

Friends of the Baillieu Library

40 years on

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The Baillieu Library at the University of Melbourne was opened in 1959. Seven years later, in 1966, the Friends of the Baillieu Library was founded,¹ with the expressed aim to 'provide a fund for the purchase of books, manuscripts or prints required by the Library.'² This aim still remains at the core of the Friends' activities, but these have broadened over time. As Peter McInnes points out, the Friends were 'very early entrants in the field'.³

The current constitution of the Friends (adopted in 2006) identifies seven aims:

- a. to support The University of Melbourne Library, ... including the Baillieu Library and all Branch Libraries, by ways and means the members determine from time to time. The aims shall include the following:
- b. to identify any books, manuscripts, prints, paintings and other materials of value for The Library and acquire them by purchase, gift or other means;
- c. to assist and support The Library in the care, maintenance and preservation of its collections;
- d. to obtain gifts of money or other property whether real or personal, for The University, to be used for the purposes of The Library;
- e. to organise meetings for members at which they may be addressed by

- authors and other literati, view exhibitions and libraries, and engage in discussions that promote knowledge about books for their instruction and enjoyment;
- f. to co-operate or associate with other bodies sharing the Friends' aims;
 - g. to publish or assist the publication of any work consistent with the objects of the Friends.

The Committee itself meets five times a year to discuss possible purchases and plan events for members. It has been fortunate in that over its first 40 years, there have been three long-serving presidents: Rodney Davidson (1978–1996); Peter McInnes (1996–2003) and Victor Prescott (2003–2007). This continuity has meant that considerable expertise has been developed in handling the Committee's activities. Coupled with this is the sterling service rendered by several Committee members who served for many years. Outstanding contributors include the late Professor Harold Attwood and the late Dr Sophie Ducker, Mrs Diana Baillieu and Dr Alison Patrick.

The Committee has also been well served by its Executive Secretaries who were, for many years, senior staff of the Library. The services of Dr Juliet Flesch and Ms

Merete Smith in particular were duly recognised with Life Memberships of the Friends, its highest honour.

Since 1966, 261 titles have been added to the University's collections with the Friends' assistance. Most have been purchased outright, though in some special cases, partial funding was provided to assist with the purchase of particularly important items. In more recent years, funds have also been provided for the conservation of some material and the cataloguing of others.

To celebrate the 21st anniversary of the Friends of the Baillieu Library in 1987, a booklet listing the first 220 donations was published.⁴ During the following years, a further 41 books have been given by the Friends. The smaller number of additions to the collections in more recent years is the result of a conscious effort to concentrate on major purchases rather than, as sometimes in the past, a larger number of minor purchases, which are more adequately catered for through the main budget. It also reflects the smaller number of financial members of the Friends following the decision not to give automatic borrowing rights as part of membership privileges.

As Denis Richardson wrote in his introduction to the 1987 bibliography, 'The subjects covered by the Friends'

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer now newly imprinted*, Hammersmith: Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, 8 May 1896. From an edition of 425 copies. Purchased by the University of Melbourne with contributions from the Library Endowment Fund, the Ivy May Pendlebury Estate and the Friends of the Baillieu Library, 2005.

Illustration for 'The knyghtes tale' by Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898) with decorative borders and initial letters by William Morris (1834–1896).

acquisitions, and the forms of library material supported have always been extremely varied.⁵ It is not possible within this article to encompass comprehensively all the purchases made by the Friends over the last 40 years. I trust the following highlights will do the field justice.⁶

Art of the book

Over the years, many titles from small and private presses have been purchased for the collection, with the output of two presses in particular being purchased. The Friends were instrumental in completing the University's collections of two major English private presses: the Golden Cockerel Press and the Kelmscott Press.

The first Golden Cockerel titles were purchased in 1972, and the final one 20 years later, an event which was celebrated by a luncheon. In all, 21 titles were purchased, along with several items of ephemera from the Press. The Golden Cockerel Press, founded in 1920, published 214 titles before its closure in 1960. It produced limited editions of classics and contemporary works to the very highest standards and using well-known artists and typographers.

The Kelmscott Press was founded by William Morris in 1891, with the



aim of producing fine books designed within the framework of the Arts and Crafts movement. The first Kelmscott Press titles were acquired by the Friends in 1975, and in recent years the completion of the collection was a major priority. Finally, only the great 1896 Kelmscott edition of *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer* was wanting. This was acquired in 2005 with substantial funds coming from the Library Endowment Fund as well as more modest contributions by the Friends and the Ivy May Pendlebury Estate.⁷ That the University was prepared to provide substantial funding for this purchase was a most welcome reinforcement of the importance of the Baillieu Library collections.

More recently, the Friends have begun purchasing titles produced by the Ashenden Press, another fine, small, English private press.

Voyages and travels

The subject of voyages and travels has always been of particular interest to the Friends and, over the years, at least 15 titles have been added. Most have dealt with Australia and the South Pacific, but have ranged as far afield as Iceland. In 1979, the Friends enabled the acquisition of François Péron's *Voyage de découvertes aux terres australes exécuté ... pendant les années*

1800–1804, published in Paris between 1807 and 1816. These volumes, as Richardson notes, 'are of great importance to the history of European discovery in Tasmania, and the expedition took back to France a very important collection of natural history specimens as well as much geographical information'.⁸

In 1996 the Friends made one major purchase to mark the retirement of Mr Rodney Davidson as president of the Friends, a position which he had held for 18 years. The book was *A second voyage round the world* (1776). This work is commonly known as the 'Cambridge Cook' because of the widely held view that the anonymous author was a Cambridge University student. It appears to be a surreptitious account of Cook's second voyage from the journal of one of the officers, published anonymously, a year before the official account. This purchase was particularly pleasing since it was the only significant contemporary work on James Cook's voyages not held in the Baillieu Library's Australiana Collection, and was on its list of 'most wanted' items. The addition of this book adds greatly to the research value of the collections of Cook and of voyages within the Library. The purchase was funded partly by the Friends' funds and partly

through a fundraising effort, since it was well beyond the means of the Friends. The University Librarian generously agreed to cover the balance through library funds.

A more recent addition, purchased from the David Parsons collection in 2006, was Anders Sparrman, *A voyage to the Cape of Good Hope: Towards the Antarctic Polar Circle* (London, 1786). Sparrman was professor of zoology at Uppsala University and had accompanied James Cook on his second voyage in 1772.

Manuscripts

One of the Friends' most important purchases was made in 1974—an illuminated manuscript produced in England around 1350, a breviary according to the use of Sarum (Salisbury). This is one of the undisputed treasures of the Baillieu Library and was once part of a larger breviary (a book containing the texts for the celebration of Divine Office), the other part of which is in the Bodleian Library in Oxford.⁹ It is one of only 40 known English breviaries from the first half of the 14th century.

The purchase of original mediaeval manuscripts is now well beyond the resources of the Friends. However, funds over the years have been used to purchase fine facsimile

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer now newly imprinted*, Hammersmith: Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, 8 May 1896.

The University's copy is bound to a design by William Morris in original full white pigskin, lavishly stamp-decorated in neo-gothic style, with original metal clasps and banded spine; signed on the back inner dentelle 'Doves Bindery 1896'.

versions of important manuscripts, including several produced for the Court of Berry in France. Other facsimiles of manuscripts held in collections in Italy, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the United States have also been bought. In 1997, for example, the Friends' major purchase was *Der Kreuzritterbibel* (The Morgan Crusader Bible). This superb facsimile of a medieval manuscript was produced as a close copy of the original manuscript in a limited edition of only 980 copies.

Occasional seminars highlighting these splendid works are always popular with members, especially with speakers of the calibre of Professor Margaret Manion.

The sciences

In earlier years, the Friends purchased a considerable number of works in the area of the sciences—botanical, physical and zoological as well as medical history. Many are of great importance, especially the work acquired for its 'coming of age' in 1987: Pierre Bulliard's *Herbier de la France, ou, Collection complete des plantes indigènes de ce royaume* (Paris, 1780–1809). This was probably the first botanical work completely colour-printed without retouching by hand. A separate plate was used for each colour.¹⁰





Special purchases

It is worth recording that the Friends have received two special donations which enabled the purchase of four outstanding titles. In 2000, the George Shaw Trust donated \$100,000 to support the purchase of an item or a collection of permanent value for the Library's Special Collections. The works chosen were an incunabulum, *Quadragesimale de filio prodigo* by Johannes Meder (Basel: Michael Furter, 1495), and another early imprint, *Opera* by Virgil (Strasbourg: Johann Gruninger, 1502).

In 2002, \$4,000 was channelled through the Friends from the T.A. Scheps Bequest, which purchased two items. The works chosen were *Memoirs of an unfortunate young nobleman, return'd from a thirteen years slavery in America* (London: Printed for J. Freeman, 1743) and *Horticultura* by Peter Lauremberg (Frankfurt: Sumptibus Matthaei Meriani, 1654). The latter item further strengthened the Friends' considerable purchases in the area of botanical sciences.

Conservation and cataloguing

A major decision taken during Peter McInnes's presidency was to provide funds to assist the Library with the

conservation of its collections. A special appeal for funds raised money which supported the conservation of some early newspapers and an important early edition of *Holinsbed's chronicles*. Subsequent funds were provided to conserve an important heraldic manuscript from the Gorman Cambridge Collection—*The foundation of the Universitie of Cambridge* (see p. 12).

Funding was provided for the cataloguing of historical maps of the University, Melbourne and Victoria. A total of 168 maps were catalogued, including 77 which were not recorded as being held by any other library. As a result of this project, all the Library's historical maps of the University are now catalogued, as are the majority of the historical maps of Melbourne. Funding was also provided to purchase two special sets of shelves to house large folios in the Rare Books Collection.

A recent decision was to fund a new and revised catalogue of the Gorman Collection, *Cambridge in books: The university, the town and the country*, held by the Baillieu Library and formed by the late Dr Pierre Gorman CBE, a major benefactor of the Library and a stalwart Friend over many years. The first edition of the catalogue was compiled by Dr Gorman in 1998, since when the

collection has doubled in size to over 2,500 items.

Another link to the Cambridge Collection occurred in 2005 when the Friends, in association with the Centre for the Book at Monash University, were able to publish a major lecture by David McKitterick, *From local collecting to global understanding: Cambridge University and its histories*.¹¹ McKitterick is the acknowledged expert on the history of Cambridge University's libraries and publishing.

Other activities

A regular part of the Friends' activities has always been talks and other events focussing on the collection in particular and on books and literature in general. A significant number of these subsequently found their way into print in the *University of Melbourne Library Journal*. The Friends have long enjoyed a good working relationship with Melbourne University Press (now Melbourne University Publishing) which has seen MUP authors talk to the Friends about their work. Major seminars have been held at various times on romance fiction, cookery books and medieval manuscripts, highlighting the splendid collection of facsimiles purchased by the Friends.

In recent years, the annual general meeting, held in March, has been addressed by a senior member of the University, including the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Relations). These occasions enable the Friends to set their own operations within the wider University context as well as reminding senior members of the important role the Friends have played, and continue to play, in developing and conserving the Library's collections.

Once or twice a year, the Friends visit other important libraries and collections. These popular occasions have included visits, among others, to the Royal Society of Victoria, the Sugden Collection on the early history of Methodism at Queen's College, the Melbourne Athenaeum, the Melbourne Cricket Club and the University of Melbourne Archives.

The future

Over its first 40 years, the Friends group has made a significant contribution to the holdings of rare and fine works in the Baillieu Library. The funding of some recent projects has recognised the importance of conserving and cataloguing works, besides simply purchasing them. This combination can be expected to

continue in the coming years. The Friends of the Baillieu Library is committed to pursuing its aims within the resources available to it. The steady state of its membership numbers remains a matter of concern and work remains to be done in attracting new members.

Graham Dudley was elected President of the Friends of the Baillieu Library in March 2007. A librarian and public servant for over 30 years until retiring in early 2007, he managed for many years the State Government's grants programs for public libraries. Graham has a particular interest in the history of libraries and mechanics' institutes.

Members of the Friends of the Baillieu Library receive many benefits, including invitations to special events throughout the year, a substantial discount on the University Library membership and borrowing fee, a 15 per cent discount on purchases from the University Bookshop, and receipt of this new publication, *University of Melbourne Collections*.

Readers interested in joining the Friends are encouraged to contact Ms Leanne McCredden, c/- Cultural Collections Reading Room, 3rd floor, Baillieu Library, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, telephone (03) 8344 5997, email leannelm@unimelb.edu.au or visit the Friends website <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/culturalcollections/links/baillieufriends.html>.

Notes

- 1 The early history of the Friends is covered in Peter McInnes, 'Friends of the Baillieu Library', *University of Melbourne Library Journal*, vol. 5,

- no. 2, December 1999, pp. 38–40.
- 2 Words taken from the original invitation as cited by McInnes, 'Friends of the Baillieu Library', p. 38.
- 3 McInnes, 'Friends of the Baillieu Library', p. 38.
- 4 June Stewart, Juliet Flesch and Valerie Turnbull (eds), *Friends of the Baillieu Library: A list of books presented to the University of Melbourne 1966–1987*, Parkville: University of Melbourne, 1987.
- 5 W.D. Richardson, 'Introduction', in Stewart, Flesch and Turnbull (eds), *Friends of the Baillieu Library*, p. 7.
- 6 Purchases for the period 1988 to 1998 are dealt with in detail by Merete Smith in 'Presented by the Friends of the Baillieu Library', *University of Melbourne Library Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, December 1999, pp. 44–48. I am indebted to Merete for allowing me to use her work for this article.
- 7 For a discussion of the making of the Kelmscott Chaucer, see Pam Pryde, 'The making of the Kelmscott Press' *The works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, in Brian Allison, Astrid Britt Krautschneider and Pam Pryde, *Kelmscott: A medieval adventure in the age of the machine*, exhibition catalogue, 2nd edition, University of Melbourne, November 2005, pp. 18–21.
- 8 Richardson, 'Introduction', p. 12.
- 9 This manuscript is discussed in detail by Margaret Manion and Vera Vines in *Medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts in Australian collections*, Melbourne: Thames and Hudson, 1984, pp. 98ff, and Merete Smith, 'Sarum breviary', in Chris McAuliffe and Peter Yule (eds), *Treasures: Highlights of the cultural collections of the University of Melbourne*, Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Publishing, 2003, p. 152.
- 10 Richardson, 'Introduction', p. 13.
- 11 This publication was the initiative of Professor Wallace Kirsop and his foreword on the development of the Baillieu Library's collections is essential reading.