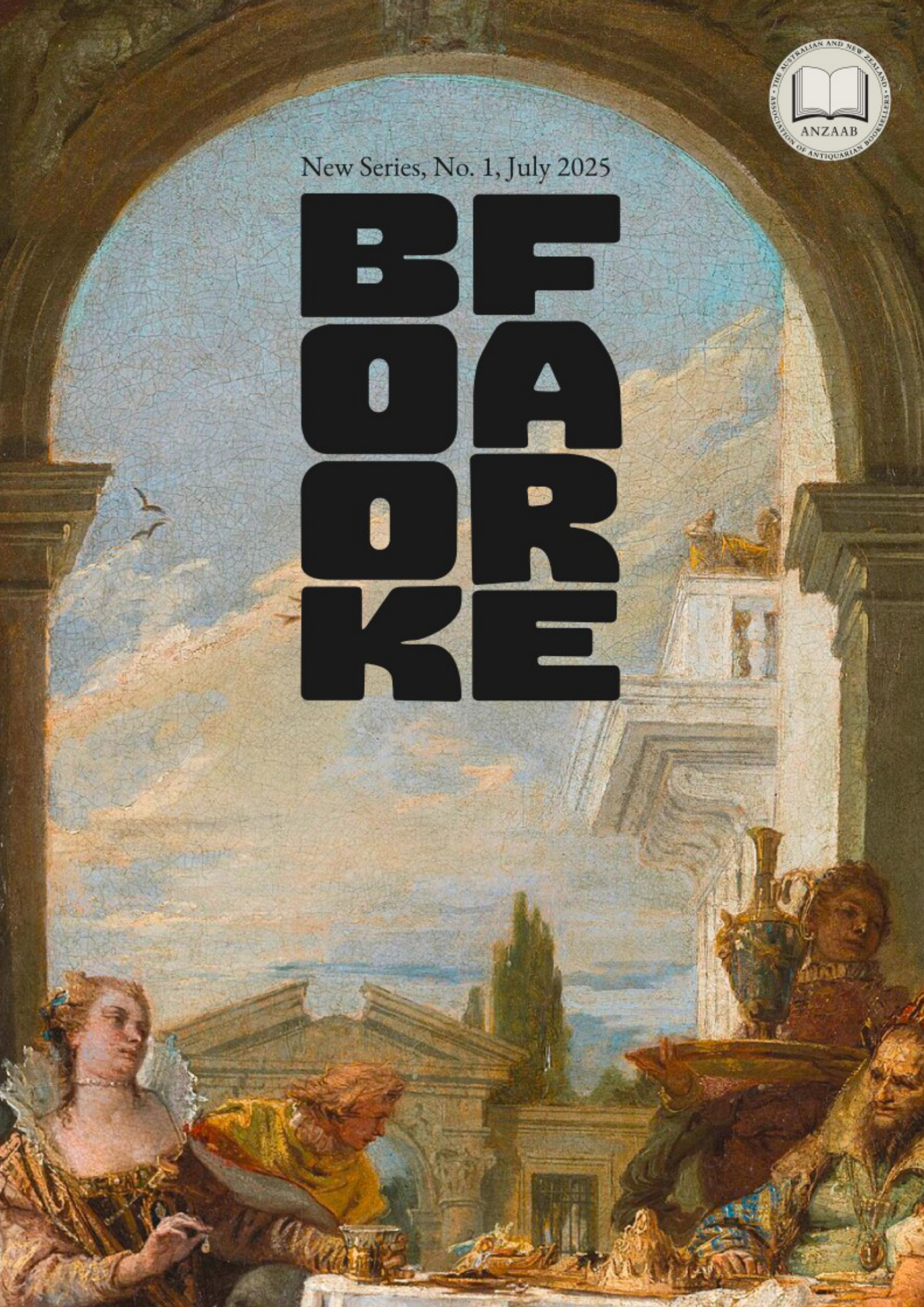


New Series, No. 1, July 2025

# BOB KORF KE







An occasional newsletter of The Australian & New Zealand Association of  
Antiquarian Booksellers sharing our world with those who love books.

New Series, No.1, July 2025

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*If you are curious about old books and what makes them collectable,  
if maps and printed ephemera attract you, then Melbourne in July is your destination.*

**Melbourne Rare Book Week**—24 July to 2 August. [🔗](#)

Presented by Rare Books Melbourne Inc

**Melbourne Rare Book Fair**—31 July to 2 August. [🔗](#)

Presented by ANZAAB with the support of The University of Melbourne

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## A message from the ANZAAB President, Dawn Albinger



Welcome to ANZAAB's occasional newsletter, relaunched here under the title *Book Fare*, sharing our world with those who love interesting, old and beautiful books. As you will discover in this first issue of the new series, *Book Fare* will include book news from around the world, with a particular focus on Australian and New Zealand books and collections.

The new editorial team embraces a refreshing mix of long-established and more recent members of the ANZAAB community: Tom Baker-Stimson (Michael Treloar Antiquarian Booksellers, Adelaide, SA, and an ANZAAB Board member); Kay Craddock (Kay Craddock Antiquarian Bookseller, Melbourne, Vic.); Alice McCormick (Rare

Illustrated Books, Sydney, NSW); and Gordon McIlreavy (Buderim Rare Books, Buderim, Qld).

If you have a story to share about an extraordinary acquisition, a reflection on your time in the trade, or an account of a particularly fine collection, please contact Kay ([kay@kaycraddock.com](mailto:kay@kaycraddock.com)) or Tom ([tom@treloars.com](mailto:tom@treloars.com)).

We trust that you will find this new format for our newsletters to be engaging, informative, and fun.

Enjoy!



THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF  
ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSELLERS LIMITED

ACN 050095531 ABN 32050095531 [www.anzaab.com](http://www.anzaab.com) [admin@anzaab.com](mailto:admin@anzaab.com)

Mailing address: PO Box 7009, Doncaster East, VIC 3109.

President: Dawn Albinger Vice-President: Tim White Secretary: Dafydd Davies

Treasurer: Sue Treloar Board Members: Yarran Jenkins, Tom Baker-Stimson and Nick Kissajukian

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Return button at the bottom of each article will bring you back here.*

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## LESSONS OF BOOK SCHOOL



Overview of the Australian and New Zealand Rare Book School

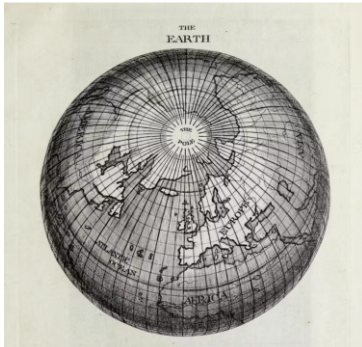
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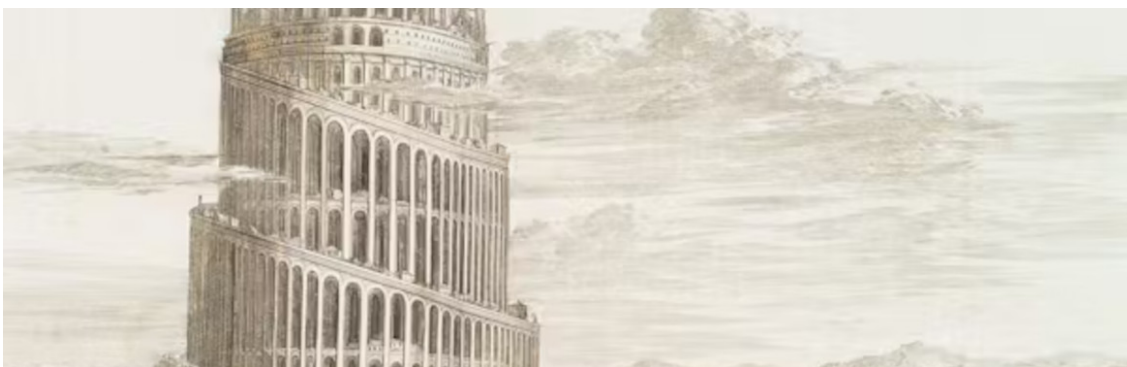
The David Ruggles Prize





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# LESSONS OF BOOK SCHOOL



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## Australian and New Zealand Rare Book School (ANZRBS)

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The 2025 ANZRBS was hosted by Victoria University of Wellington and The National Library of New Zealand from 27 to 31 January 2025.

Topics for this year's programme were:

- Experimental Letterpress: Inspirations and Techniques, with Tara McLeod
- Provenance in Books: Tracing Owners and Collections, with David Pearson
- Reading Chinese: the Book, the Collection, and the Library in Late Imperial China, with Duncan Campbell

ANZAAB awarded a full bursary to Jack Larsen (Bookhound, New Zealand) and a half bursary to Jack Straughair (Asia Bookroom, ACT, Australia).



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## The World Beyond the Words - Dr Morgan Burgess

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In 2017, while researching for my doctorate in Literary Studies, I attended a conference at Villa La Pitra, New York University's campus in the Florentine hills. Talk about congenial places for deep thinking and learning! The fourteenth-century villa has sloping olive grove gardens, Mediterranean cypress trees, and a view of the Duomo in the distance. The conference was as spectacular as the setting, the speakers were intellectually generous, and the talks inspiring.

Endowed to the university in the 1990s, the villa and its contents support an array of cultural studies research. At a workshop hosted by fashion historian Jessamyn Hatcher I learnt about a collection of dresses worn by Hortense Acton, the villa's owner in the early twentieth century. They had been re-discovered in a steamer trunk over a hundred years after they'd been carefully stored away.

Some of the dresses were on display for the workshop. They were beautiful – think satins, silks, beading. What I remember most about them, though, is the way enzymes from Hortense's sweat continue to affect the textiles. Even after so many years. Weakening the fibres, those enzymes are a persistent reminder of Hortense and her life.

At the time, I was interested in the textual stories recorded in books, but the materiality of Hortense's dresses captivated me. In the years since, especially in my work as a rare books librarian, I have come to appreciate books as objects, too. Like Hortense's dresses, their

materiality provides glimpses of intimate histories, stories described in signs of use; wear and tear to bindings and pages, and notes and marginalia recorded inside.

Earlier this year I attended a course all about seeing and deciphering these histories embodied in the materiality of books: Provenance in Books: Tracing Owners and Collections. Guided by David Pearson, a small group of fellow book enthusiasts and I spent a week learning to interpret the non-textual stories told by the rare book collection at the Turnbull Library in Wellington.



*An example of a beautiful armorial binding*

These rare books told a story about the movement and veneration of information particular to New Zealand and its colonial heritage. Māori people have a tradition of oral storytelling and record

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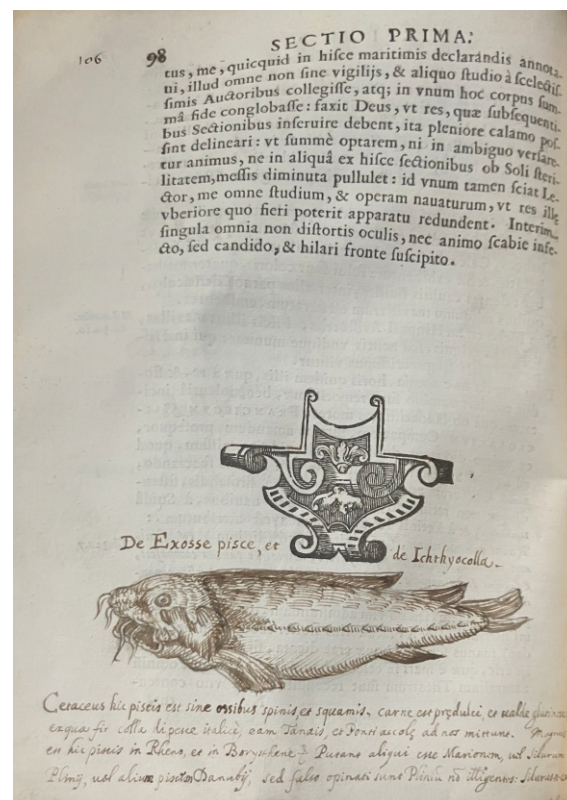
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keeping, so cultures of writing were imported to Aotearoa New Zealand by European colonists. The books we saw belong to that colonial tradition. A Catholic text, for example, in which each mention of the Pope was neatly struck through with a neat line of ink, telling the story of a reader determined to keep the book on the safe side of Henry VIII's anti-Catholic purges during the Reformation in Tudor England. The book's presence in a New Zealand library's collection provides evidence for an intellectual tradition imported from its English roots. Another book told tales of the way this intellectual tradition was maintained in the antipodes: classroom education. A primary school textbook filled with lewd sketches – the most memorable a flamboyantly drawn horse alongside the unfortunate human recipient of its defecation – recalling for me the tedium of boring lessons, an apparently timeless experience.

As objects, books create meaning in relationship to each other when collected into libraries onto private bookshelves. They offer insight into their collectors' values and intentions. In context at the Turnbull Library, the books we studied admit their myopic representation of history; they are just one thread in the fabric of Aotearoa's story. In the years since 1918, when Alexander Turnbull donated his personal collection to found the library that bears his name, successive generations of librarians have expanded upon its then narrowly colonial point of view. The collection now includes material that speaks to the many threads of the nation's story, including the perspectives of multiple cultures, gender identities, sexual ori-

entations, ages, and lived experiences. During the course I was also reminded of how the physical settings in which we engage with books contribute to the meanings we can draw from their materiality. Architectural and curatorial choices at the Turnbull Library make it clear that Aotearoa's Māori heritage is respected and valued. While there, I saw the Treaty of Waitangi in the He Tohu exhibition and learned the significance of the wairua bowls. Positioned for visitors to cleanse themselves of tapu or sacred energy when leaving the reading rooms, the wairua bowls are a reminder of the taonga, socio-cultural treasures, that reside there. This environment helped surface the book's colonial perspectives, placing their stories they told books into wider context.



*An interesting example of marginalia*





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## Rare Book School 2025 - David Pearson

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I was delighted to be able to come to Wellington to run my course on **Provenance in Books: Tracing Owners and Collections in January 2025**. I have run ANZRBS courses in Australia but this was only the second time I have had the chance to do so in New Zealand, after doing a week in Dunedin in 2009.

Rare Book Schools have flourished around the world since the original one was founded by Terry Belanger at the University of Columbia in 1983. That one is still going strong at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where it moved in 1992, and now offers around 40 full-week courses every year in multiple venues across north-east America. An initiative to create one in London in the 1990s was short-lived, but in 2007 the London Rare Books School was established and has been running ever since. The ANZ version therefore stole a march on London by beginning in 2005. The west coast of the USA has been served by the California Rare Book School since that same year.

The basic model is the same across them all: identify a range of topics in book history where people need to develop knowledge and skills, find experts who can teach them, and bring them together with small classes of a dozen or so students and plenty of books. That last bit is important – one of the characteristic strengths of these schools is a wealth of hands-on experiencing of historic books as an integral part of the teaching. People learn about books by seeing and

handling them, more than by being told about them. The Charlottesville RBS has built up a dedicated teaching collection of around 100,000 books to support the courses, while the others are typically hosted in research libraries with collections that can be quarried.



*Crane, Walter, 1845-1915. E libris Alex H Turnbull. Fortuna favet audaci [1891]. The Graham Bookplate Collection. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.*

I have run my Provenance course in most of those schools over the last decade or so and was pleased to be able to bring it to New Zealand. It is based on my *Provenance Research in Book History*, a handbook first published in 1994 and completely revised for the new edition of 2019. This aims to describe the many forms of provenance evidence encountered in historic books, with guidance on their recognition, dating and interpretation, and I always think of the course as the living film of the book. Interest in the former

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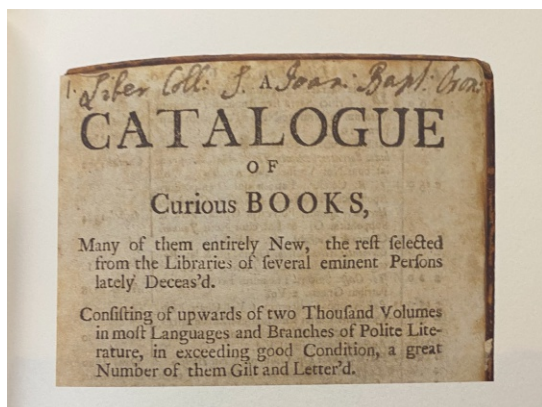
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ownership of books has grown hugely in recent decades, as we have become aware of how this kind of evidence helps us to understand how books have been received, read and valued over the generations, and what influence (or not) they may have had.

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*An eighteenth-century Oxford college ownership inscription, Liber Coll[egii]: S[ancti]. Joan[nis]: Bapt[istae]: Oxon[iensis]., 'The book of the College of St John the Baptist, Oxford'*

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We used to take note of provenance only if it related to famous people – the cult of the association copy – but we now appreciate the cultural value of all kinds of footprints within the individual story of every book. Attendees at these courses tend to have a mixture of backgrounds, united by a shared interest in books – librarians, curators, dealers, auctioneers, collectors, academics – and the Wellington cohort fitted that norm. The bringing together of these different but related professional backgrounds is a strength of the model. We were oversubscribed, which is encouraging, but disappointing for

those we had to turn away (something I never like doing) – too large a class, quite apart from the physical limits of the teaching space, dilutes the experience for everyone.

From my perspective, we had a great week, and I do hope everyone went away with the same thought. People came from across Australia and New Zealand and after a week of talk and chalk from me we wrapped it up with my 'take a book, look at it and tell us about it' exercise. The richness of the Turnbull collections, which we were able to quarry extensively to illustrate the course, allowed us to use some interesting books and the support from Anthony Tedeschi and his colleagues at the National Library was an essential underpinning to the whole week. Every library collection is a voyage of discovery for me, and who would have thought that in New Zealand I would find an 18th-century bookseller's ink stamp, only the second such example I have ever seen? At the end of the preface to the latest edition of the Provenance book I thank 'all the bright and alert students asking the right questions, finding the gaps and pushing the boundaries' who have attended my Rare Book School courses, for keeping me on my toes and up to date. My Wellington 2025 group are very definitely added to that list.

## *David Pearson*

David Pearson is a distinguished scholar of book history and is a regular lecturer at Rare Book School (University of Virginia) and its offshoots London Rare Books School and ANZRBS.

He has recently been appointed editor of *The Book Collector*.

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## Reports from ANZAAB Bursary Recipients

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**Jack Larsen**

**Book Hound, New Zealand**

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Sign them, stamp them, dot them with gold? I'm considering how to mark my books. Commission a bookplate? Use the embossing stamp a friend gave me last year? It didn't feel quite right at the time: I preferred to leave my collection pristine. But now I have been taught for five days by David Pearson on the topic of Provenance. 'Pristine' has come to seem a synonym for 'un-informative'.

The course was divided loosely into three parts. Day one was an overview of the field: what is provenance, what categories of provenance evidence exist, why might we care about it? Days two through four concerned particular types of evidence. I wanted to send copies of the exercises to my puzzle-enjoying family members, since they were not only useful but as much fun as jigsaws. We learned to read puzzling hands, what bookplate ornamentation styles are characteristic of what decades, what reference books we ought to have at our fingertips when working out the owner of an unnamed armorial stamp, and where else we might look outside a book itself to learn about its movement through libraries and auction-houses. Day five was the time to apply what we'd learned: each student chose an early modern book from a collection of fifteen, and spent forty-five minutes looking at them and working out a preliminary presentation.

[Click here to read the rest of this article.](#)



**Jack Straughair**

**Asia Bookroom, Canberra, ACT**

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My deepest and warmest thanks again to ANZAAB for sponsoring my attendance at David Pearson's Provenance in Books course at this year's Australian and New Zealand Rare Book School in Wellington, kindly hosted by the National Library of New Zealand and the Victoria University of Wellington. The partial scholarship extended by the Association was exceedingly generous, and I very much appreciate having had the opportunity to further advance my skills in the antiquarian trade as a result.

In the weeks following the course, I have been making active efforts to apply David's insights and have eagerly shared a range of learnings from the program with my colleagues at Asia Bookroom. The course further developed my appreciation for books as objects, and highlighted the relationship between book ownership and individual experiences. As the key points of the course have settled and integrated with my work, a greater understanding of the antiquarian trade and its role in encouraging the transfer of knowledge has also grown. ants of a long-since abandoned conception of history as the story of "great men".

[Click here to read the rest of this article.](#)



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## BOOK NEWS AROUND THE WORLD



### The Launch of Melbourne Rare Book Week 2025



*MRBW Launch - Sketch by Alissa Duke*

The formal launch of Melbourne Rare Book Week (MRBW) 2025 took place at Tonic House on Friday 30th May 2025 in front of an audience of more than 80 partners, guests and friends. The guest speaker was Krystyna Campbell-Pretty AM, who was introduced by the Honorary Treasurer of Rare Books Melbourne, Dr. Jonathan Burdon AM. Krystyna gave an impassioned speech on her commitment to philanthropy to

the Arts in general, but particularly to the decorative arts, which encompasses both fashion and books. She particularly emphasised the importance of women taking a leading role in such philanthropy.

The Program Director of MRBW, Emeritus Professor Chris Browne, thanked Krystyna for her speech and for her role as a major donor to MRBW and Rare

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Books Melbourne. Both Jonathan and Chris thanked Gary and Genevieve Morgan for their generous support of MRBW since its inception in 2012, and also thanked Michele Levine, who was unable to be present, for generously allowing MRBW to have access to Tonic House. The various signs and posters from MRBW, ANZAAB and ILAB on display emphasised the ongoing collaborative relationship between the three organisations.

### *Emeritus Professor Chris Browne*

Programme Director  
Melbourne Rare Book Week



*MRBW Launch Krystyna  
Campbell-Pretty AM*

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## **The Hamilton Club: 150th anniversary, Library and Charles Dickens, by Roz Greenwood**

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Hamilton Club, Western Victoria, of which I am a member, celebrates its 150th year of operation in 2025. Yes, since 1997, we do have female members, and several are on the Club's Library Committee. Hamilton Club has rich archives, including the first minute book from 1875 with minutes recorded in the hand of Alfred D'Orsay Tennyson Dickens, our club founder and one of two of Charles Dickens' sons sent to Australia to make their fortunes. The other was Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, both named after some of their father's friends. It is only in the last twenty years that a library has been established with the collection aiming to source and preserve Western District history, Australian and Victorian history generally, and material relating to Charles Dickens and his sons.



*A gathering of members of the  
Hamilton Club*

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The Dickens connection is much valued, and as a group of book-lovers dedicated to researching books and ephemera on the subject, we have had some exciting finds.

A full set of the works of Charles Dickens was sourced by Wes Rogers, a Library Committee member, collector and historian of the Western District.

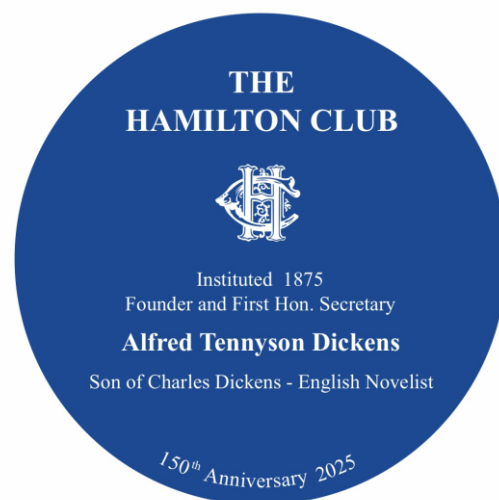
This set was not only owned by Alfred Dickens, but also contained a cheque uncashed and signed by Charles Dickens himself. An early membership certificate of the Dickens Fellowship (1907) is on display in the library, along with a nineteenth-century photographic portrait of Alfred.

From the inception of the library, the Dickens Fellowships, both the Melbourne and the Adelaide branches, have had a strong literary and social connection with Hamilton, with dinners, performances and readings being held annually.

Alfred Dickens was a leading citizen of Hamilton at the end of the nineteenth century. He was a sportsman, a not-very-expert horseman, a stock and station agent, a gregarious and sociable clubman, and of course the in-

spiration for the Club itself. It is said that when the number of members outgrew the local pub as a meeting place, the young Dickens went ahead and chose the site and secured it without the approval of the rest of the inaugural committee. Still in its present position on the corner of Gray and Kennedy Streets, its location has a bitter-sweet aspect, as Alfred Dickens' wife Jessie was killed in a buggy accident on that very corner, in 1878.

Hamilton Club has commissioned a plaque for the 150th anniversary.



*Roz Greenwood OAM*

Roz Greenwood Old and Rare Books  
(Dunkeld, Vic)

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## Russia: Book publishers arrested in anti-LGBTI campaign

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**Reacting to the Russian security forces' detention of at least 10 book publishing professionals in Moscow on "extremism"-related charges over alleged "LGBTI propaganda" in books published by affiliated printing houses, Natalia Zviagina, Amnesty International's Russia Director, said: "In their ruthless campaign against LGBTI people, Russian authorities have now come after book publishers,**

**accusing them of 'extremism' for merely doing their job: bringing books to readers. This shameless heavy-handed use of state apparatus against literature is as absurd as it is terrifying."**

*Read the full article here.*



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## EVENTS NEAR AND FAR



### Writers Revealed — an exhibition from 12 April to 3 August

Presented by HOTA, Home of the Arts,  
Bundall Road, Surfers Paradise, QLD



Treasures from the British Library  
and the National Portrait Gallery,  
London (with some assistance from  
Archives Rare Books, Brisbane).

Explore six centuries of world-famous  
portraits and rare manuscripts from  
literary legends in this unprecedented  
exhibition.

Offering a once-in-a-lifetime  
opportunity to come face-to-face with  
some of the most well-known figures  
in English literature, the exhibition will

feature literary giants such as William  
Shakespeare, Jane Austen, the Brontë  
sisters, William Blake, Virginia Woolf,  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, J.R.R. Tolkien,  
Lewis Carroll, Sir Kazuo Ishiguro and  
Zadie Smith.

For the first time, intimate handwritten  
manuscripts, letters and illustrations, as  
well as rare, published editions from the  
British Library will be seen alongside  
outstanding portraits of authors from  
the National Portrait Gallery, London,  
exploring the connection between  
literature and visual expression.

Exhibition visitors will encounter some  
of the world's most celebrated  
individuals who created great literature  
such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Lord of the  
Rings*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Harry Potter*,  
*Oliver Twist*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Dracula*,  
*Sherlock Holmes*, *Peter Rabbit* and many  
others.

*Find out more here.*

 Hold CTRL key and click to open  
external web links in a new window

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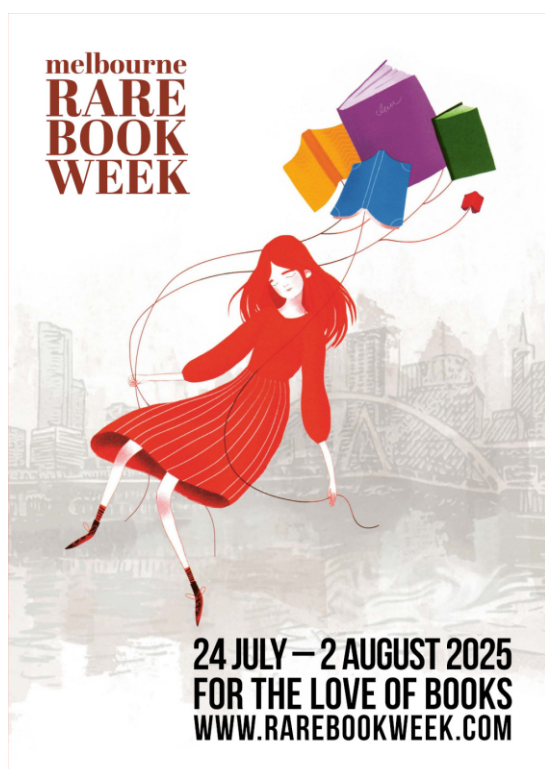


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## Melbourne Rare Book Week — 24 July to 2 August 2025

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This year represents the eleventh time that Melbourne Rare Book Week (MRBW) has been offered to the public as a celebration of all things relating to books, printing and creativity on paper. This year we are offering a full and varied programme, which showcases the people, places and objects that make Melbourne such a fine UNESCO City of Literature. We are also pleased to be able to include a symposium organised by the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers in this year's programme.



Among the special offerings this year will be an opportunity to see one of the absolute highlights of nineteenth-century Australia, the artist William Strutt's *Victoria the Golden*, a visual record of life in Victoria from 1851 to

1862, which was presented by the then Premier to the State Parliamentary Library of Victoria in 1907.

Many events offered by our partners emphasise the diversity of the rich holdings and interests in our state. These include an exploration of the contribution of women to the study and depiction of wildlife (Museums Victoria), the state's collection of illuminated manuscripts and fine bindings (State Library of Victoria), the story of Breaker Morant and the Bushveldt Carbineers in the Boer War (Royal Historical Society of Victoria), the best collection of sporting books and memorabilia in the country (Melbourne Cricket Club Library) and the story of Joseph Furphy, an extraordinary Irish-Australian observer of colonial life and attitudes presented by Dr Frances Devlin-Glass (The Celtic Club @ The Wild Geese, Brunswick).



*Detail of an illuminated manuscript*

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We also celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Jane Austen, the writings of her best 20th century rival, Georgette Heyer, the contribution of Samuel Pepys to the Royal Navy, a children's event with Tove Jansen's beloved Moomins, the story of Melbourne's oldest lending library, and an exploration with The University of Melbourne of that great nineteenth-century rite of passage 'The Grand Tour'.

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*Charles Edmond Brock illustrates the moment Elizabeth Bennet is first introduced to Mr Darcy as a suitable dance partner by Sir William Lucas. Published in J.M. Dent's 'English Idylls' edition of Pride and Prejudice in 1896.*

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*Portrait of Joseph Furphy, author of Such is Life (1903).*

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Come and join us in Melbourne from the 24th July to the 2nd August for MRBW 2025. Surely you will all find something of interest in one of our 45 events.

## *Emeritus Professor Chris Browne*

Programme Director, Melbourne  
Rare Book Week

**Website:** <https://rarebooksmelbourne.com/> 

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/RareBookWeek/>

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## Melbourne Rare Book Fair — 31 July to 2 August

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**Melbourne Rare Book Fair (MRBF)**

**31 July to 2 August.**

**Presented by ANZAAB with the  
support of The University of  
Melbourne**

The Melbourne Rare Book Fair returns to Wilson Hall, The University of Melbourne. It is the major annual book fair of ANZAAB and one of only a few rare book fairs held in the Southern hemisphere. Now in its 55th edition, the Fair will again feature rare and wonderful books, manuscripts, ephemera, prints (and much more) from the best rare book and antiquarian dealers across Australia and New Zealand as well as from Austria, Denmark, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.



Whatever your tastes may be, you are sure to find a rare and interesting book, print or piece of ephemera to add to your collection.



**The Book Fair will be open as follows:**

Thursday 31 July 6:00-9:00pm  
Friday 1 August 10:00am-5:00pm  
Saturday 2 August 10:00am-4:00pm

Wilson Hall, The University of  
Melbourne, Parkville (entry via Monash  
Road)

ANZAAB will run book fair tours on  
Friday 1 August and Saturday 2 August.  
These should be booked via the Rare  
Book Fair website homepage.

For more information visit:

***The Melbourne Rare  
Book Fair Website*** [!\[\]\(95b425611cbd2b8716a140cf67c81822\_img.jpg\)](#)

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## ILAB Symposium — 30 July 2025

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Following the successful symposia in New York (2019), Oxford (2022) and Paris (2024), ILAB invites rare booksellers, librarians, collectors, and anyone handling antiquarian materials to the next edition of its international series of symposia, this year taking place in Melbourne.

This global forum will bring together leading voices from across the rare book trade, special collections and the academic world to explore pressing issues in the field.

### *Session 1*

Why It Matters: Care and Integrity in Cataloguing

### *Session 2*

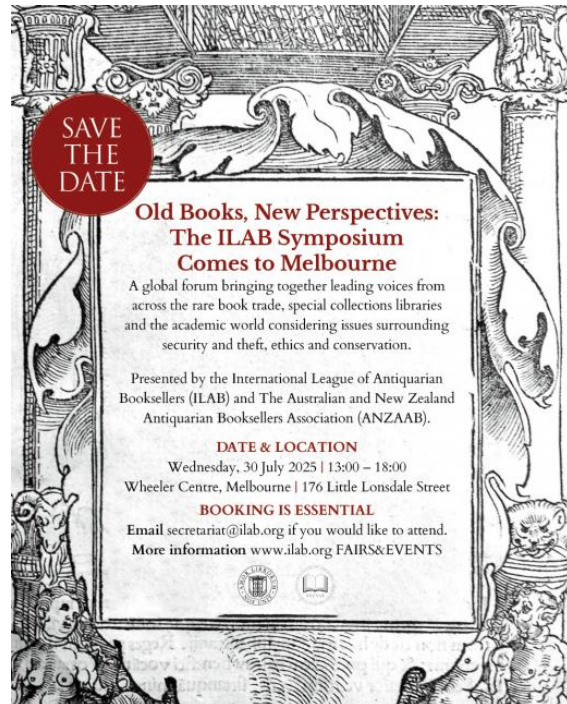
Ethics and book repair: What's the big deal?

### *Session 3*

Security. A Shared Concern

*[Click here for full details of the programme and registration.](#)* 

The symposium is co-sponsored by ANZAAB, The Australian and New Zealand Association of Antiquarian Booksellers.



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## ILAB International Mentoring Programme

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Starting a career in the Rare Book Trade? Are you new to the world of rare books? Thinking about launching your own bookselling business or looking for guidance in your early career?

You are warmly invited to a session introducing the ILAB International Mentoring Programme. This global initiative connects early-career booksellers with experienced ILAB members, offering one-on-one guidance to

help navigate the rare book trade. Whether you have graduated from a rare book school, recently started your business, or simply feel you would benefit from a helping hand, this session is for you. All questions and aspiring booksellers are welcome!

Presented by the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers on Saturday 2 August at 9am.

*[Click to register for the event.](#)* 

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## Sydney Rare Book Week — October

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### Sydney Rare Book Week (SRBW)— October 2025

The Sydney Rare Book Week program includes free talks, workshops and tours that celebrate the importance of books, publishing, book production and collecting, and will be held at venues across Sydney.

The program concludes with the Sydney Rare Book Fair at the Library of NSW, from Thursday 23 October 2025.



*Details pending.* [!\[\]\(d66ff64371a51729ac8c1cdaa685ba6f\_img.jpg\)](#)

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## Sydney Rare Book Fair — 23 October to 25 October

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### Sydney Rare Book Fair (SRBF)—23 October to 25 October 2025

ANZAAB's 56th Australian Antiquarian Book Fair will be held in the Glasshouse at the Library of NSW, as part of Sydney Rare Book Week. A gathering of buyers, sellers and lovers of books not to be missed.

Honorary Sydney Fair Convenor

*Nicholas Kissajukian*

[nick@antiqueprintmaproom.com](mailto:nick@antiqueprintmaproom.com)

*[sydneyrarebookfair.com](http://sydneyrarebookfair.com)* [!\[\]\(4b7a79268f6ba26c1471d4232fffa85a\_img.jpg\)](#)



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## TALES FROM THE TRADE



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### ANZAAB Life Member, Kay Craddock, celebrates her sixtieth anniversary as a bookseller

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On May 28th, 1965, my mother Muriel, father Les, and I opened our first shop in Buckley Street, Essendon. Our stock was a combination of second-hand books, bric-a-brac, old furniture, and handicrafts that Muriel and I had made. Sadly, my father Les died of a heart attack two months after the opening.

In 1967, at the urging of one of our customers who had an empty retail shop in the city, my mother and I took a sub-lease at 569 Bourke Street, Melbourne, whilst continuing to run the Essendon shop for another two years.

There have been many highlights and quite a few low moments in my book-selling career.

*They say. What say they? Let them say!*



*Muriel and Kay Craddock in 1998  
by Ian Kenins*

This famous motto, with its early Greek origins, has been adopted by many over the centuries. It was often quoted to me by my mother during the difficult times in our careers. During our first week in business in May, 1965, amidst all the

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*Kay Craddock - Antiquarian  
Bookseller 156 Collins Street*

congratulatory comments, we heard the casual remark: I wonder how long they will last? In 1967, the week before we opened our second bookshop in Bourke Street, and while the windows were still covered with paper, a comment drifted through the half-opened door: I bet they won't last longer than six months.

Another surprisingly motivational decision was to leave school at the age of sixteen, having failed to pass my Intermediate Certificate. A school friend tried hard to persuade me to change my mind, challenging me with his belief that I would never achieve anything worthwhile in life if I left school so early.

I wonder now if these early negative predictions became the challenges that have contributed to the longevity of my business? Although my father did not live long enough to see the business

prosper, my mother Muriel remained my partner in the bookshop for five decades, only retiring at 96 years of age due to macular degeneration. She died in 2017 at the grand age of 105 years and 8 months, having maintained her interest in our bookshop for most of those years.

In reflecting on my life as a bookseller I am acutely aware of, and grateful for, the support of many, including friends, colleagues and our customers. I am no longer able to celebrate this milestone with my mother and business partner Muriel Craddock, but I am glad to be able to pay tribute and give thanks to my husband, Dr Jonathan Burdon AM, for his support and involvement in the bookshop over the past twenty-four years.

We are fortunate (some may say foolhardy) to occupy prime Melbourne retail space in The Assembly Hall building at 156 Collins Street, a fine example of Gothic Revival architecture which formerly housed the much-loved Presbyterian Bookroom. We continue to enjoy an open-shop environment which encompasses both antiquarian and general secondhand bookselling.

Importantly, Jonathan and I are grateful for the support and assistance of our general manager, Alison Sayers, who joined the bookshop in 1987 and David Cosgrove, who joined us in 2014. Together we enter our seventh decade of bookselling with a continuing commitment to the time-honoured traditions of our profession.

## *Kay Craddock AM*

Kay Craddock - Antiquarian Bookseller  
(Melbourne, Vic)



[Hold CTRL key and click to open external web links in a new window](#)

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## Firsts London 2025 by Douglas Stewart

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Firsts (the London Rare Book Fair) was again held at Saatchi Gallery from 15–18 May 2025, the fifth occasion it has been in this venue. Just under a hundred British and International exhibitors took part, which is a small drop in numbers from previous years. Two ANZAAB members exhibited this year, Archives Fine Books, Brisbane, and Douglas Stewart Fine Books, Melbourne. It was the first time that Archives had exhibited in London and they took an impressive range of literary manuscripts and first editions, of which several found homes in U.K. institutions and private collections. We took an eclectic range of travel books, literature and newly acquired books suited to an international market, and found that the weaker Australian dollar made our prices an attractive proposition for other dealers as well as collectors, so sales were healthy.

The structure of the fair in Saatchi Gallery means that the Ground Floor booths attract a premium price, the Second Floor is the lowest price, and the First Floor is mid-range. Both Archives and I took booths on the First Floor. I feel this is the best value option which still attracts visitors who make it up one flight of stairs, but might run out of puff for the second.

Exhibitors submit anonymous sales figures to the organisers at the close of the fair which are shared to track performance. Total sales were just over £5,000,000 with an average take of about £53,000 per exhibitor, a little higher than the year before. While the Ground Floor and First Floor stands were pretty much all sold, there were fewer dealers up on the Second Floor, which might indicate the dealers with

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*Firsts Book Fair - Photograph By Jon Baker*



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less valuable books are not finding the fair is working for them. Two dealers reported zero sales which would be disappointing, and the top take was £650,000, which would have seen some champagne corks popping.

The fair is well patronised by collectors, dealers and librarians who do indeed travel internationally just to visit the fair. We sold a good number of books to American booksellers over on a buying trip, and in previous years we have sold material to collections such as the Smithsonian, the British Library and Yale University at the fair. A few Australian customers also came over to visit, it is a lovely time of year in London, and Europe is just a train ride away, so bibliophiles should consider including a visit to Firsts in their next itinerary. The next edition of Firsts London will be 14–17 May 2026, so mark your diaries! For those who can't wait that long, Firsts Hong Kong will return to the Hong Kong Maritime Museum from 5–7 December this year. With direct flights from Australian cities and a concentration on material on East and South East Asia, this fair also attracts good attendance from Australian booksellers and customers, so we might see you there also!



*Dawn Albinger and Douglas Stewart at Firsts*

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## *Douglas Stewart*

Douglas Stewart Fine Books  
(Armadale, Vic)

[www.firstslondon.com](http://www.firstslondon.com)

[www.firstshongkong.com](http://www.firstshongkong.com)



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*Firsts Book Fair - Photograph By Jon Baker*



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## FOCUS ON ANZAAB



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### ANZAAB congratulates member Roz Greenwood

ANZAAB congratulates member Roz Greenwood (Roz Greenwood Old and Rare Books, Dunkeld, Victoria) on being awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for service to literature in the 2025 King's Birthday Honours List. In addition to her important roles with numerous cultural organisations, particularly in western Victoria, Roz served on ANZAAB's board for nearly 15 years, for much of this time as vice president.

*[Click here for a fuller list of Roz's contributions the cultural life of Australia](#)*



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### ANZAAB to host the 2025 ILAB National Presidents' Meeting in Melbourne

In July this year ANZAAB is proud to be hosting the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB) annual National Presidents' Meeting in Melbourne. This will be the third ILAB Meeting we have hosted, the first being the 1997 ILAB National Presidents' Meeting in Sydney, and the second being held during the 37th ILAB Congress and 20th International Book Fair in Melbourne in 2004.



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Also in July, the 2025 Melbourne Rare Book Week (MRBW) will be held, with the programme including a rare opportunity to attend an ILAB Symposium. MRBW concludes with ANZAAB's 55th Australian Antiquarian Book Fair held at

Wilson Hall at The University of Melbourne, with many of the international presidents attending the ILAB meeting also exhibiting at the Fair.

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## ANZAAB's oral history

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In 2022 ANZAAB commissioned an evolving series of video interviews with its members, creating an oral history in their own words.

These are the videos to date, available on the

*[ANZAAB website](#)* 



*What is the collective term for a group of antiquarian booksellers ?*

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## Two new members

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ANZAAB has two new members: Thomas Baker-Stimson (Michael Treloar Antiquarian Booksellers, S.A.) and Mark O'Neill (Blue Mountains Books, N.S.W.).

Tom and Mark join an association of booksellers who work with integrity and honesty in running our businesses, and fairness when dealing with members of the public. Our members are committed to upholding our reputation as both individual dealers of excellence and as an Association of strong moral fibre.

As members of ANZAAB we select, catalogue, and make relevant for people the finest examples, the most interesting copies, and the essential references that best reflect our trade. And though we are diverse in our interests and expertise, we share 'the eye' for a good book, and the enthusiasm to keep our standards high so we show off our trade in the best possible light.

ANZAAB welcomes Tom and Mark to this Association of idiosyncratic and dedicated booksellers, and we wish them brisk trading and warm collegiality.

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## HIGHLIGHTING ILAB

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The International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB) or Ligue Internationale de la Librairie Ancienne (LILA) is the global federation of 22 national antiquarian booksellers' associations (including ANZAAB), established in 1947. Over 1600 affiliated rare booksellers based in 39 countries worldwide belong to the ILAB network.

Website: <https://ilab.org/> 

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### 'We are in uncharted territory': Trump's tariffs scramble art trade

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**ILAB's stance against tariffs on rare books and associated items has been highlighted in The Art Newspaper.**

US President Donald Trump's recently announced tariff regime has brought confusion and turmoil to the international art and antiques trade, with dealers around the world scrambling to find out if their merchandise is exempt from these taxes when they sell or exhibit in the US and what the actual amount of tax would be ...

The London-based International League of Antiquarian Booksellers released a statement on 25 March noting that, "While we recognise the attraction of tariffs when applied to newly manufactured materials, we believe their application to goods of some age is inappropriate and disproportional. We also deplore the impact these tariffs would have on the international advance of education, learning and scholarship."

*[Click to read the full article by Daniel Grant.](#)*



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## Breslauer Prize for Bibliography

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**Authors, publishers, academics, scholars, and the book trade are invited to submit publications for the ILAB Breslauer Prize for Bibliography 2026. The prize was set up by the noted antiquarian bookseller Dr. Bernard H. Breslauer (1918-2004), and is funded by B. H. Breslauer Foundation.**

The prize is awarded every four years, with a first prize of US\$10,000 and second and third prizes of US\$5,000 and US\$3,000 respectively. In addition to the prize, the judges may, at their discretion, award Honourable Mentions to other deserving entries.

For the 2026 Prize, three additional awards of US\$1000 each will be offered for a submission from an Asian, African, and Central & South American publisher or author in the field of bibliography, or book related history. ILAB would like to thank rare booksellers Asia Bookroom, Peter Harrington, Scott DeWolfe and Charles Kutcher for sponsoring these additional prizes.

The purpose of the prize is to recognise the authors of the three or four best works, published or unpublished, in the field of scholarly bibliography, research into the history of the book or book trade, book design or binding, typography, exhibition and private library catalogues, manuscript and early printed book catalogues, or books of general interest on the subject.

Entries are not restricted to English-language publications: all languages and places of publication will be considered by an international jury.

One copy of the publication must be sent to the ABA/ILAB Library in London before May 2026, where all submissions for the prize are catalogued and held until the judges meet.

Submissions for the Prize should be sent to:

ILAB Breslauer Prize for Bibliography  
Peter Harrington, Attention of John Ryan  
100 Fulham Road  
LONDON, SW3 6HS, UNITED KINGDOM

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19<sup>TH</sup> ILAB  
BRESLAUER PRIZE  
FOR BIBLIOGRAPHY  
2026



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## BOOK CLUBS & SOCIETIES



### Bookplate societies in Australia: A History

Most book collectors recognise bookplates (or ex libris) as labels placed inside a book to mark ownership. A well-designed bookplate of suitable size for the volume and placed inside the front cover or on the front free endpaper (flyleaf) will usually enhance the book, especially if the bookplate's owner was a well-known personality or was somehow related to the book or the book's subject. Provenance in relation to books is a field of increasing focus and a bookplate – rather than being a form of ephemera – can be a valuable and enduring record of the book's ownership. I have a number of books in my collection with two (or sometimes more) bookplates of previous owners, and to these I have joyously added one of my own. Bookplates exist in every possible technique of design and printmaking, whilst unique hand-drawn or hand-



*Hand drawn bookplate by Jessica Le 2020  
Firsts*

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painted manuscript bookplates are also worth hunting for because of their frequent beauty of execution.

The first bookplates came into being in Germany c. 1500 not long after the advent of printing from moveable type. It took over three centuries for bookplate collecting to arise in Britain in the early nineteenth century as an offshoot of the genteel pastime of collecting coats of arms into albums. The Ex Libris Society was formed in London in 1891 and the influential art magazine *The Studio* promoted the new style of pictorial bookplate as a democratic reaction to the engraved armorial, only affordable to the

wealthy and titled bibliophile. The Ex Libris Society lasted into the early years of the twentieth century and had a very small group of Australian members, who directed their enthusiasm towards encouraging and commissioning local artists to try their hands with the pictorial bookplate.

In Australia, bookplate collecting and owning a bookplate became the height of fashion among the cultured between the World Wars. In recent years, there has again been increasing interest in bookplates among book lovers and artists, with new societies formed.

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## Australian Ex Libris Society

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On 18 May 1923, an exhibition opened at Tyrrell's Galleries, Sydney, with over 200 Australian and overseas bookplates. William Moore's notice in the *Daily Telegraph* of 2 June 1923 repeated the hope of organiser John Lane Mullins that the interest aroused would quickly lead to the formation of a bookplate society in Sydney. Indeed, within a month, at a meeting at Tyrrell's, Lyster Ormsby 'detailed the scheme for the formation of the Australian Ex Libris Society ... seconded Percy Neville Barnett, carried unanimously'.

Soon after, William Moore's article 'The charm of the bookplate' in the August 1923 number of *Art in Australia* brought before readers 57 Australian pictorial designs from the previous 25 years. The Society remained in the public eye. At the visit of the Duke and



*Linocut by Rhyll Plant 2020*

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Duchess of York to open the new federal capital of Canberra in 1927, both were presented with a bookplate designed by Adrian Feint, whilst a gift of a linocut design by G.D. Perrottet made to the young Princess Elizabeth in 1934 also attracted much publicity. As well, P. Neville Barnett sent copies of all of his sumptuous bookplate books to the Royal Library at Windsor.

An annual booklet was issued listing Australian bookplates which had come to notice and reproducing a few, often tipped-in. Two further series were begun, a *Journal* and *Bookplate Artists*, but in each case only a single issue appeared. Sydney meetings included

talks provided by artists, collectors and others. During the 1930s, two bookplate competitions were mounted. The annual dinner for 1938 held at a Sydney café was a special occasion when Lane Mullins was presented with a portrait bookplate etched by J.B. Godson to mark his 15 years as society president.

From its inception, the Society, whilst based in Sydney, encouraged membership in other states, which peaked at 185 in 1930. Lane Mullins' death in early 1939 and the outbreak of World War II led to the fading away of the Society.

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## New South Wales Bookplate Club

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**Dissatisfaction with the perceived poor status of artists led, in 1932, to the breakaway of members led by Frank Clune to form the New South Wales Bookplate Club.**

The Club's International Bookplate Competition captured the interest of all. Prominent supporters donated prize money in 13 categories. The competition was advertised internationally, with a notice appearing in the July 1932 *Bulletin* of the American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers. The Sydney newspaper *Smith's Weekly* (8 October 1932) publicised the competition with a facetious article entitled 'NSW Bookplate Club lifts depression with £41,' noting that the competition was 'an effort to encourage artists who are particularly affected by the present economic conditions'. Entries by 35

Australian and nine New Zealand artists, and 21 North American and Continental artists, were exhibited at David Jones' Gallery, Sydney, in 1933.

The Club issued two quality publications: the *Founders' brochure* – No. 1 containing brief articles by Camden Morrisby about A. Feint, G.D. Perrottet and G.Gayfield Shaw, illustrated with 12 original bookplates; and *John B. Godson. Bookplates*, with nine original bookplates, and a list of members as at June 1933 was produced with the assistance of naval hydrographer and book designer Lieut. G.C. Ingleton. The Club failed to markedly increase the status of artists and continuing financial problems led to its demise during 1935.

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## Australian Bookplate Club

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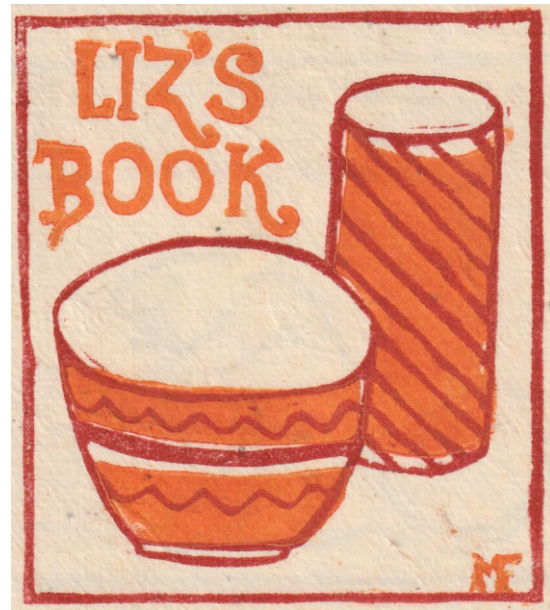
However, interest remained strong in Victoria. On 25 November 1941 a meeting was called by 'organiser' John Gartner to form the Australian Bookplate Club with R.H. Croll elected as president and Gartner as secretary-treasurer. After six months, the club had 23 Victorian members, and 16 from the rest of Australia and the United States.

Gartner utilised his typographic skills and his own Hawthorn Press to develop a vigorous, if brief, publication program. Following the *Constitution and list of foundation members*, he issued the Club's *Newsletter* in 1943 and 1944, and two *Checklists* of the bookplates of Eric Thake and Eirene Mort. He also published under his own name a checklist of the Victorian etcher William Hunter. However, as a result of Croll's long illness compounded with

the effects of World War II, it seems that the Club did not survive beyond 1944.

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*Colour linocut by Mark Ferson 1986*



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## Australian Bookplate Society

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After a hiatus of some decades, interest in bookplates in Australia began to increase in the 1970s and 1980s, largely as a result of the commissions and collecting activities of art patron Patrick Corrigan. In this period also Melbourne publisher Robert C. Littlewood produced a number of monographs on bookplate artists. At the 10 September 1997 meeting in Melbourne of the Ephemera Society of Australia, Littlewood together with collector Edwin Jewell announced the formation of the Australian Bookplate Society, and newsletters were issued in 2002 and 2003.

For a number of years the Australian Bookplate Society, was closely associated with the Keith Wingrove Memorial Trust in sponsoring regular bookplate design competitions. Bookplates entered into each Award were donated to the State Library of Victoria. The Trust recently completed the purchase of a major bookplate collection which was donated to the State Library of Victoria. The Society and Trust ceased to operate in 2024.

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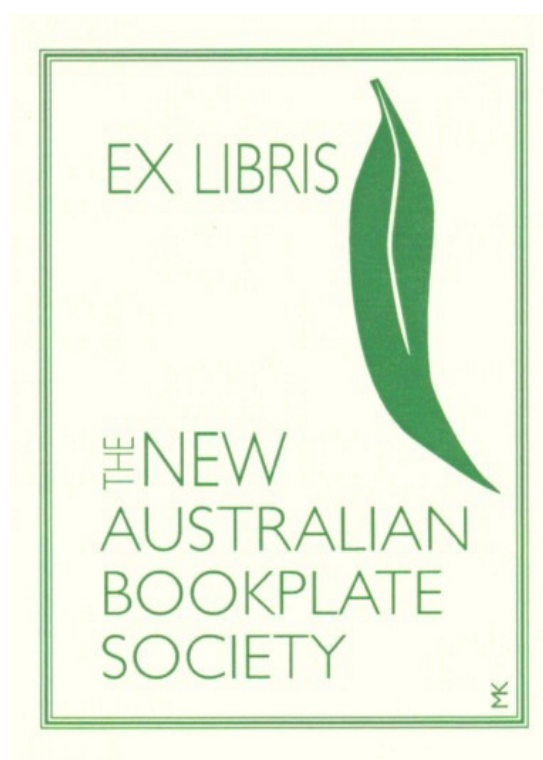
## New Australian Bookplate Society

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With the Australian Bookplate Society to some extent dormant, a need was felt to start an association based in Sydney whereby members would be able to communicate their interests in bookplates through meetings and the organ of a regular bulletin. The concept of the New Australian Bookplate Society was launched on 22 October 2005 by artist and gallerist Elisabeth Bastian and enthusiast Mark Ferson with an exhibition of bookplates held at the Stop Laughing This is Serious Gallery, Blackheath. A meeting to officially form the Society took place in Sydney exactly one year later on 22 October 2006.

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*New Australian Bookplate Society  
Bookplate.*



The constitution states that the aims of the Society are 'to raise public awareness of, and promote, bookplates as both a historic and a contemporary art form, and to bring together individuals with an interest in designing, owning, studying or collecting bookplates.' In 2022 the Society gained registration with the Australian Charities and Non-profits Commission.

An illustrated, full-colour *Newsletter* is published each quarter; five supplements to the *Newsletter* have appeared: indexes to issues 1-20, 21-40 and 41-60; *The bookplates of Graham Cox* (2021); and *The bookplates of Ola Cohn* (2023). A *Directory of members* was published in 2011. A website features articles on interesting bookplates, a gallery of the designs of artist-members and an annual bibliography of articles published in Australia on bookplates.

In 2013 the first successful 'Show and tell' was held and the Society was invited by Kogarah City Council (Sydney) to mount an exhibition which was held over 24 July to 11 August and opened by Pat Corrigan AM.

The Society celebrated its 10th anniversary with its Bookplate Design Award 2016, open to tertiary art and design students, with 140 designs received from 100 entrants. The Exhibition and Awards Presentation were held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales Research Library in October 2016. The Society was gifted the important Eirene Mort Bookplate Collection in 2018, now.

In 2023 our celebration of the 'Centenary of bookplate collecting in Australia 1923-2023' marked 100 years

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since the formation of the Australian Ex Libris Society with events in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. The Society mounted two exhibitions, at Lane Cove Library (Sydney) and 'Bookplates – a celebration' online and at the Sydney offices of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. Carrying this momentum into 2024, the Society was involved in two further exhibitions at North Sydney and Mosman Libraries. Members each received a complimentary copy of the Society's Directory of members 2023.

October 2025 marks twenty years since the launch of the New Australian Bookplate Society and celebratory events are planned for Sydney and Melbourne and other locations if there is interest. Bibliophiles wishing to hear more about bookplates, find artists who

will design a bookplate or to join the Society are encouraged to contact us. Our website features articles on interesting bookplates, a gallery of the designs of artist-members and an annual bibliography of articles published in Australia on bookplates.

*Dr Mark J Ferson,*

President, New Australian Bookplate Society

Website: <https://bookplatesociety.org.au>



Email:

[newaustralianbookplatesociety@gmail.com](mailto:newaustralianbookplatesociety@gmail.com)



*Painting By Kathryn Lovejoy  
2022*

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## BSANZ: The Perfect Society for Booklovers

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After quite a few decades of growing interest in the field of bibliography and book history, the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand (BSANZ) was formed on 17 February 1969. On that day, a group of 'librarians, scholars, collectors, printers and antiquarian booksellers' met in the State Library of Victoria's board room to discuss the possibilities. The Bibliographical Society in London, formed in 1892, was the model for its antipodean equivalent.



Since its formation, in the same year that saw the publication of the last volume of Sir John Ferguson's *Bibliography of Australia* and A.G. Bagnall's *New Zealand National Bibliography to the Year 1960*, the Society has proved the ideal forum for those interested in bookish matters. Our journal *Script & Print: Bulletin of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand* is published twice a year and sent to all members. The articles published in *Script & Print* are accessible to the common reader and absolutely fascinating in their scope and variety. In February, From *Convict Printers to*

*Book Arcades: The History of the Book in Australia Volume 1* was launched at the Athenaeum Library in Melbourne. Professor Wallace Kirsop, a founding member of BSANZ, and his fellow editors have done a marvellous job on this long-awaited final instalment of the History of the Book in Australia series. The Bibliographical Society supported this important work by purchasing half of the print run to send to members in lieu of volumes 47 and 48 of *Script & Print* thus bringing the journal up to date.

Following Dr Shef Rogers retirement as editor of *Script & Print* my colleague Dr Anna Welch, former Vice-President of BSANZ and Principal Curator of the 'World of the Book' exhibition at the State Library of Victoria, has joined me to edit Volume 49 that will appear this year in two numbers. We continue to seek contributions. More information regarding the journal and submissions to it can be found on our website. Our annual conference is the highlight of our calendar. Last year we gathered at the National Library in Canberra for 'Bibliomania: Stories from Inside and Outside the Book'. This year, in conjunction with the University of Otago Centre for the Book, we will meet in Dunedin, New Zealand 18-20 November for 'Whose Work Is It Anyway?'. This promises to be a wonderful event.

The Society is proud to offer bursaries to members, including the Wallace Kirsop Conference Bursary, and the Donald Kerr Bursary for Bibliographic Research. We also offer the BSANZ

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Bursary for the Australian and New Zealand Rare Books School (ANZRBS). The Australian and New Zealand Rare Book School alternates between four venues annually: State Library Victoria (Melbourne), State Library NSW (Sydney), Victoria University (Wellington) and the University of Otago (Dunedin). It offers courses that support education and training in the study of rare books, including

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bibliography and material culture. I have been a member of BSANZ since 2015 and have had the honour of serving as President since 2023. Over the last ten years I have enjoyed seeing and delivering talks, reading stimulating essays, and forming friendships with colleagues throughout Australasia and beyond. I entreat you all to consider joining our beautiful Society.

## *Simon Farley*

Fryer Librarian, The University of Queensland

President

**The Bibliographical Society of  
Australia and New Zealand Inc.**

**Website:** <https://www.bsanzenz.org/>



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bsanzenz.org/](https://www.facebook.com/bsanzenz.org/)

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australia-and-new-zealand-bsanzenz/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bibliographical-society-of-australia-and-new-zealand-bsanzenz/)

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## BOOKISH LINKS & RESOURCES



### Links from Sally Burdon

<https://persuasivemaps.library.cornell.edu/>

The map as a persuasive tool is not something that necessarily immediately comes to mind, however after visiting this site you may find yourself thinking about maps in quite a different way! US collector PJ Mode's collection of fascinating maps has been digitized and can be found at the Cornell University Library site.

<https://chinese posters.net/>

This highly regarded site created by Chinese Posters Foundation takes the art persuasion to another level! Featuring over 5000 Chinese posters it takes the viewer on a journey from the 1920s, through the well known posters of the Cultural Revolution and on to recent times. While scholarly, the site is very accessible, and offers thousands of full colour examples of Chinese

posters. The site also includes comprehensive information about Chinese posters in general, including a useful section on hints about identifying fakes, of which unfortunately there are many.

Many people will be familiar with Hiroshige's Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō Road but may not realise that its huge popularity led to his creation of many other editions, each very different to the original Hōeidō edition which was first published in 1832. Click on the link you will find [here](#) to have your eyes opened!

*Sally Burdon*

Asia Book Room   
(Macquarie, ACT)

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## AI and Bookselling by Malcolm Moncrief-Spittle

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I find Grok sometimes useful, sometimes entertaining, and sometimes both useful and entertaining. Where I would once have used Google search, I now often search first on Grok. For technical questions like how to create a dual-monitor setup, I have found Grok excellent. Grok is not infallible though, and can hallucinate incorrect answers, or supply references that do not support its statements.

I asked Grok a few months ago “Who loved the voices of night-winds through palm or banana leaves, and the song of the tree-frogs?” and was assured that this would be Joseph Conrad. We then discussed whether the answer should perhaps have been Rudyard Kipling, since this was a quote from Kipling’s ‘Something of Myself’ (1937). Whatever the truth may be, Grok was happy to provide an image of Conrad and Kipling both listening to the night-noises together.

I just asked Grok the same question again, and was assured that the quote I am referencing is “likely inspired by Lafcadio Hearn, a writer known for his

vivid descriptions of nature and exotic locales, particularly in his works about Japan and the Caribbean.”



*Conrad and Kipling according to Grok*

Other interfaces to Large Language Models like Microsoft Co-Pilot or Google Gemini may produce similar results. Co-pilot and Gemini in fact both produced the correct answer “Rudyard Kipling” to my query above, so they were more useful but less entertaining.

**Malcolm Moncrief-Spittle**

Renaissance Books (Dunedin, New Zealand) [✉](#)

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## Links from Fiona McIlreavy

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One recent discovery is charming. <https://digital.nls.uk/moir/index.html> [✉](#)  
John Moir's collection on Bees and Beekeeping held in The National Library of Scotland.

The Second is Slightly Foxed.

<https://foxedquarterly.com/> [✉](#)

The literary quarterly and publisher. It is a place for reflection of books forgotten and those not yet discovered.

Quirky fiction and non fiction that as a bookseller I have handled without really appreciating. I now often refer bookbuyers to books I have discovered though the newsletter or podcast.

*Note: Slightly Foxed is a subscription service they do however offer a free podcast.*

**Fiona McIlreavy**

A&F McIlreavy Buderim Rare Books [✉](#)  
(Buderim, QLD)

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## COLLECTORS' CORNER



### The Hyakumantō Dhāraṇī (百万塔陀羅尼) by Douglas Stewart

‘So, tell me, what’s your oldest book?’

This question will be familiar to most booksellers, and it is not an unfair one, as there is always a fascination around books which are genuinely antiquarian. Occasionally, ANZAAB members will handle incunabula European books printed prior to 1501 – a term which literally translates as ‘the cradle’ (of printing). It’s even possible to purchase a page of the first Western book printed with moveable type, the Gutenberg Bible (1455), however a copy of the complete book is now unattainable as far as collectors are concerned – at any price.

In recent times we have been fortunate enough to handle something substantially older than European incunabula.



*Hyakumantō Dhāraṇī*

While not technically a book, it is in fact the oldest printed object from any culture which can be reliably dated; it precedes Gutenberg by about 700 years, which makes it

**really, really old.**

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The work in question is the Hyakumantō Dhāranī (百万塔陀羅尼), created in Japan between 764 and 770 CE.

The Hyakumantō Dhāranī are, collectively speaking, an extraordinary class of artefact dating to the earliest period of printing technology. They also provide a record of the practices and beliefs of Buddhist society in Japan in the Nara period.

In the year 764 CE, the Empress Shōtoku (称徳天皇) commissioned one million (hyakuman) miniature wooden pagodas (tō) for distribution to ten major Buddhist temples in Japan. Known collectively as the Hyakumantō (百万塔), each contained a small scroll on rice paper with a Buddhist mantra or prayer (dhāranī), which was most likely printed on a bronze tablet – although some scholars suggest wooden blocks were used.

Each of the Hyakumantō contained a dhāranī from the body of texts known in Sanskrit as the Vimalasuddhaprabhasa mahadharani sutra, and in Japanese as Mukujōkō daidarani kyō (無垢淨光大陀羅尼經). The six main sections of the sutra had been translated into Chinese by the Central Asian monk Mituo-xian between 680 and 704 CE, and it became one of the key sutras of Empress Shōtoku's period. Chinese was the principal language of worship, as there was no formal standardisation of written Japanese at this early date; consequently, the dhāranī contained in the Hyakumantō were printed in Chinese script.

As well as being intended for the expiation of sin and the accumulation of religious merit, the prayers were believed to have apotropaic powers, which meant that each of these diminutive pagodas was in essence a protective talisman to ward off evil spirits.

The earliest record we have of the commission of the Hyakumantō Dhāranī is found in the Shoku Nihongi (続日本紀) of 797 CE, a 40-volume work of national history which documents their creation, thus allowing us to precisely date their creation.

Although it is questionable whether one million of the Hyakumantō Dhāranī were actually made, it would appear certain that at least several hundreds of thousands were – an unprecedented example of mass production in Japan, which came at great personal expense to the empress. We are certain that a small army of artisans was responsible for their creation: from the evidence provided by a maker's mark on many of the surviving examples, it has been ascertained that no fewer than 157 artisans were engaged in their production.

Most of the extant pagodas have lost their printed dhāranī, and those that have survived are typically in a state of decay. As noted by Yiengpruksawan in 1987: 'Their fate after the 8th century was unhappy; by the modern period most were lost, with Hōryūji remaining the sole temple that still maintained a collection. When the Hōryūji collection was surveyed in 1908, there were 43,930 pagodas but only 1,771 darani. Today Hōryūji owns 102 pagodas and 100 darani.' (Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan. 'One Millionth of a Buddha: The "Hyakumantō Darani" in the

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Scheide Library'. The Princeton University Library Chronicle, Vol. 48, No. 3, Spring 1987, pp. 224-238).

In the twentieth century, a printed copy of the Usnīsa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra, known as The Great Dharani Sutra, was discovered in Korea. It is speculated to have been printed in the early eighth century. Printing in China is believed to have had its origins even earlier, in the seventh century CE during the Tang dynasty, and there are a handful of fragmentary examples suspected to be from this date in museums in China. However, the date of none of these specimens has been verified, and there is no comparable example of a printed document from such an early date that has appeared on the market in recent times. In addressing the claims of earlier printing survival in Korea and China, Yiengpruksawan notes that 'Both views warrant caution pending the discovery of documentation on its production comparable to that which exists for the Hyakumantō darani. The Hyakumantō darani remains the most completely documented and firmly dated example of early printing.' (ibid., p. 238).

Collectors hoping to locate other early examples of printing in Japan of such antiquity (i.e. from the 8th century CE) will be disappointed. After the commission of the Hyakumantō Dhāraṇī, mechanical printing in Japan went into decline. It remains unclear whether this was due to the cost of the endeavour, or the ritualistic implications of the printed prayers. Woodblock printing of text would not be revived until the 10th or 11th century, with woodblock books only beginning to be published more regularly in the 12th and

13th centuries. Most, if not all, examples of the Hyakumantō Dhāraṇī found in Western collections can trace their origins to the Horyūji Temple, Nara, Japan. In 1908 a number of Hyakumantō Dhāraṇī were given to supporters who donated funds towards the maintenance of the temple.

Most extant examples are in Japanese collections; with few examples appearing in the Western market. A single example exists in Australian public collections, in the State Library of Victoria, acquired from us in 2024, and recently placed on display in the World of the Book exhibition. Recent articles in the print media capture the thrill that handling such early printed technology has amongst collectors and curators : “I would say it’s the most exciting acquisition that’s been made in the library in my time,” said Dr Anna Welch, the library’s principal collection curator’ (The Guardian, 13 May 2025).

*Douglas Stewart*

Douglas Stewart Fine Books   
(Armadale, VIC)

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## Japanese Children's Life Insurance Brochures by Sally Burdon

### 子供保険パンフレット.

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I never expected to get excited about insurance documents (with the possible exception of when I look at the amount owing at the bottom of the latest invoice I received!). And then we bought this small collection of seven rather cute, historically interesting insurance brochures! Each illustrated brochure in its original colour paper wrapper was published circa 1940 and together this group offer a fascinating insight into the life of the average family in WWII Japan.



The group comprises four brochures for conscription insurance, two for general life insurance, and one 18-page booklet on family life insurance. In Japan, life insurance policies for children were, and continue to be, commonly used as savings plans to help meet future educational costs. When the policy matures, a lump sum is paid out to the policyholder, usually with the intention that it be used for schooling.

The 18-page booklet on family insurance was published by the Nagoya Postal Agency. At the time, the Ministry of Post and Communication administered both savings banks and insurance services. The booklet provides detailed information on the available services and rates of return for policyholders.

The conscription insurance brochures reflect a rather unusual form of saving, aimed specifically at boys approaching military age. All Japanese men were required to undergo a physical examination at the age of 20 for possible military service. In peacetime, only 10 to 25 percent were actually called up, but this increased significantly during the Pacific War. Policies could be set to mature at either 18 or 20, and the resulting lump sum was intended to be used to prepare for military service, education, or marriage.



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Several insurance companies still in operation today, among them the Fukuoku Mutual Life Insurance Company, represented in this group, have their origins in the conscription insurance business. A fascinating collection which offers a revealing glimpse into the way financial planning and national priorities intersected in pre-war and wartime Japan.

*Sally Burdon*

Asia Book Room ☞

(Macquarie, ACT)

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## The David Ruggles Prize

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**ILAB proudly supports the David Ruggles Prize - encouraging and supporting young book collectors of colour.**

ILAB is delighted to announce a sponsorship and its support of the David Ruggles Prize, an annual award established to encourage and support young book collectors of colour. Founded in 2021, the prize is named in honour of David Ruggles, a groundbreaking 19th-century abolitionist, publisher, and Underground Railroad conductor, who opened the first Black-owned bookstore in the United States.

The prize celebrates collecting in its broadest form, welcoming not only traditional hardcovers and paperbacks but also zines, comic books, graphic novels, contemporary book art, and other creative interpretations of the book. The aim is to spotlight passionate young collectors whose collections reflect vision, dedication, and personal

meaning—regardless of their monetary value.

Each year, three cash prizes are awarded: a \$1,000 grand prize, \$500 second prize, and \$250 third prize. Entry is open to individuals aged 35 and under, anywhere in the world. ILAB is proud to support this important initiative, which aligns with our mission to foster bibliophilia, inclusivity, and the future of collecting across generations and cultures.

View the details here:

*The David Ruggles Prize at ILAB*



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