picture is worth a thousand words, then this very special picture of our predecessors is bound to launch many more.

Dr David J. Jones
State Library of New South Wales

and concerned with education for the profession. The Association has had an active course recognition program since courses in library and information management were first offered through the universities from the early 1960s. Prior to external tertiary training for librarians, the Association — from its inception as the Australian Institute of Librarians (AIL) and later as the Library Association of Australia (LAA) — undertook the examination and registration of library professionals.

The developments which led to the passage of Libraries Acts in the various Australian states and the subsequent establishment of public libraries in the early 20th century was an important driver in increasing demand for trained librarians, and of a number of attempts to form a national association that would set and maintain standards for the profession. The article outlines the association's involvement in education and training as the basis of developing standards for the profession.

Education for Library and Information Services: A Festschrift to Celebrate Thirty Years of Library Education at Charles Sturt University, edited by Philip Hider and Bob Pymm, is available at <**http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/sciagr/sis/CIS/epubs/LISEduc.htm**>.