Parliament of Victoria

The Parliamentary Library and 175 years of change

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No. 10 | October 2026

Heritage Note
Victorian Parliamentary Library

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Introduction

As the colony of Victoria took a step towards becoming a state, the new legislators took the view that if they wanted to make sound decisions, they needed the requisite knowledge to be made available to them.

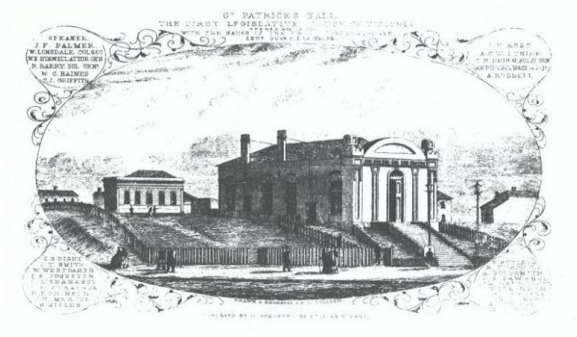
Libraries can do that. They're full of useful facts, new perspectives and wonderful people. But how the Victorian Parliamentary Library can help Members and their staff has changed markedly over the years as the Library itself has gone through many phases—growing, shifting, straining, shrinking and modernising.

When the Victorian Legislative Council was established in 1851, Members could not be expected to be up to date on all matters or know how to run a parliamentary democracy from scratch. And while many wealthy men of the time may have had their own libraries, a specifically parliamentary library would provide something more particular than a collection of literature, classics and philosophical musings (although it provided all those things too). It would provide newspapers from far and wide, have comprehensive legal volumes, a collection of parliamentary procedure from comparable Westminster-style jurisdictions, statistical datasets, and journals of science, engineering and other areas of inquiry. It would tell Victorian parliamentarians about the world but also, more specifically, what they needed to know about Victoria.

This still holds true to what the Victorian Parliamentary Library provides today. From its beginnings in the cramped confines of a backroom of the now-demolished St Patrick's Hall, to the grand surroundings of Peter Kerr and John George Knight's Parliament House, and even further into the virtual sphere, the Parliamentary Library's services have evolved to reflect the changing face of Victoria's parliamentary environment and the needs of its Members. This paper explores the Library's archives for a brief look at its history, including how it has both remained constant and adapted to changing times.

Taking root

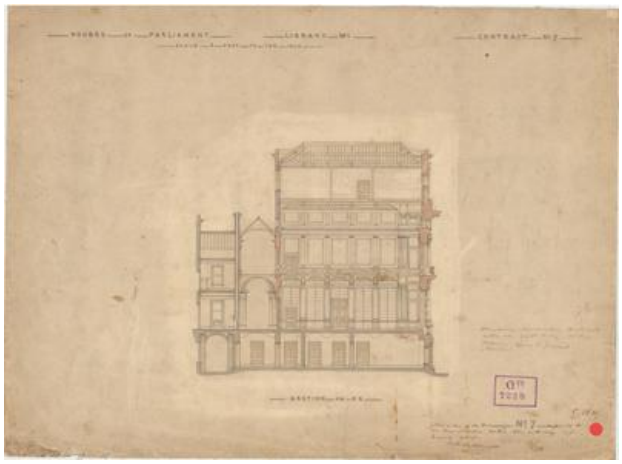
The Victorian Parliamentary Library started from humble beginnings in a small room at the back of St Patrick's Hall when the Legislative Council was just beginning in 1851, five years before Victoria would become an independently governed colony. On the second day of the Council's meeting, 14 November, a Library Committee was formed.

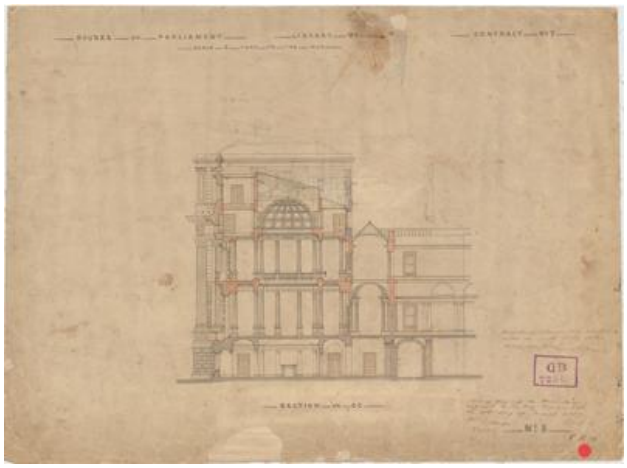




As Philip Laundy notes of parliamentary libraries generally, the library naturally served to reflect 'the nature of the society' that the new legislature sought to represent, with an emphasis on a mix of 'cultural heritage' and 'contemporary learning'.[1]

Allocated a 'single weatherboard room a few yards square', the first Librarian Charles Ridgeway was soon craving more space. The room was crammed full with the infant library's first volumes on law, industry, commodities and parliamentary procedure from other Westminster-style parliaments.[2] While it wouldn't have been a grand sight, it is nonetheless a shame we can't see it for ourselves, since St Patrick's Hall was demolished in 1957, six years on from celebrations in 1951 marking 100 years since the first Legislative Council's inaugural meeting.





Top: Image 1. An early sketch of St Patrick's Hall from 1856, the host building for the first Legislative Council (1851–56).

Middle: Image 2. A photo of St Patrick's Hall in 1949.

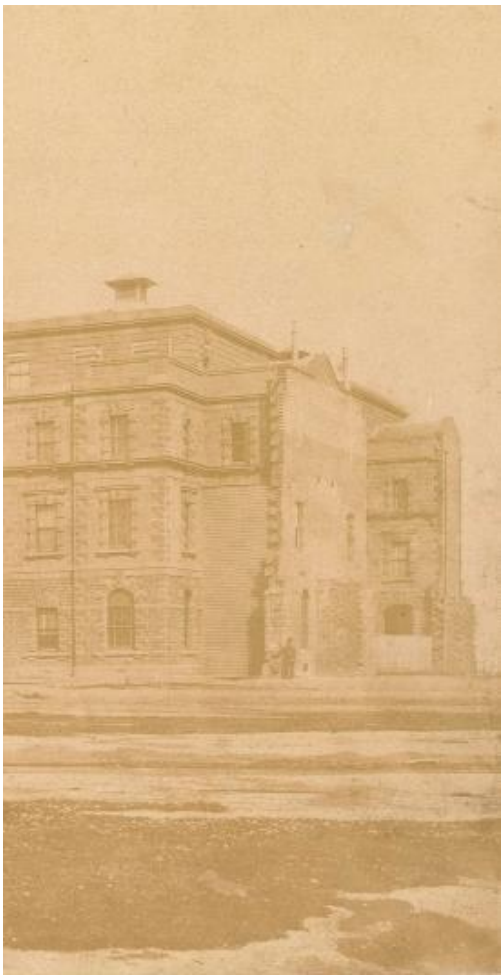
Bottom: Images 3 and 4. Peter Kerr's cross-sectional plans for Victorian Parliamentary Library from 1859, witnessed by John George Knight.

[1] P. Laundy (1980) *Parliamentary librarianship in the English-speaking world*, London, Library Association, p. 3.
[2] P. Gregory (2001) *Speaking volumes: the Victorian Parliamentary Library 1851–2001*, Melbourne, Victorian Parliamentary Library.

When the Library's collection and staff were moved into Peter Kerr's immense Parliament House project in 1856, the immediate lodgings weren't quite as grand as they are now. Similar to their St Patrick's Hall address, they inhabited another wooden shack, this time erected between the chambers. In any case, they were there for the start of responsible government, which makes 2026 also the 170th anniversary for the Parliament of Victoria. It wouldn't be until 1861 when the Library as we now know it was finally ready for occupation.[3]



Few institutions can lay claim to as comprehensive a glow-up as the Library had in 1861, moving into its central position at the rear of the building equidistant from the chambers. By this time, the Library had clearly established its central function of collecting reference materials deemed helpful to the new legislature by the Library Committee. It also took on another role of building an identity of sophistication and grandeur for the new colony. Given that the western side of Parliament confronted the top of Bourke Street without a face—its façade not built until 1888—the Library's east wing became the de facto vantage point for Parliament. Few photos from this period capture this western view of Parliament House, but the bottom-right photo gives an idea of the building's incomplete appearance.

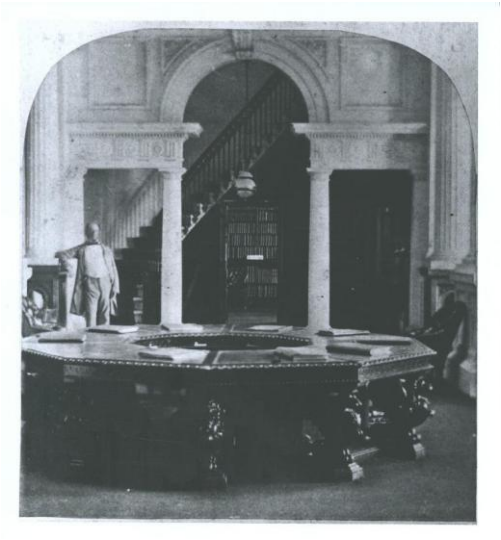


Photos of the Library's interior were included in a collection of images of Melbourne for the International Exhibition of 1862 in London, to 'convey to the people of England an accurate idea of the great metropolis of the South'.[4] In 1868 on the Duke of Edinburgh's visit, local photographer Charles Nettleton gifted him a book, this time including an outside view of the Library.[5] Ray Wright characterised the Library's extensive volumes and indulgent design

Top: Image 5. A group of boys, possibly school kids or street sweepers, stands before the newly created east wing in 1860. Whether permission was granted to climb the Parliament fence is unclear.

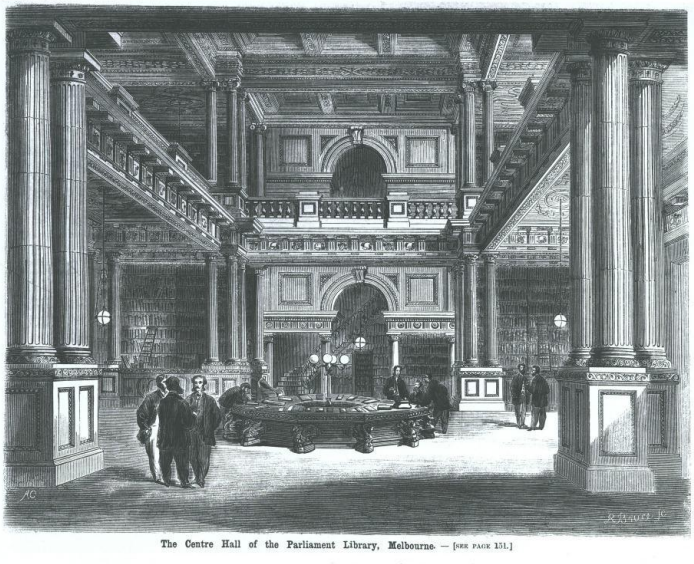
Bottom: Image 6. A detail of an Edward Haigh photo from around 1861 showing a rare pre-completion view of the western façade of Parliament House.

[3] R. Wright (1992) *A People's Counsel*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, p. 44.
[4] (1862) 'Thursday, January 16, 1862', *The Argus*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 16 January, p. 5.
[5] (1868) 'The News of the Day', National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, *The Age*, 3 January, p. 4.



and furnishings as the 'social centre of Parliament' that added 'a modest gloss to a still-callow Melbourne', while Sukkel described it as a refuge in which 'factional and personal animosities could be momentarily submerged'.[6] The design, which took Kerr 'a great deal of trouble and thought', was certainly grand and expensive—enough to warn the Parliament off further stages of construction for another 16 years.[7]

The Library's establishment also followed the precedent of other notable legislatures that had set up parliamentary libraries relatively recently: France's Bibliotheque de l'Assemblee Nationale (established 1796), the US Library of Congress (1800) and the UK's libraries of the House of Lords and House of Commons (1818 and 1825).[8] Unlike the United Kingdom's separate collections for each house, the new Victorian Parliamentary Library provided a common, apolitical ground for the Parliament as a whole.



The Centre Hall of the Parliament Library, Melbourne. — [SEE PAGE 131.]

Its wide-ranging collection initially betrayed the elevated demographics of the Library's patrons, including broad collections of classics, philosophy, religion, biography and travel, emphasising the degree of worldliness expected of those standing for office.[9] Such volumes would offer what the first Library Committee Chair called a 'refuge' for those 'who frequent public-houses and indulge in strong drinks' and provide them with 'better society'.[10] The Library became a point of pride for its exclusive membership. Until 1870—when Members were first remunerated for their Parliamentary duties—Members also had day jobs to attend to, so their after-hours parliamentary work came with a need to lounge somewhere. However, the functions of the space and the collection's emphasis would change over time as the users, the requirements for running a parliament, and the expectations of the Library also changed.

Top: Image 7. A photograph of the Parliamentary Library's centre table and, presumably, Charles Ridgeway, the first Parliamentary Librarian, in the background, 1861.

Bottom: Image 8. The central hall of the Victorian Parliamentary Library, 1865, wood engraving, by Robert Bruce. Bruce's sense of proportion added embellishment to the Library's dimensions and humbled those of the Members.

[6] Wright (1992) op. cit., p. 41; L. Sukkel (1993) 'A Gentleman's Club?: The role and function of the Victorian Parliamentary Library between 1851 and 1900', Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, December, p. 36.
[7] P. Kerr (1904) 'Melbourne Houses of Parliament', *Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*, pp. 5–6.
[8] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 2
[9] ibid., p. 5.
[10] ibid., p. 3.

The space

In 1877, the Library was seen as 'a delightful retreat where knowing members of Parliament ensconce themselves for the evening, and are only disturbed by the electric bell which summons them to a division'.[11] The central table also became a regular point of reference for Members, owing to the tradition of Members laying out documents on the table for other Members' use.

The space was so inviting that in 1892 one government Member reportedly sought permission from his ministry to cede his position and become an Assistant Librarian, a request that was ultimately refused.[12] He was not the first, however, with ex-Member James Farrell having already become Parliamentary Librarian (31 December 1878 — 30 June 1880; 11 October 1880 — 31 October 1890) for a bumpy stint due to his former political ties and perceived bias (see 'Relationships' section).[13] Controversy around the appointment of the Parliamentary Librarian was not uncommon. The workplace was inherently political in nature, and differences of opinion among Members brewed debate in the chambers about the suitability of appointees, whether the debating Members were on the Joint Library Committee or not.

The Library's collection grew to reflect the Joint Library Committee's range of opinion, each individual bringing ideas of what a parliamentary library should offer. One news article from 1882 indicated that the 'Government and politics' section was the most heavily relied upon by 'Members entirely devoid of literary taste … as a means of vindicating themselves or occasionally damaging the political reputation of their opponents'.[14] That same journalist's cynicism was strong enough to doubt most Members were 'aware of the existence of such a division as that of Arts and Sciences', but conceded most 'affect light reading, in the shape of fiction or travels'.[15] The 1886 catalogue's floor plan indicates that the Victorian Library still very much arranged itself as an extension of British library customs, including extensive British historical, legal and statutory volumes and those of its colonies.[16] Ultimately, Sukkel writes, the Library's many functions—'refuge, reading room, office and showpiece'—allowed it 'to be responsive to many different, and in many ways equal, needs of the Members'.[17]



Above: Image 9. A photograph of the Parliamentary Library's central chamber in 1920 during the federal occupation of Parliament House, with a writing table in a cabinet in the foreground. This French Louis XV style table was used by Queen Victoria to sign her assent to the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Bill in 1901.

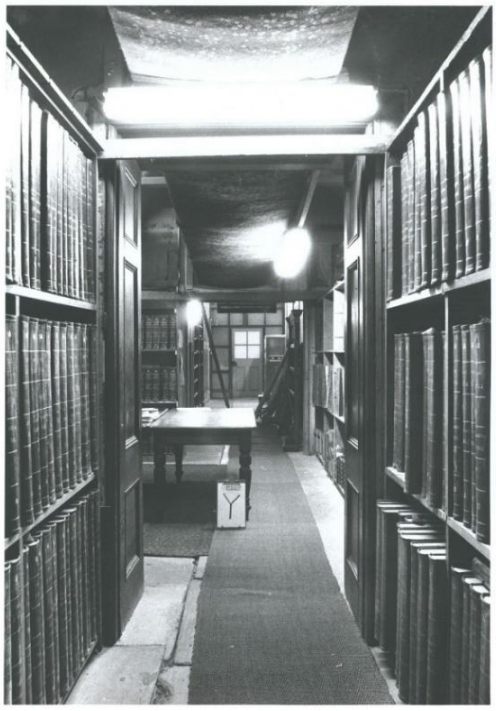
[11] (1877) 'Parliament House', *The Herald*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 18 May, p. 3.
[12] (1892) 'The political bowling green', *Melbourne Punch*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 1 September, p. 5.
[13] Gregory (2001) op. cit.
[14] (1882) 'The Parliamentary Library', *The Argus*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 8 September, p. 9.
[15] ibid.
[16] Parliament of Victoria Library (1886) 'Distribution of the books', *Victoria: Catalogue of the Parliamentary Library*, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer.
[17] Sukkel (1993) op. cit., p. 110.

Use of the space would change hands as the Federal Parliament took over Parliament House in 1901. Some aggrieved Victorian Members believed that a key reason for the Federal Parliament deciding to occupy the Parliament building and not the Exhibition Building was to have control of the Parliamentary Library.[18] And so, the Library, beginning to clutter under the weight of its collection, was split in two. The Victorian Parliamentary Library waved a kind of goodbye to its home of 40 years (albeit Victorian Members still retained access and borrowing rights) as it moved into a windowless section of the Royal Exhibition Building's western annexe (also now demolished). Meanwhile, the Library in Parliament House was hosting the growing collections of both an infant Federal Parliamentary Library (and its offshoot, the National Library of Australia) and the already well-established Victorian one.



The Federal Parliament finally completed their well-overdue exit and handover in 1927, the Victorian Parliament having initially hoped it would be a short-term solution of three to five years.[19] The federal occupants had filled the space with art and heritage items, among them a writing table used by Queen Victoria to sign the Constitution Act of the Commonwealth.[20]

By this time, it was showing the weight of use that comes with supporting two parliaments. A trail of unresolved maintenance issues lay in store for Eric Frazer, the then Parliamentary Librarian. Each issue requiring remedy was noted with what we can imagine to be a tone of bemusement, given the limited budget Frazer already had to work with—cracked tiles and windows, broken moulds around shelves, some old lino left uncarpeted in the 'Messengers' corner' which looked 'very odd', together with worn carpets, upholstery and leather.[21] On the plus side, in 1929 the space would gain from storage a chandelier which had previously hung in the Legislative Council chamber.



Disentangling the two collections proved a challenge. About 1,460 volumes were missing when the federal parliamentarians moved out (200 were noted as

Top: Image 10. The Library's chandelier, here photographed being cleaned in 1975, was originally a gasolier when it hung in the Legislatively Council chamber. Of the three originals, only one survives.

Bottom: Image 11. One of the numerous storage rooms that previously belonged to the Library in the Parliament basement, containing printed newspaper volumes, these from the *Age* and *Argus*.

[18] Gregory (2001) op. cit., pp. 62–64.
[19] Parliament of Victoria (date unknown) 'The federal years: 1901-1927', Parliament of Victoria website.
[20] (1927) 'The trek to Canberra', *The Herald*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 2 April, p. 15.
[21] E. Frazer (1928) 'Damages and renewals, Parliamentary Library', unpublished material, undated.

requiring replacement, and the Federal Parliamentary Library offered to provide replacements).[22] In all, they took around 108,000 volumes—moving the equivalent of 9 tons of books each week—many of the rarer and nationally significant items bound for the new National Library, while the parliament-focused content was destined for the new Federal Parliament House.[23]

One particular book Victoria retained was William Strutt's *Victoria the Golden*, a book of sketches from the 1850s and 1860s. It was prized at the time of acquisition and was singled out by Librarian Eric Frazer amidst WWII as the one book in the collection that was worthy of preservation in microfilm in case of bombing. It remains one of the Library's most prized and valued possessions today.[24]

However, the ever-growing nature of the collection saw the Library extending into the extensive rooms within Parliament's lower levels. The Federal Parliament's parting gift of £50,000 towards a memorial befitting the building's role in the national parliament's creation facilitated the addition of new refreshment rooms. This allowed space in the basement, which had been used as kitchens, to be used for Library storage and reunite the Library's split collections.[25] But funds for managing the Library hadn't increased much during Frazer's long tenure (1926–57), perhaps not helped by the purse-tightening that followed a war, then a depression, then another war. This paucity of funds meant there were not enough people to manage the collection and barely enough money to keep up with incoming newspapers, legal volumes, statutes, statistical summaries, periodicals, and other texts deemed necessary for the running of Parliament. Member for Benambra Thomas Mitchell unfavourably compared the Library's funding to that of the kitchen in 1954:

> It will be noted that a sum of £6,400 is provided to meet the cost of the Parliamentary refreshment rooms. The fact is that we feed our stomachs better than we feed our brains.[26]

Changes to the space were underway, as the Library's services expanded to include research and news-clipping. Shelves that had been





Top: Image 12. The Library's central chamber here features the cast-iron radiators that provided heat from their installation in 1930, while shelves between the columns have been removed, opening up the corner spaces.

Bottom: Image 13. Neville Dutton, a Parliamentary Library reference librarian, works amid ongoing renovations in the central chamber in 1986. Victorian Parliamentary Library archive.

[22] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 88.
[23] (1926) 'The Garden: Amateurs and Their Work', *The Argus*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 31 December, p. 4.
[24] E. Frazer (1941) Correspondence from Eric Frazer, Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, to Secretary, Premier's Department, personal communication, 21 August.
[25] V. Isaacs (2013) 'Parliament in Exile: the Victorian Parliament at the Exhibition Building 1901 to 1927', *Victorian Historical Journal*, 84(2), p. 350; Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 90.
[26] J. Bloomfield, (1954) 'Premier's department', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 9 December, p. 2763; T. Mitchell, (1954) 'Premier's department', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 9 December, p. 2763.

installed between pillars in the central library chamber to store burgeoning volumes were removed, letting light into what had become an increasingly enclosed space.



Barely a Library Committee meeting went by without complaint over a lack of space or logistical discussion of moving the collection around locations. Room names within the building explored the length of the alphabet, giving some indication of the collection's sprawling footprint. This wasn't counting the several premises, from St Andrews Place to old wine cellars in the inner north, that were sourced to store excess volumes.



Ultimately, the Library's physical footprint within Parliament House would recede. However, its service provision would not. The building was gradually modernised and its collection 'rationalised' to accommodate changing library cataloguing practices and new technologies (see 'Technology' section below), as well as changing Member demands. The Library focused its collection policy more on publications and information specific to the Parliament and Victorian politics, with interlibrary loan schemes with the State Library and university libraries able to make up for any requests unable to be filled from the Parliamentary Library's collection.[27]

In the 1990s, the Library was almost uprooted again, along with the rest of Parliament, to move to the Venetian Gothic 'Olderfleet' building in Collins Street, when Premier Jeff Kennett's campaign to complete Kerr's original Parliament design, complete with dome, was put in motion—only for that motion to stop almost as promptly.[28] This disappointed some who had hoped that the building's heating and cooling issues might be resolved with a facilities upgrade. In 1971 Member for Sunshine Denis Lovegrove dubbed Victoria's Parliamentary Library 'the worst ventilated library in Australia', and a senior parliamentary officer in the Legislative Council expressed in the *Parliamentary Newsletter* in 1997 that the project would have been a good chance to transform the building into one that 'encourages energy and enthusiasm rather than lethargy and complaint'.[29]

Top: Image 14. Parliamentary Librarian Josephine McGovern stands in the undercroft of the Parliament's west wing, cleared of stored library volumes and soon to become ministerial offices.

Bottom: Image 15. McGovern remarked that the workmen who built the refreshment rooms and lower library (now the rear ground floor passage towards the annex) in 1859–60, 'including many ex-miners', would have been 'amazed at the 1984—85 team which included female apprentices'. (J. McGovern (1985) 'Parliament of Victoria: Lower Library', Melbourne, Parliamentary Library)

[27] Gregory (2001) op. cit., pp. 134–35.
[28] W.R. Baxter (1996) 'Parliament to Move to Olderfleet Next Year', *The Parliamentary Newsletter*, 1(3), pp. 1–2; B. Chamberlain (1997) 'View from the top: Parliament House Completion Project', *The Parliamentary Newsletter*, 2(1), pp. 1–2.
[29] D. Lovegrove (1971) 'Estimates', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 30 November, p. 3354; R. Wright (1997) 'Point of view: Summer thoughts on Parliament House', *The Parliamentary Newsletter*, 2(1), p. 2.



This of course did not happen, and the Library remains firmly in Parliament House. However, in recent years many of the Library's staff have relocated across Macarthur Street to 55 St Andrews Place, giving the Library extra capacity for staff and the Parliament's heritage collection. This means there are fewer Library staff working in Parliament House on any given day, but the reduction of working desks has freed up the north and south wings to be used for meetings, a sitting-day Member Services kiosk and occasional events. As such, the Library chambers in Parliament House remain central to its service provision and still very much a multifunctional space for Members, their staff and parliamentary staff in the sense that Sukkel described—refuge, reading room, office and showpiece. The space also offers a level of distinction appropriate for special occasions, such as the opening of any new Parliament, when the Governor visits to meet with the newly elected Premier and their ministry.

With a reduced physical collection and an emphasis on electronic resources, information services, heritage management and research and inquiries, the Library has moved into the digital age to keep up with the evolving challenges of changing Members' demands and volatile media environments—a transformation in which the Victorian Parliamentary Library were early adopters.

The technology

Technology in Library has changed significantly over the years, transforming how the Library fulfills its many functions. Many of these changes are not so much specific to libraries as to workplaces generally—the addition of an Apeco copy machine in 1963, for example, or the installation of mobile compactus shelving in 1966 to increase storage capacity in confined spaces. Heating and cooling mechanisms have come and gone. With the installation of a microform reader in 1977, Library Committee minutes indicate that ideas of the library being merely a 'repository of books' were being replaced amid the 'advent of new equipment' aimed at modernising the workplace.[30]

Particular changes have been foundational, most notably to how the Library is catalogued and the move from analogue to digital.

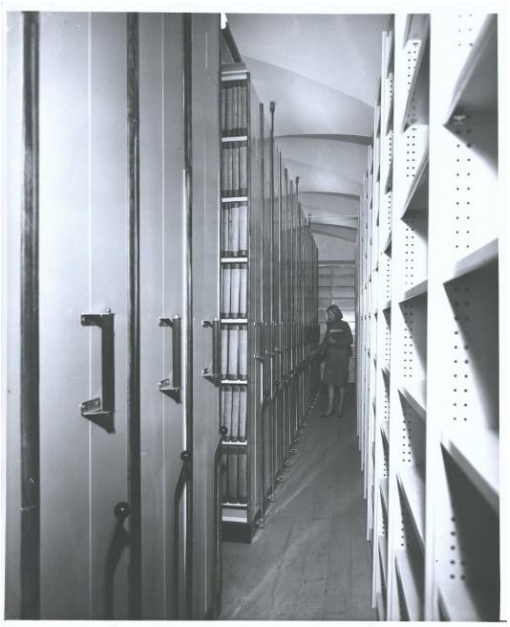


Top: Image 16. The Library space has at times filled a ceremonial role, such as here where Governor Alex Chernov signed official documents on the central table on the occasion of the 58th Parliament's opening.

Bottom: Image 17. A electric copy machine may not be so flash now, but in the 1962, it was a very useful addition to the Library's technological arsenal (Apeco (1963) 'Apeco Electro-Stat', *The Canberra Times*, 8 August.)

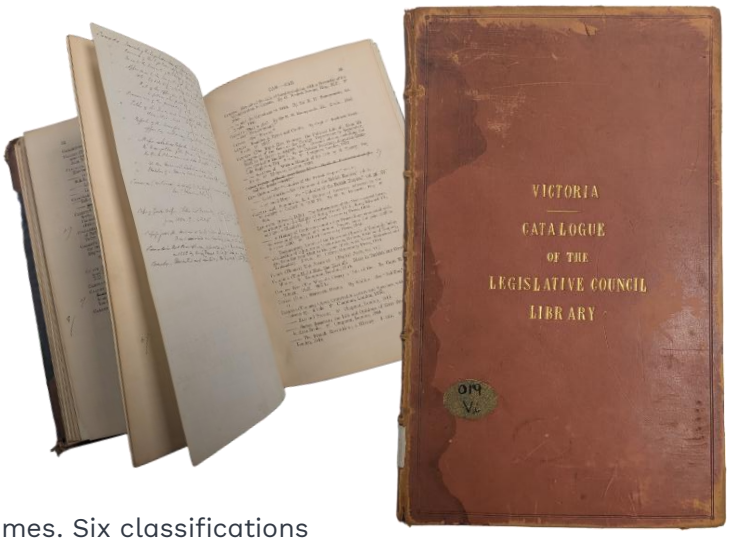
[30] Joint Library Committee (1977) 'Report of the Library Committee', *Minutes and proceedings of the Joint Library Committee*, Melbourne, Victorian Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria collection, p. 1.

The evolution of catalogues



Library catalogues first emerged in antiquity as inventories rather than searching tools. The first known systematic bibliographic catalogues were organised by subject, author and form.[31] As for the Victorian Parliamentary Library, its formation coincided with the maturing of print-based cataloguing, although just before the onset of more formal rules and categories aimed at grouping materials and aiding searching. Catalogues were often printed volumes, organised by author or subject, serving both librarians and scholars. However, category rules remained local and inconsistent across institutions.[32] Library-specific and local criteria applied.

The first Victorian Parliamentary Library catalogue, from 1854, was a slim printed volume containing both general and 'library-table' editions. The latter had a handwritten code for each item's location in the margin.[33] As Patrick Gregory noted, its contents, while favouring 'material directly useful to the business of the Council', were also dominated by 'history, biography and travels, topped up with classics in both Latin and in translation'.[34]



The 1863 and 1886 editions followed a similar pattern, although with some further innovations. The former included both alphabetical and 'classified' volumes. Six classifications each comprised a range of subcategories, ranging from theology to 'arts and sciences'. The most detailed guide to the location was a single page detailing the 'general arrangement' of themes across the library's three main rooms and the gallery.[35] It appears that the 1886

Top: Image 18. A view of Victorian Parliamentary Library staff member Val Browne with the new compactus storage, installed in the undercroft of Parliament House in 1966.

Bottom: Images 19 & 20. In foreground is the original 1854 Legislative Council catalogue, while behind it, open, is an annotated 1857 Victorian Parliamentary Library catalogue.

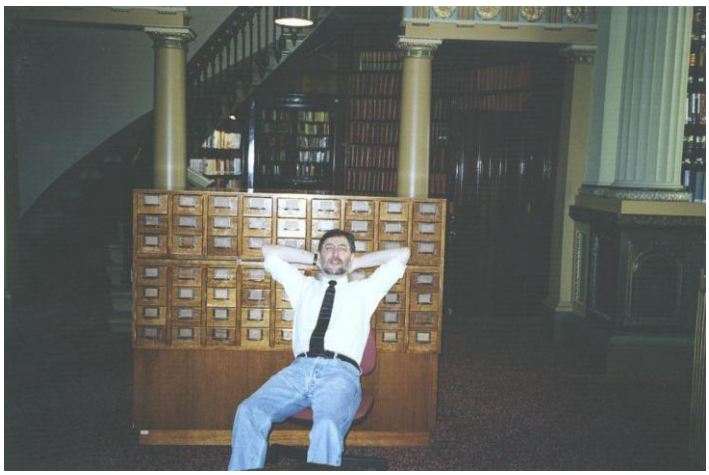
[31] T. Fons (2016) 'Improving Web Visibility: Into the hands of readers', *Library Technology Reports*, 52(1), pp. 5–32.
[32] K. Coyle (2016) 'The Evolving Catalog: Cataloging tech from scrolls to computers', American Libraries website.
[33] Parliament of Victoria Library (1854) *Catalogue of the Library of the Legislative Council of Victoria*, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer.
[34] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 5.
[35] Parliament of Victoria Library (1864) *Catalogue of the Library of the Parliament of Victoria (Part 1 and 2)*, Melbourne, Mason and Firth.

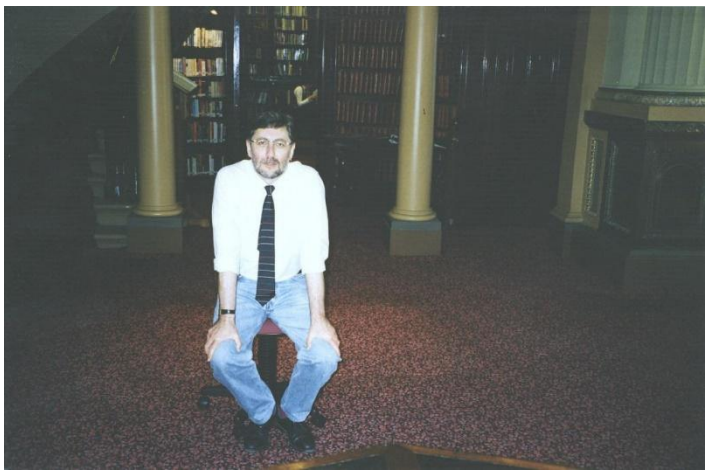
edition of the catalogue was either only produced in alphabetical form or that none of the 'classified' volumes are still kept.[36]

How accessible were these sources for the parliament's main users? Gregory suggests that:

> Few members would have used the catalogue themselves ... Members in need of information would usually have gone directly to the Librarian, whose personal knowledge of the collection and the location of individual volumes was of far greater importance than it is today, and who possessed an up-to-date catalogue which was annotated by hand as new books were classified ... [37]

The catalogues themselves probably served more as a memory aid for staff rather than a tool directly used by Members.





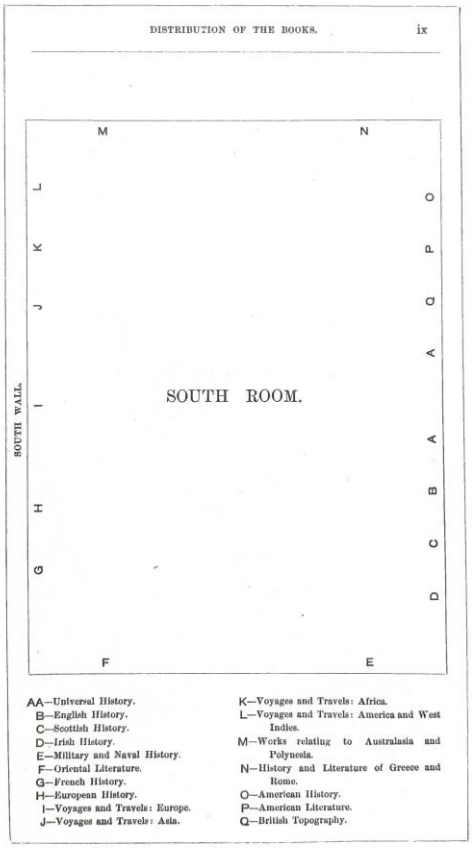
That situation changed in part with the advent of card-based cataloguing and the systems for assigning call numbers that followed international trends in library science, specifically the Dewey decimal classification system. While the Dewey decimal classification system—a numeric, hierarchical system invented by Melvil Dewey for classifying library collections—initially emerged in America from as early as the 1870s, the adoption of the Dewey system in Victoria corresponded with the Parliament of Victoria's shift to the Melbourne Exhibition Building between 1901 and 1927. [38] Although it was first recommended in 1901, the system was probably not adopted until 1906 (to correspond with the federal library collection), and even then, it was an abbreviated three-digit form until 1925.[39]

The introduction of the Dewey system was also accompanied by the purchase of a new card-based catalogue in 1903 from America, where the Library of Congress's adoption of this method of library management had encouraged the implementation of card catalogues across the country.[40] The card-based catalogue remained in place in the Victorian Parliamentary Library until late 1998.

Above: Images 21 & 22. On 28 August 1998, the day of the card catalogue cabinet's removal from the Library central chamber, technical services librarian Phil Clifford bids farewell to the last card catalogue of the Victorian Parliamentary Library.

Next page: Image 23. An extract from the 1863 Victorian Parliamentary Library printed catalogue, detailing the floor plan for the library.

[36] Parliament of Victoria Library (1886) *Victoria: Catalogue of the Parliamentary Library*, Melbourne, John Ferres, Government Printer.
[37] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 43.
[38] Online Computer Library Center (date unknown) 'DDC 23 Summaries', OCLC website.
[39] Gregory (2001) op. cit., pp. 74–75.
[40] K. Coyle (2016) op. cit.

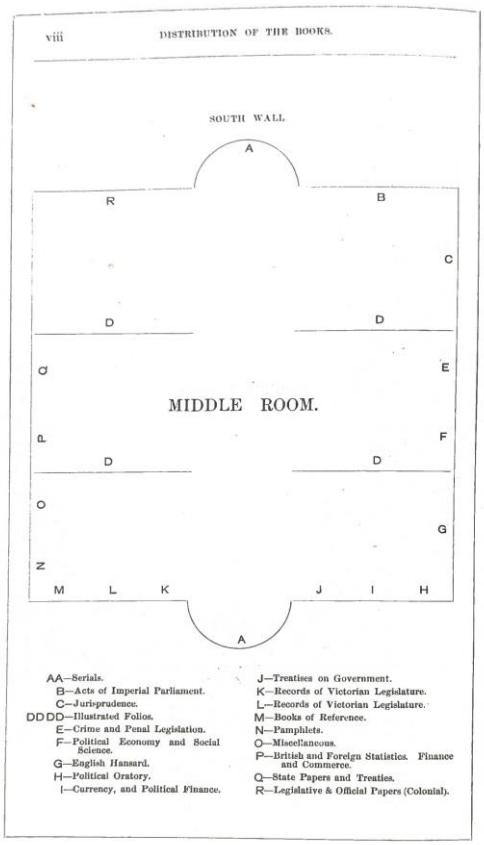


DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOKS. ix

SOUTH WALL.

SOUTH ROOM.

AA—Universal History.
B—English History.
C—Scottish History.
D—Irish History.
E—Military and Naval History.
F—Oriental Literature.
G—French History.
H—European History.
I—Voyages and Travels: Europe.
J—Voyages and Travels: Asia.
K—Voyages and Travels: Africa.
L—Voyages and Travels: America and West Indies.
M—Works relating to Australasia and Polynesia.
N—History and Literature of Greece and Rome.
O—American History.
P—American Literature.
Q—British Topography.

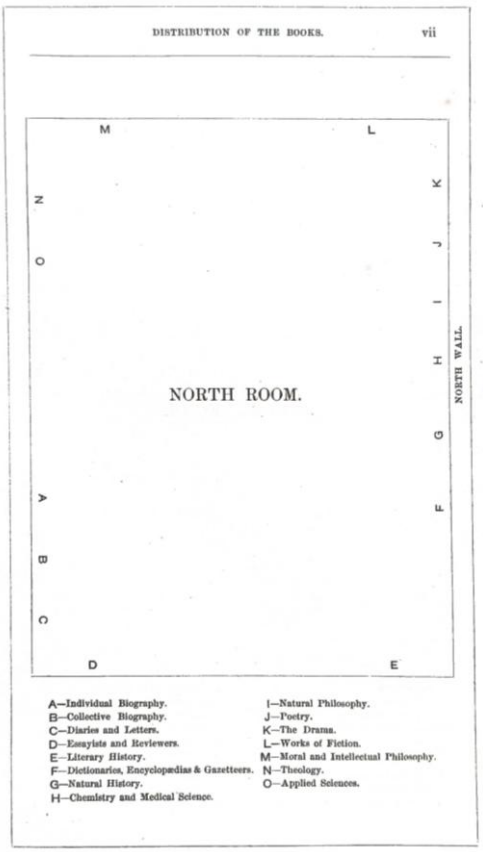


viii DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOKS.

SOUTH WALL.

MIDDLE ROOM.

AA—Serials.
B—Acts of Imperial Parliament.
C—Jurisprudence.
DDDD—Illustrated Folios.
E—Crime and Penal Legislation.
F—Political Economy and Social Science.
G—English Hansard.
H—Political Oratory.
I—Currency, and Political Finance.
J—Treatises on Government.
K—Records of Victorian Legislature.
L—Records of Victorian Legislature.
M—Books of Reference.
N—Pamphlets.
O—Miscellaneous.
P—British and Foreign Statistics. Finance and Commerce.
Q—State Papers and Treaties.
R—Legislative & Official Papers (Colonial).

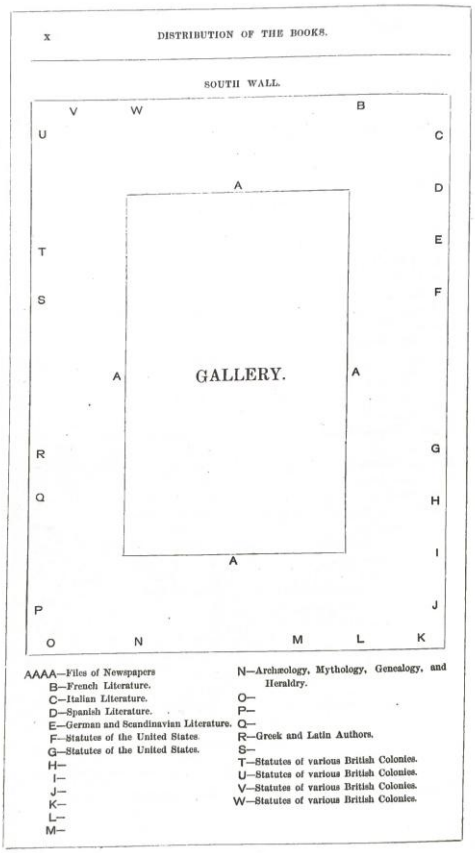


DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOKS. vii

NORTH WALL.

NORTH ROOM.

A—Individual Biography.
B—Collective Biography.
C—Diaries and Letters.
D—Essayists and Reviewers.
E—Literary History.
F—Dictionaries, Encyclopædias & Gazetteers.
G—Natural History.
H—Chemistry and Medical Science.
I—Natural Philosophy.
J—Poetry.
K—The Drama.
L—Works of Fiction.
M—Moral and Intellectual Philosophy.
N—Theology.
O—Applied Sciences.



x DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOKS.

SOUTH WALL.

GALLERY.

AAAA—Files of Newspapers
B—French Literature.
C—Italian Literature.
D—Spanish Literature.
E—German and Scandinavian Literature.
F—Statutes of the United States.
G—Statutes of the United States.
H—
I—
J—
K—
L—
M—
N—Archæology, Mythology, Genealogy, and Heraldry.
O—
P—
Q—
R—Greek and Latin Authors.
S—
T—Statutes of various British Colonies.
U—Statutes of various British Colonies.
V—Statutes of various British Colonies.
W—Statutes of various British Colonies.

Computerisation



The next stage of the development of catalogues was their computerisation. Computers became increasingly integral to the Library's services from the late 1970s onwards as these technologies' capability for reducing space constraints and manual toil advanced. As with many other libraries, Victoria's Parliamentary Library moved away from being a predominantly book-based collection towards becoming a more multifaceted information source.[41]

The Library's gradual adoption of computers followed the same patterns of computerisation as libraries more broadly. The initial large mainframe computers of the post-war era remained the preserve of larger, research-focused libraries well into the 1970s.[14] In Australia, institutions such as the Australian National University began to argue for more 'automation' to improve productivity.[15] Minutes of a Victorian delegation to the National Library in 1977 detail perhaps one of the first glimpses at what was to come, with a 'fascinating' demonstration of the 'computer based information retrieval system, AUSINET', the first Australian-based commercial vendor of online bibliographic databases.[42]

In the 1980s microcomputers and PCs began to be seen as efficient tools for libraries seeking to save time and resources on tasks such as acquisitions, cataloguing and data management, becoming more affordable amid Library budget constraints.[43] Work towards this end was started in the Library in 1980 when Member for Monash Don Hayward proposed a 'Computer Information Retrieval Service'.[44] Librarian Josephine McGovern agreed it would be a 'superior finding tool' to complement a dedicated research unit, linking Library researchers to other state and federal parliamentary libraries as well as other services.[45] A subsequent feasibility study for computer access by Jinette de Gooijer drew on examples of computerisation in other legislative libraries such as the US Library of Congress as well as the UK, Australian and Queensland parliamentary libraries. De Gooijer noted that the Library's 1981–82 budget request for an AUSINET terminal had been denied by the government, but avowed that any investment in computer access would only help to develop

Above: Image 24. Computer terminals in their new positions in the Parliamentary Library Central Chamber in 1995, where the card catalogue used to be.

[41] Gregory (2001) op. cit., pp. 151–52.
[42] J. McGovern (1977) 'Visit to the Parliamentary Library Canberra by Members of the Victorian Parliamentary Library Committee', *Minutes and proceedings of the Joint Library Committee*, Melbourne, Victorian Parliamentary Library, 23 September, Parliament of Victoria collection, p. 8.
[43] S. McCallum (2003) *40 Years of Technology in Libraries: A Brief History of the IFLA Section on Information Technology, 1963/64 – 2003*, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, July; O. Morris (2025) 'When Did Computers Show Up In Libraries?', AEANET.ORG website.
[44] D. Hayward (1980) *Provision of a legislative research service and associated computer information retrieval service for the Library of the Parliament of Victoria*, Melbourne, The author.
[45] ibid.; J. McGovern (1981) 'Comments on the paper by the Hon. Don K. Hayward, MLC', unpublished material, 13 February.

a ‘flexible sophisticated information service’.[46] In 1983, a Hewlett-Packard terminal became ‘operational’ in the Parliamentary Library and was used to search databases such as Medline and AUSINET.[47]



From the mid-1980s, PCs started to replace card catalogues through the introduction of online public access catalogues (OPACs) in libraries broadly, becoming points of direct public interaction. The first PC in the Victorian Parliamentary Library was purchased in 1985, and purportedly ‘no one was initially sure how to make the strange object work’.[48] It was, however, quickly put to use for word processing.

The 1990s saw the growth of CD-ROM-accessible databases and, later, internet access, cementing the role of PCs in public and academic libraries as tools for information retrieval, research, and learning.[49] Computers were ubiquitous in libraries, with staff members invariably working the bulbous cathode ray tube monitors of the time. Amidst the internet’s rapid development, the Parliamentary Library expanded its services in favour of access to periodicals, news services' electronic datasets, journal article databases and CD-ROMs. By 1994, internally developed online databases had gradually found new use among ministerial offices and parliamentary committees.[50] The Victorian Hansard was also digitised and made searchable and publicly available by the Library in 1996, the first Australian parliament to do so.[51]

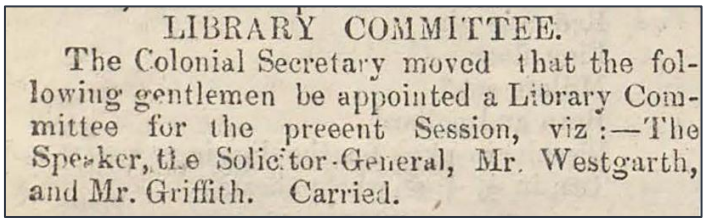
These computer-based services expanded considerably after a Client Review was undertaken in 1997, which found many Library users wanted ‘electronic information resources for the direct use of members and staff’, with the adoption of computers in this area being the ‘greatest growth area over the last decade’.[52] The most visible indicator of the changing times was in the replacement of the large card catalogues with public computers. The March 1999 launch of Parlynet, the Parliament of Victoria's intranet, was another step reflective of the technological advances in just a few decades following over a century of an analogue status quo.[53]

The shift towards computerisation enabled the shift towards information services, with the Library’s clientele increasingly accessing services remotely and electronically. The forward-thinking of the Library positioned the service as an essential component of a well-informed parliamentary democracy, providing for a rapid increase in both the demand for services and the volume of information provided to Members and their staff. Gregory reported in 2001 that ‘the Library now handles more requests from members or their staff than at any previous time in its history’.[54]

Above: Image 25. Lorraine Elliott, Member for Mooroolbark (1992–2002), tries the new Parliament of Victoria new home page in 1996 in the Victorian Parliamentary Library, assisted by Jon Breukel.

[46] J. De Gooijer (1981) *Computer access to parliamentary information: a feasibility study, with specific application to the Victorian Parliamentary Library*, November, Melbourne, RMIT Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, pp. 25, 56.
[47] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 144.
[48] ibid., p. 145.
[49] Morris (2025) op. cit.
[50] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 150.
[51] ibid.
[52] ibid., pp. 150–51.
[53] Ibid.
[54] ibid., p. 149.

The relationships



LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

The Colonial Secretary moved that the following gentlemen be appointed a Library Committee for the present Session, viz :—The Speaker, the Solicitor-General, Mr. Westgarth, and Mr. Griffith. Carried.

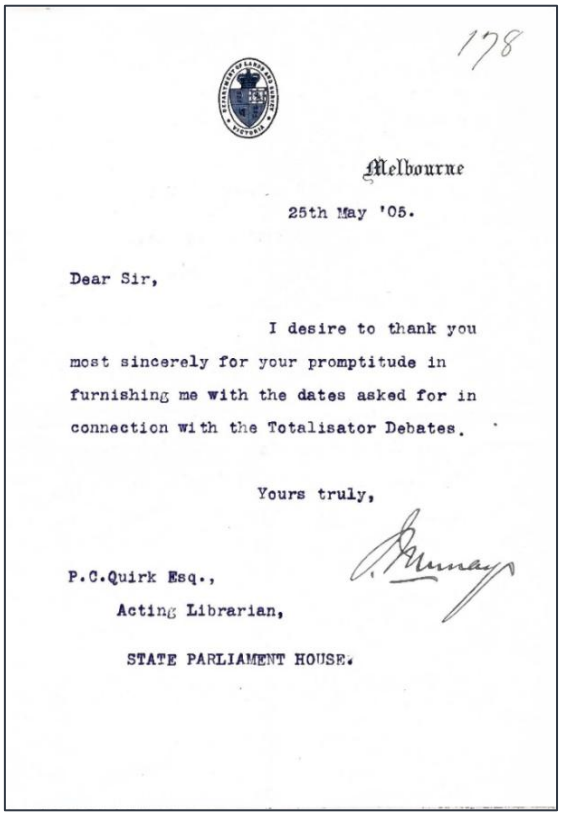
The necessity of the Parliamentary Library was self-evident to the Members of the newly formed Legislative Council on 14 November 1851. However, over the years the Library experienced fluctuating levels of appreciation from its patrons in the Treasury and the Joint Library Committee, the latter of which governed the Library until 2005. Money flowed freely initially but was tight when Melbourne became the centre of a depression in the 1890s.[55] This remained the case as the state lurched from one shock to another in the following decades, only finding clear air to re-evaluate its state of affairs and overall purpose in the 1950s (see the section below on 'The Service' for more detail on the development of the Library's research, reference and information services from the mid-century onwards).

Over this eventful lifetime, the Library has had to develop and maintain relationships with a range of patrons and stakeholders, navigating social and political developments as they have arisen and all the while remaining impartial. These factors were and are reflected in how the Library conducts itself. These include the involvement and, later, leadership of women in the workplace, earning the trust of Members across the political spectrum, and developing the Library's role within the parliamentary institution.

A rapport with the Members

While the desire for a well-stocked and well-managed library was widely held by Members in 1851, there was a wide diversity of stakeholders, placing a premium on managing relationships. In this respect, the late 1800s presented a number of teething problems for the Library, which may be partly because no-one with previous library experience entered the Library's employ until Patrick Quirk in 1901.[56]

The Parliamentary Librarian was required to be the impartial face of a small staff with a big responsibility, and it took some time to establish what was desired in this role. The appointment of ex-Member James Farrell in 1879 was contentious due to allegations of favouritism and political bias, but it proved an effective way of reading the room on what a Parliamentary Librarian should represent.[57] House debates among Members at the time show that the appearance of impartiality was as important as its practice in building trust.[58] The Hansard



178

Melbourne

25th May '05.

Dear Sir,

I desire to thank you most sincerely for your promptitude in furnishing me with the dates asked for in connection with the Totalisator Debates.

Yours truly,

John Murray

P.C.Quirk Esq.,
Acting Librarian,
STATE PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

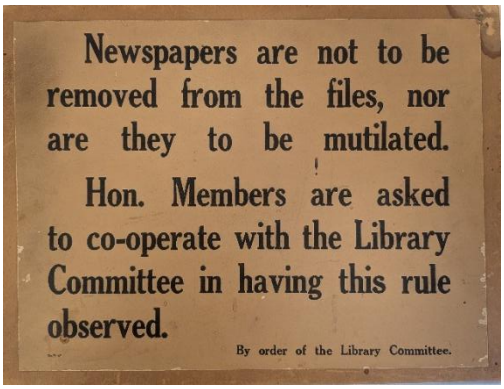
Top: Image 26. The procedure by which the original Library Committee was formed. ((1851) 'Library Committee', *Argus*, 14 November)

Bottom: Image 27. One of the more legible thankyou notes from an MP, this one from John Murray, Member for Warrnambool (1884–1916).

[55] Reserve Bank of Australia (date unknown) 'Research Guide: 1890s Depression in Australia', RBA website.
[56] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 74.
[57] ibid., p. 39.
[58] ibid., pp. 39–40.

record illustrates the view among Members on what virtues a Library worker ought to have: 'service' and 'courteousness'; a willingness to 'rush at once and get the book'; being able to 'hunt up information' on a range of topics; being well-read; able to scale ladders; and well-versed in Victorian political history.[59]

The reputation of the Parliamentary Librarian in the 19th and early 20th century in part rested on the rationale for the procurement of books for the Library. This process was reflective of Members' changing interpretations of the essential role of the Library. There was a tension between 'research or recreation', with Gregory noting that the originally educated and wealthy demographic of Members at Parliament's establishment had gradually changed by the 1880s to include 'economists and calculators'.[60] Not that being paid stopped Members from taking or 'mutilating' the newspapers, evidently.



Most Library users across the 175 years have been happy with the service provided, with correspondence in the Library Archives littered with request slips and thankyous from Members for reference and research work, and for reports and books procured. That said, critics have occasionally challenged the priorities of a cash-strapped Library and, at times, the Library's ability to furnish books for Members, be they on law, war or other topics.[61] Complaints have ranged from the Library's choice of newspapers to, in the harsh 1930s monetary climate, a lack of up-to-date essentials such as legal works, dictionaries, atlases, data and other resources.[62] The provision of recreational reading did not escape scrutiny either. Some claimed in 1933 that there were not enough 'good yarns' by 'modern popular authors' in the collection, while others in the media questioned whether public funds should be spent on paperbacks for Members' downtime when the annual budget for books and periodicals was only £400.[63]

Largely, however, the relationship between the Library and Members has been grateful, understanding and fulfilling. Even when the Library Committee was abolished in 2005, the value of the Library was still being expressed in the House. Member for Brighton Louise Asher reiterated that the Library remained a key point of reference for oppositions and backbenchers 'for impartial and independent research', at least 'until one discovers or makes friends in the ministry', while Member for Shepparton Jeanette Powell also stressed the value of library services to electorate officers, especially those in regional offices.[64] As minor parties have grown in influence to fill a much greater proportion of the Legislative Council in recent terms, Member for Western Metropolitan David Ettershank also noted the research service's value particularly to the Council as a house of review and the capacity of all Members to participate meaningfully in debates.[65] Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Maree Edwards noted the Library for its 'calm and quiet space', saying that 'Without our magnificent library, this parliament would not be whole'.[66]

Above: Image 28. A warning to Members not to take liberties with the newspapers. The fact that such a sign was needed may indicate the trouble the Library had encountered with keeping the papers orderly.

[59] ibid., pp. 41-42.
[60] ibid., p. 53.
[61] ibid., p. 70, 79.
[62] ibid., p. 96.
[63] (1933) 'Popular books for Parliament', *The Herald*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 27 July, p. 6.
[64] L. Asher (2005) 'Second reading: Parliamentary Administration Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 20 April, p. 620.
[65] D. Ettershank, (2026) 'David Ettershank: Valedictory statement', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 9 September, p. 4173.
[66] M. Edwards, Speaker (2026) 'Member for Bendigo West: Valedictory statement', *Debates [Proof]*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 24 September, p. 99.

Relationships amid Federation

The Parliamentary Library's collision with Federation strained the Library's relationships with many. *The Age* of 1 August 1901 described the Library's dilemma as such:

> As the State Parliament of Victoria takes up the position that it is not prepared to surrender the control of the State Parliamentary buildings the committee finds itself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand it may not manage the future Federal library, and on the other it is shut out of the control of the existing State library.[67]

The Victorian Library's collection was split, with the state parliament taking a few essentials with them to the Exhibition Building, including Assistant Librarian Patrick Quirk. They did, however, surrender the services of Chief Librarian Arthur Wadsworth to Canberra.

The relegation of the Victorian Parliamentary Library to the Exhibition Building's western annexe may have felt like a betrayal for some Members, but differences were reportedly settled by establishing separate state and federal committees to manage their respective Members' interactions with the Library. 'All the causes of former friction are said to have been removed' between the occupants of Spring Street and the Exhibition Building, *The Age* reported in November 1901.[68] Only weeks later, ripples of discontent were radiating through the Victorian Parliament when Member for Brighton Thomas Bent notified the chamber he had been locked out of the Library while the Federal Parliament was in recess, the Library key apparently having travelled to Adelaide.[69] Members expressed the view that 'the Library was the great object of the desire of the Federal Government' and that, as a result, it would seek 'to shut honorable members out of the building during their holidays'.[70]

Access to the main Library space and service was still granted to Victorian Members, but requests for materials were complicated by the imposition of a 1-kilometre distance that messengers had to navigate between Spring Street and the Exhibition Building. Only seven days after the Parliament decanted into the Exhibition Building, Members were struggling to overcome their newfound separation anxiety:

> **The Hon. W. H. EMBLING**— ... if an honorable member had to wait till a messenger boy travelled three quarters of a mile and back again with the book, it might be of very little value when it came to hand, as the debate might have concluded, or the opportunity of quoting from the book have passed. Perhaps a connexion might be made between the Exhibition-building and Parliament Houses, Spring-street, by means of a pneumatic tube, by which at a moment's notice any book which was required in the course of a debate could be obtained.
>
> **The Hon . A. O. Sachse**— There would be no difficulty in doing that.[71]

Sachse must have been an optimist. But this idea's short-lived spell in the parliamentary imagination did not dampen the demand from Members. The lack of more than one yearbook in 1905 (a statistical snapshot of the state) prompted Assistant Librarian Patrick Quirk to protest to the Statisticians' Office that the allocation of only one was 'altogether inadequate'.[72] But it was a sign of the straitened times more generally—the apologetic reply of the Chief Statistician, while able to supply another copy at short notice, indicated budget restrictions were hitting just as hard there.[73]

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[67] (1901) 'Parliamentary Library', *The Age*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 1 August, p. 6.
[68] (1901) 'News of the day', *The Age*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 16 November, p. 8.
[69] T. Bent (1901) 'Parliament Buildings, Spring Street', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 19 December, p. 3746.
[70] J. McIntyre, (1901) 'Parliament Buildings, Spring Street', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 19 December, p. 3748.
[71] W. H. Embling (1901) 'Accommodation of the Federal Parliament', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 25 June, pp. 34-35.
[72] P. Quirk (1905) Correspondence from Patrick Quirk, Acting Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, to the Government Statist, personal communication, 5 July.
[73] Acting Statistician (unnamed) (1905) Correspondence from Acting Statistician, Australian Government Statistician's Office, to Patrick Quirk, Acting Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, personal communication, 8 July.

Regardless of the stressors, the Members' relationship with the Library coming out of the federal years was ultimately a trusting one, with one memento of this time being the original mace. Wooden and gilt with gold leaf, it was lent to the Federal Parliament in 1901, subsequently taken to Canberra in 1927, where it would remain until 1952. You can make out the mace in the *Herald's* version of events from 1952, among the portraits, books, 'promises' and 'red tape' being carried out of Spring Street that year, with a man in the top left corner marching down the steps holding it aloft. When it returned to Melbourne, the Speaker would entrust it directly to the Library for safekeeping as a marker of its importance to the history of both the Victorian and national parliaments.[74] It remains above the main door of the Library to this day.



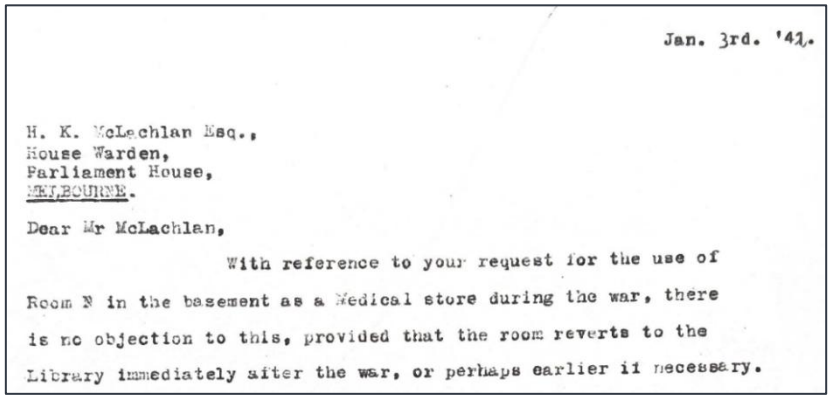
Collaboration with other services and stakeholders

While there was relief to have the space back in 1927, the need for cooperation between the federal tier of government and the Victorian Parliamentary Library was called upon just over a decade later with the outbreak of World War II. The Library's services and its spaces were utilised in the war effort by about 30 wartime organisations, including adjusting its holdings to make way for a medical store in the basement of Parliament House (see over page).[75] Maps, data and research services were utilised by federal departments and even US military forces.[76] However, circulation of information was strictly censored, even for a library with such an exclusive and lofty clientele. At times, the Library has drawn on high-flung connections to safeguard its collection. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, being the Chairman of the Library Committee, instructed the Chief Librarian to bring in the Chief Commissioner of Police when volumes of the *Casanova Memoirs* went missing in 1940.[77] A culprit was never found.

For many years, the Parliamentary Library relied on overseas publishers to send periodicals and documents by boat and, later, by air. Newspaper and periodical subscriptions from the US and UK were regularly shipped in, while parliamentary documents were exchanged far and wide with parliaments in the US, the Caribbean and the Cape Colony (later South

Above: Image 29. A satirical cartoon by *Herald* cartoonist Samuel G. Wells, capturing the handover of the Spring Street address from Federal Parliament back to the Victorian Parliament. Among the items being taken are 'promises', 'red tape, '27 years of Hansard', 'more red tape' in exchange for £50,000 handed over by a dapper federal representative to Victoria's then-Premier John Allan, less handsomely dressed.

[74] (1952) 'Victoria Gets Its Mace Back', *The Age*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 2 July, p. 3.
[75] B. Reid & D. Reeves (2025) *The Victorian Parliament and World War II*, August, Melbourne, Parliamentary Library & Information Service, Parliament of Victoria. p. 14.
[76] ibid.
[77] E. Frazer (1940) Correspondence from Eric Frazer, Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, to the Chief Commissioner of Police, personal communication, 21 June.



Jan. 3rd. '41.

H. K. McLachlan Esq.,
House Warden,
Parliament House,
MELBOURNE.

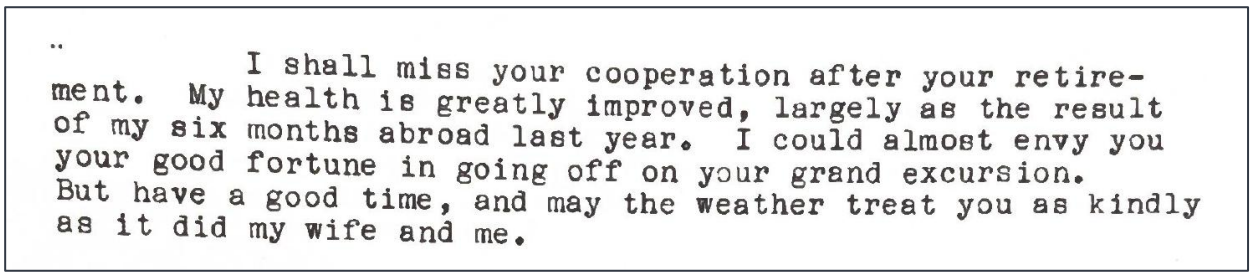
Dear Mr McLachlan,

With reference to your request for the use of Room N in the basement as a Medical store during the war, there is no objection to this, provided that the room reverts to the Library immediately after the war, or perhaps earlier if necessary.

Africa). Correspondence in the Library archives also points to lasting relationships with non-parliamentary institutions abroad, such as with the New York Public Library and the British Museum, requesting item catalogues or interlibrary loans. As a marker of the early Parliament's colonial ties to the UK, *The Times* was one of the Library's longest-standing newspaper subscriptions from its earliest days, though this ceased in 2001 as the Library turned 150.[78]

This reliance on international correspondence had its pitfalls. The physical dangers of shipping during wartime were self-evident, with restrictions on supply routes from the UK and US, while the economics of scarcity meant cost inflation was a threat to strict budgets.[79] But this was not strictly a wartime issue. Ships can and will sink, which the Library found out when a collection of English Law Reports went down in 1905 off the coast of Perth with the SS Orizaba, one of the largest ships to be wrecked off Australia's coast.[80]

However, closer to home, friendships developed and survived despite distance through a spirit of collaboration, as we can see from this correspondence between NSW Parliamentary Librarian Harry McLoskey and Eric Frazer upon news of Frazer's imminent retirement in 1956.



.. I shall miss your cooperation after your retirement. My health is greatly improved, largely as the result of my six months abroad last year. I could almost envy you your good fortune in going off on your grand excursion. But have a good time, and may the weather treat you as kindly as it did my wife and me.

A network of parliamentary libraries has developed among states and territories, providing both fruitful lending and research capacity and valued cooperation among staff. Gregory describes Laurie Parkes, Librarian from 1965 to 1968, as 'hungry' for information on such parliamentary library services, and information sharing has since become a point of pride among this niche library ecosystem.[81] Later, under Josephine McGovern, an association of the country's Parliamentary Librarians would form. This mutual understanding would lead to NSW Parliamentary Librarian Russell Cope being invited to undertake a thorough review of Victoria's Library and its services (see more in 'The service'). In 1984, again under McGovern's tenure, a telefacsimile network among parliamentary libraries was established, as was an information-sharing network among Australian parliamentary libraries.[82]

Top: Image 30. The Library's store rooms were briefly used as a medical store during World War II.

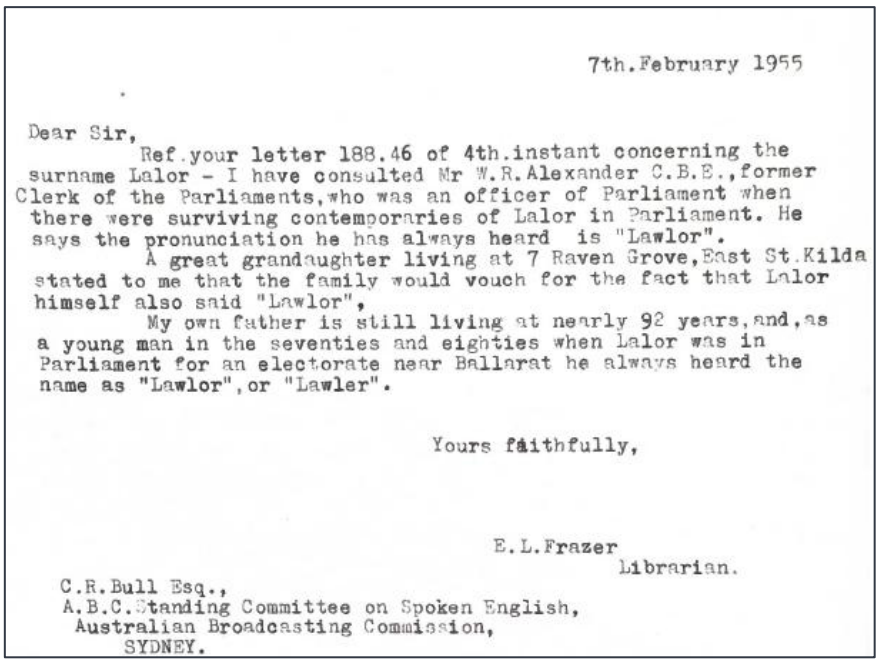
Bottom: Image 31. Correspondence from Harry L. McLoskey, Librarian, NSW Parliamentary Library, to Eric Frazer, Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, demonstrating the ties that have developed between parliaments and the very particular role of the parliamentary librarian.

[78] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 153.
[79] George Robertson & Co. (1914) Correspondence with Victorian Parliamentary Librarian, personal communication, 13 October.
[80] C. F. Maxwell (1905) Correspondence from Maxwell, Publisher, to Patrick Quirk, Acting Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, personal communication, 4 April.
[81] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 129; C. Eager (1956) Correspondence of Clifton Eager, Chairman of the Joint Library Committee, to Premier Henry Bolte, personal communication, 7 November.
[82] Joint Library Committee (1984) 'Minutes of the meeting 15 August 1984', *Minutes and proceedings of the Joint Library Committee*, Melbourne, Victorian Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Victoria collection, pp. 2–3.

These connections have endured with the Victorian Parliamentary Library continuing an active presence. In 2008, the Library hosted the inaugural conference of the Australasian Parliamentary Libraries Association, and it also convened the first fully virtual edition in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic.[83] The conference has since become an annual opportunity for information-sharing for practitioners in this very particular role in parliamentary democracy.

The service

Despite the money allocated to the Library dwindling from the 1890s until well into the 20th century, the collection naturally continued to grow in the absence of a suitable staff or strategy for weeding surplus material. In 1851, the annual budget for running the library was £3,200, declining to an allocation of just £425 by 1936. This placed additional pressure on the Library's collection policy to adequately meet the needs of a parliament, with the Library reported as being 'hopelessly out of date' in 1937.[84]



7th.February 1955

Dear Sir,

Ref.your letter 188.46 of 4th.instant concerning the surname Lalor - I have consulted Mr W.R.Alexander C.B.E.,former Clerk of the Parliaments,who was an officer of Parliament when there were surviving contemporaries of Lalor in Parliament. He says the pronunciation he has always heard is "Lawlor".

A great grandaughter living at 7 Raven Grove,East St.Kilda stated to me that the family would vouch for the fact that Lalor himself also said "Lawlor",

My own father is still living at nearly 92 years,and,as a young man in the seventies and eighties when Lalor was in Parliament for an electorate near Ballarat he always heard the name as "Lawlor",or "Lawler".

Yours faithfully,

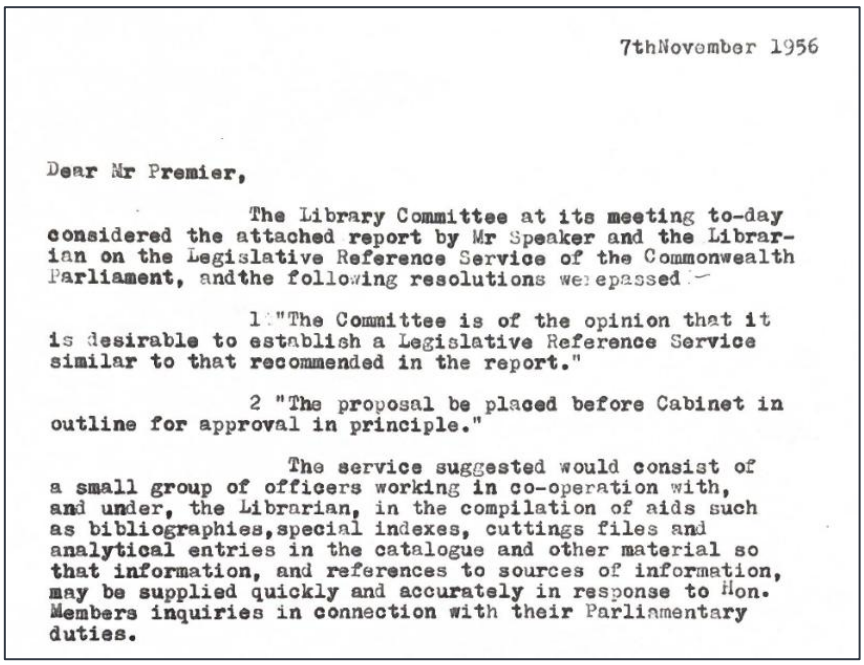
E.L.Frazer
Librarian.

C.R.Bull Esq.,
A.B.C.Standing Committee on Spoken English,
Australian Broadcasting Commission,
SYDNEY.

Ultimately, a rehash of the Library's mode of operating and resourcing would not be possible until the second half of the century, at which point the collection was at a tipping point. A subcommittee of the Joint Library Committee in 1956 pushed for a 'legislative reference service' like that in the Commonwealth library or the US Library of Congress.[85] Little had happened by 1965 when Librarian Laurie Parkes wrote to his NSW counterpart Russell Cope, still advocating for a research officer to be added to the staff as part of a 'strengthened and expanded library service'.[86] A reference officer, Bernice Donnellan, would be added in 1965, but Cope would come to have a lasting impact on the Library's direction.[87]

Above: Image 32. Research has long been a feature of the Library service, from before there was an official research service. This is one example from 1955 of a research inquiry completed by Librarian Eric Frazer concerning the pronunciation of Peter Lalor's surname. A year later, Frazer would recommend a formal reference service, but it would decades before an official research service was established.

[83] Department of Parliamentary Services (2008) *Annual report 2008-09*, 29 October, Melbourne, DPS, p. 39.
[84] (1937) 'Parliamentary Library: Books out of date', *The Argus*, National Library of Australia Trove Digital Archive, 13 August, pp. 14.
[85] Gregory (2001) op. cit., pp. 127–28.
[86] L. Parkes (1965) Correspondence from Lawrence (Laurie) Parkes, Librarian, Victorian Parliamentary Library, to R.L. Cope, Librarian, New South Wales Parliament Library, personal communication, pp. 2, 5, undated.
[87] E. Florence & A. Wright (2026) *'Unidentified female libarian': The women of Victoria's Parliamentary Library*, July, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria, Victorian Parliamentary Library, p. 17.



7thNovember 1956

Dear Mr Premier,

The Library Committee at its meeting to-day considered the attached report by Mr Speaker and the Librarian on the Legislative Reference Service of the Commonwealth Parliament, andthe following resolutions werepassed:—

1."The Committee is of the opinion that it is desirable to establish a Legislative Reference Service similar to that recommended in the report."

2 "The proposal be placed before Cabinet in outline for approval in principle."

The service suggested would consist of a small group of officers working in co-operation with, and under, the Librarian, in the compilation of aids such as bibliographies,special indexes, cuttings files and analytical entries in the catalogue and other material so that information, and references to sources of information, may be supplied quickly and accurately in response to Hon. Members inquiries in connection with their Parliamentary duties.

Cope replied to Parkes at the time that he was 'particularly interested to see the outline for future developments', but he was disheartened 12 years later in 1977 to describe, in a review commissioned by Josephine McGovern, what he saw as a combination of financial starvation, cumulative neglect and lack of purpose. He wrote that most Members' ideas of the Library's usefulness were 'lukewarm', and this started from the top down.[88] In a 1972 biography of Henry Bolte, the long-time Premier reportedly said that he never set foot in the Library in '20-odd years'.[89] Cope stated that, despite substantial efforts to the contrary, the Library was still struggling to 'jump beyond its own shadow' amid a 'decidedly shaky' reason for being; even more scathingly, the institution was beholden to a 'vanished era' after a 'period of suspended animation' and until now was 'unable, or reluctant, to engage in sobre [sic] self-analysis'.[90] He continued:

> ... the Library's accommodation, its overall environment and, to a large extent, its image to the Parliament are all tied to its nineteenth century origins and functions, but it has lost its original nineteenth century *raison d'etre*.[91]

Cope wanted the library to find external storage, clear out space for Members, increase staff and pivot into a proactive information service that should be nothing less than 'indispensable' and constantly 'evolving, refining and studying its users whose needs change too'.[92]

This would come in time, but it would be a gradual process. Staff comments on these recommendations can be described in the parliamentary language of 'support in principle', but optimism was not high about receiving either money or support for many of his admittedly 'utopian' recommendations—for instance, building a new wing onto Parliament purely for library storage.[93] There were still reports in 1978-79 of very basic problems, such as 'books piled on the floors of the North and South Library rooms', and volumes stored offsite in the Treasury vaults were going missing.[94] The focus, then, would be overhauling the Library's collecting policies due to a combination of modest budgets, broader inflation, storage shortages and the nature of changing Members' demands. [95]

Above: Image 33. Correspondence from Eric Frazer, dated 7 November 1956, details to the Premier the Library Committee's proposal for a formal 'legislative reference service'.

[88] R. L. Cope (1977) 'Report to the Library Committee of the Parliament of Victoria on a survey of the Victorian Parliamentary Library', Melbourne, Library Committee, p. 9.
[89] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 124.
[90] Cope (1977) op. cit., p. 8–9.
[91] ibid., p. 2.
[92] ibid., p. 9.
[93] B. Donnellan et al. (1977) 'Preliminary comments by the Library staff concerning certain recommendations in the Cope Report', Melbourne, Victorian Parliamentary Library, July.
[94] Victorian Parliamentary Library (1979) *Report to 30th June 1979*, Melbourne, the Library, p. 4.
[95] Gregory (2001) op. cit., pp. 123, 134, 140.

Part of this would be finally bringing in a research service skilled at navigating the wealth of resources and anticipating MP demands. Of course, an informal version of a research service had long been provided, with a more formal service recommended as far back as 1956.



However, it took a number of years before a 'research service' was given a special remit in 1983.[96] McGovern and her predecessor Laurie Parkes were instrumental in bridging the Library from a nineteenth-century mentality to a twentieth-century service, building on the relatively recent additions of the newspaper clipping service established in 1966 (the beginnings of a still highly valued media monitoring service) and a series of biographical histories for Victorian Members of Parliament (the bones of what is now an extensive online member database).[97] This did come at a cost, however, with McGovern noting in 1975:

> Because of space problems, there seems to be no alternative but to disband [the Library's] original collections of valuable books in order to allow the proper functioning of an information service appropriate to members of Parliament in this day and age and the Library Committee faces heavy responsibilities in this regard.[98]

Patronage of the research service especially took off in 1990 when each Member was granted the option of a second staff member, many of whom were not electorate officers but research officers based at Parliament, meaning the Library became available to a whole new client base.[99]

Where are we now?

Library and information management, media monitoring, and research and inquiries remain vital components of the Library's service today. And while ambition has been occasionally outweighed by budget, space and resourcing constraints—one Member remarked in 1985 that 'without question, Victoria's Parliamentary Library staff is the most overworked of any Parliamentary Library in the Westminster system'—the Parliamentary Library has also often been an incubator for ideas on how to make Parliament a more dynamic contributor to not only Members but the public at large.[100]

The production of educational materials developed into an 'Education Officer' role, with the Library sending out the first Parliament Education Kit in Australia in 1986—this function now represented by Parliament's Community Engagement team.[101] The Victoria Parliamentary Internship Program was proposed in 1990 by the University of Melbourne's Professor John

Above: Image 34. A view of the North Library in 1977 at the time of Cope's review, a somewhat cluttered working space. It has now been freed of much of the additional shelving.

[96] Gregory (2001) op. cit., p. 143.
[97] ibid., p. 130.
[98] Joint Library Committee (1975) 'Report for the year ended 30th June, 1975', *Minutes and proceedings of the Joint Library Committee*, Melbourne, Victorian Parliamentary Library, 30 June, Parliament of Victoria collection.
[99] Victorian Parliamentary Library (1991) *Annual report 1990–91*, Melbourne, the Library, p. 7.
[100] M. Williams, (1985) 'Committee: Appropriation (1985-86, No.1) Bill', *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 29 October, p. 1340.
[101] Gregory (2001) op. cit.

Power and was the first parliamentary library internship program in Australia. It is still coordinated by the Library, now partnering with six universities and with an alumni of nearly 1500 graduates (including a former Premier and several MPs) by the end of its 37th year.[102]

The increased computer literacy of the library in the 1980s and 1990s would eventually lead to Parliament's first IT department being initially incorporated within the Library before being diverted into its own branch. The Library was full of advice on how to use the new tool called 'the Internet' in the mid-90s and was again on the scene overseeing the development of the Parliament website as recently as 2009–10, before web development was subsequently diverted into its own team within IT. In more recent years, the Library team has incorporated data experts to help enhance the research service's ability to interpret a world now saturated with it. Broad media monitoring and a host of media databases ensure Members and staff have easy and quick access to a wealth of information concerning the Victorian Parliament from across the state.

The Library has also developed a team to help document, catalogue and research the breadth of heritage accrued over almost two centuries of Victorian parliamentary history. In the past, you could be forgiven for mistaking the Parliament's attitude as being narrow-minded to the point of seemingly preserving one book at all costs—*Victoria the Golden* by William Strutt. Its exhibition was recommended by Cope in his 1977 review, and its digitisation and republication in 1980 was a heralded occasion. It even prompted staff to suggest 'Rare books conservator' as a new job title.[103]



Strutt's work is still highly prized, but it now forms part of a broader and expanded rare books collection that requires its own brand of expertise, care and curation by a dedicated heritage team within the library. Having developed roots in 2006 as a 'Pictorial Collections Officer' to manage the growing collection, the heritage team eventually expanded into a team under a 'Coordinator of Heritage and Collection' and a dedicated Heritage unit in January 2014. This small team now manages a diverse range of materials, including the Parliament's art collection and related procurement as well as an extensive archive of material—books, maps, commemorative objects and more—with a remit for collating, documenting, managing, interpreting and exhibiting Parliament's collection of art and heritage items.

They, along with the long-established Research and Inquiries team and Information Access and Management Services team, still maintain the Library's close eye on the events of the Parliament to assess where the library's efforts are best focused moving forwards, while also recognising the lessons that can be learnt from looking back on a rich bed of history. Much of it is ripe for exploration, including areas not well served by the Library in its initial years but which are now more fulsomely acknowledged in Library collections—notably the state's First Nations history, which now represents a much larger space in the library's

Above: Image 35. Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Jim Plowman (L) is joined by Premier Lindsay Thompson (R) in unwrapping a framed print at the launch of William Strutt's *Victoria the Golden: scenes, sketches and jottings from nature with a narrative by Marjorie Tipping*, 7 November 1980.

[102] T. Hvala & J. Breukel (2015) *Students of Spring Street: 25 years of the Victorian Parliamentary Internship Program*, Victorian Parliamentary Library, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.
[103] Donnellan et al. (1977) op. cit., p. 1.

collection of books and heritage, both historical and contemporary. Changing library management practices accommodate a constantly changing political and social ecosystem, while facilitating learning about the issues facing the constituency at any given time. Ultimately these practices support the Parliament's dual identity as a simultaneously historical and working institution. Further, it is safe to say the Parliamentary Library, far from being a static relic of the past, will continue to evolve and innovate as the people and times demand.



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Suggested citation

Tonkin. A & B. Reid (2026) *The Parliamentary Library and 175 years of change*, Victorian Parliamentary Library, Melbourne, Parliament of Victoria.

Acknowledgements

The Parliament of Victoria Library acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

The authors would like to thank Teresa Aquino, Marianne Aroozoo, Ellie Florence, Carolyn Macvean, Emma O'Connell, Debra Reeves, Monica Syrette and Annie Wright for their assistance in the preparation of this paper, as well as Patrick Gregory for his work *Speaking Volumes: The Victorian Parliamentary Library 1851–2001*, which was an immensely helpful resource.

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Heritage Note
Victorian Parliamentary Library
ISSN: 2204-4779 (Print) 2204-4787 (Online)