

JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIONS CONNECT



In June, Georgina Crisp participated in an ALIA Library Technicians Group tour of the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia. This library and its staff have focused on collaboration with other Jewish services and libraries in Melbourne and the local Jewish community to create an excellent service that goes above and beyond what one might expect from a not for profit library.

This ALIA Group tour was a great opportunity to see a library that I would not have otherwise come across and get a behind the scenes tour by Leonie Fleizig, the Library Director. The Lamm Library is housed in a building that used to be a nursing home, purchased by the Zionist Council of Victoria with donations and grants from generous donors and the State Government. It is funded solely by grants, donations and membership fees and they are doing an amazing job of providing a consistent service to the public with these variable funding sources.

Upon entering the library, you find yourself in an open, sunny reading room with a service desk, comfortable seating and of course plenty of reading material; this room was once the central living area for the nursing home residents. Following Leonie down corridors we found a rabbit warren of rooms which have been repurposed for use by the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society, the Australian Jewish Historical Society, the Bereaved Parents Society and the various donated collections, with some rooms still physically empty but full of future potential.

It was great to see the various groups and collections able to retain their individuality and their own space while benefiting from their proximity to each other and the Beth Weizmann Community Centre next door, creating a convenient hub of services for the Jewish community.

The library also collaborates with Kadimah, The Holocaust Centre and the Jewish Museum with some of these collections now physically located in the Lamm Jewish Library building. Regardless of their physical location, one catalogue serves the four collections of materials in English, Hebrew and Yiddish now housed at the library. This combined catalogue also includes the collections of other Jewish libraries around Australia and is an initiative of the Lamm Jewish Library. It is kept up to date by the dedicated staff and volunteers at the library. This excellent

service means the public can easily access details of Jewish related resources across Melbourne and the rest of Australia through the Lamm Jewish Library website, simplifying the process of accessing the items they may need.

The library also runs a variety of events including regular children's storytime with songs and stories in Hebrew, regular movie sessions, exercise classes, the Makor Write Your Story project (to date 120 autobiographies have been published) and the 2014 Jewish Writers Festival. This popular festival brought together a variety of Jewish writers and writers who have produced works reflecting the Jewish experience in an exciting program of events and is expected to become a biannual event.

Anyone is welcome to visit the Lamm Jewish Library and peruse their collections. Loans are fee-based, with membership the most cost effective option. In addition, the library is always looking for qualified volunteers who can help with cataloguing and making recent acquisitions more accessible to the public, so please contact Leonie if you have the time and skills to spare. For more information, visit the library's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/LammJewishLibraryAustralia or their website at www.ljla.org.au.

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