

# ANNE-MARIE SCHWIRTLICH

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich is Australia's eighth Director-General of the National Library. She comes to the position with a broad background in the cultural sector and a passion for the possibilities libraries offer our communities. So what's on her mind as she settles in at one of Australia's most cherished libraries?

**inCite: After your broad experience in various cultural institutions, what is it that has now drawn you towards wanting to take on this role at the National Library of Australia?**

**A-MS:** For the last eight years it has been stimulating, inspiring and nurturing to work with colleagues in the State Library of Victoria, in Victorian public and university libraries and at the National and State Libraries Australasia table, on reimagining libraries for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The allure of the National Library is the opportunity to play a role in reimagining libraries from a different perspective, to explore what the 'national' in our title signifies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to get to know a little about an astounding collection built over decades by clever and determined colleagues and generous donors.

**inCite: What challenges do you see as priorities for the National Library right now?**

**A-MS:** Developing the capacity and the capability to acquire, document, preserve and make accessible Australia's digital documentary record, increasing the opportunity for Australians to have access to the National Library's, and other, collections and services – particularly on digital platforms, and continuing to demonstrate that the National Library has a significant role to play in the intellectual, social, cultural, educational and economic lives of Australians.



**inCite: Do you see the role of the Director-General of the National Library of Australia as a leadership role for the sector and/or the profession in Australia? Why? How will this affect your objectives for the National Library?**

**A-MS:** It has been a matter of great pride to the staff and Council of the National Library that the Library has been innovative and effective in animating the clause in its Act that it 'co-operate in library matters'. As appropriate, the National Library has led, it has facilitated or it has collaborated and with remarkable results like Libraries Australia, PANDORA and Trove (and Trove's antecedent services such as Pictures Australia, Music Australia and Australian Newspapers). I see this as important work to advance.

**inCite: What challenges do you see as critical to the library and information profession in Australia right now?**

**A-MS:** Articulating the compelling role of libraries in the educational and productive lives of Australians and seeing this reflected in the National Cultural Policy, exploring and piloting possible services for the National Broadband Network and continuing to harness and translate the wellspring of support for (and the evidence and statistics about the impact of) libraries into financial support for our collective enterprise.

*"The allure of the National Library is the opportunity to play a role in reimagining libraries from a different perspective, to explore what the 'national' in our title signifies in the twenty-first century..."*

**inCite: And finally, what is it about your library that you love?**

**A-MS:** When we arrived in Australia, the public library in Gordon, Sydney, was the first public library I had encountered. It was magical – teeming with books of all sorts, light and airy, encouraging – and libraries remain wonderful because they continue to offer us unimagined possibilities.

I am particularly looking forward to the opening of the Treasures Gallery in October where many of the National Library's greatest treasures, including James Cook's Endeavour Journal, Ellis Rowan's exquisite images, the papers of Edward Mabo, Patrick White's notebooks – and indeed his spectacles - and what is believed to be the earliest known printed document in Australia, the 1796 Sydney theatre playbill, will go on permanent display. It will mark an exciting new chapter for the National Library and the culmination of many years of work by National Library staff and our supporters.

## From India to Canberra

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich began work as the new Director-General of the National Library of Australia on 11 March 2011, after eight years as CEO and Chief Librarian at the State Library of Victoria. She came to the National Library from a rich and varied career in the public sector, including at the National Archives and the Australian War Memorial.

Ms Schwirtlich migrated to Australia with her family in the early 1970s after being brought up in India. She went to university in Sydney before moving to Canberra in 1985 to work at the National Archives where she stayed for 18 years before moving to the State Library of Victoria.

She took over from Jan Fullerton, the first woman to hold the post of Director-General of the National Library of Australia. Ms Fullerton retired last year after 11 years in the top job and a total of 43 years at the National Library.