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The Society's eighth annual general meeting

Following the success of the seventh annual general meeting, we decided to impose again on the kindness of owner Pat Corrigan and staff of Better Read Than Dead bookshop in Newtown in Sydney's youthful and lively inner west. As it turned out, not a lot of members were able to make it to the meeting on the evening of 24 June, due to illness, distance, short hours of daylight or prior engagements, but the small attendance was amply made up for by the vigour and breadth of discussion.

After the minutes of the seventh annual general meeting were confirmed, the President presented his report for the year 2014. Four issues of the *Newsletter* had been prepared and distributed, further work had been put into the Society's website, and the invitation card for 2014 was the second in the series of postcard-style compilations, this time on the topic of flower/garden bookplates. In addition to the annual meeting, an informal 'show and tell' meeting was held in Sydney and further, a group of Melbourne members arranged a local gathering to discuss bookplates and other matters of common interest. The year ended with 78 paying members, including four new members (three, NSW, and one, QLD). All in all it was considered a successful year, and the President thanked members for their continuing interest in the Society, and in particular Bronwyn Vost, honorary secretary for organising successful annual and show and tell meetings, and Mary Keep for continuing superlative design of the *Newsletter* and the most attractive invitation 'postcard'.

Further business of the meeting was next covered, including the report of the Treasurer, showing a bank balance of a little under one thousand dollars at year's end, up from about six hundred dollars at the start of the year. The increase was due to an excess of income (based on membership subscriptions, donations and

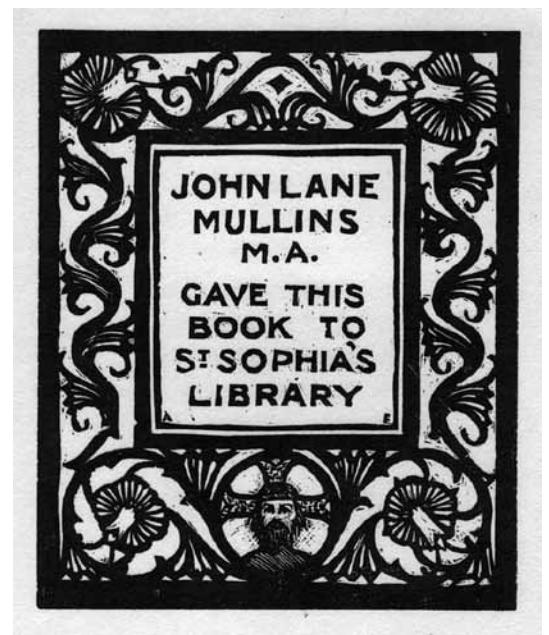
other income) over expenditure (on printing postage and stationery costs). The Treasurer thanked members who had made monetary donations to the Society. There was no change in office holders for 2015 as no nominations were received other than from incumbents, and those present confirmed Mark Ferson as the President and Treasurer, Ronald Cardwell as Vice President and Bronwyn Vost as Honorary Secretary. Previous committee members were confirmed for 2015 as Mary Keep (designer) and Nicholas Ingleton.

The President then introduced the next agenda item 'Tenth anniversary celebration' by noting that the Society was officially formed at a meeting held in October 2006 and that he had the idea of marking the tenth anniversary in late 2016 with some sort of function or other event. This prompted a pleasantly vigorous discussion, in particular a suggestion from Nick



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Wood-engraved bookplate by Adrian Feint for John Lane Mullins' donation to Sancta Sophia College, 1926

Ingleton of mounting a bookplate design competition, open to all but in particular targeting students of art/design schools and courses. It was agreed to proceed to develop this excellent idea, and it is proposed that a sub-committee be established to plan the celebration and associated events.

Concluding the discussion of the Society's tenth anniversary, the President again thanked those present, closed the formal meeting and invited members to talk about bookplate-related items they may have brought along to show. Juanita and Richard Hattersley agreed to start the ball rolling by showing some items bought at the Melbourne auction of the John Lane Mullins Collection, the property of Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney. Each of these books contained the Adrian Feint wood-engraved bookplate worded 'John Lane Mullins M.A. gave this book to St. Sophia's Library'. Following this Bronwyn Vost circulated her copies of the Australian Ex Libris Society annual reports, now of the order of 80 years old, and James Fellows showed his striking hand-printed, two-colour linocut collage of kangaroo and Ned Kelly, whilst Mark Ferson gave the last presentation, showing a copy of J Leicester Warren, *A guide to the study of book-plates* (London, 1880) he had picked up at the Caravan Book Store, Los Angeles, and discussing the fascinating provenance suggested by a bookplate and annotations within the volume. To finish, photographs were taken, and staff of the bookshop again thanked for their generosity in providing such a pleasant venue for the meeting.

Institutional bookplates as indicators of provenance

By Geoffrey Burkhardt, ACT

With the recent interest among bibliographers in issues relating to the history of ownership of books, especially books of some historical and bibliographic significance, bookplates are important as one of the numerous indicators of previous ownership.

Although many collectors of bookplates most usually focus their efforts upon personal bookplates rather than institutional bookplates, this brief paper seeks to alert collectors to the contribution that an institutional bookplate may make to the history of ownership of a book. A book's provenance, as revealed by its bookplate, raises a number of questions for both the bibliographer and the collector. What might the bookplate tell us about the various owners of a book? Does the book have some historical significance by virtue of its history of ownership, or historical association as suggested by its bookplate or bookplates? Does the presence of an armorial bookplate have some sociological or genealogical significance for the book's history? What might the presence of an institutional bookplate or institutional accession number tell us about reading preferences and/or literary tastes of the period?

The significance of bookplates for interpreting the history of ownership derives from the common practice of many bookplate artists who design the content of the bookplate to include symbolism

relevant to the career, background and interests of the owner. With institutional bookplates, especially those from libraries, the bookplate may come as a 'presentation' plate, a gift or acquisition of a notable collection, or from a person of historical or professional significance. An apt adage on the frontis bookplate illustration of the book by Martin Hopkinson titled *Ex libris – the art of bookplates*, states, 'Show me the books he loves and I shall know the man far better than through mortal friends.'

Three examples have been chosen to illustrate aspects of the above.

J G Lockhart

Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.
(Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1842)

This book is one whose historical and bibliographic significance lies not in its title or its content but in its association with one of the original attempts to establish a permanent settlement on the north coast of Australia in the 1860s. The evidence supporting this association lies in the provenance conferred by its bookplate, which reads, '*Presented to the Officers and Men of the Northern Expedition by the Board of Governors of the South Australian Institute, April 1864. Duplicate Copy from the Institute Library*'. The Northern Expedition referred to on the bookplate is that led by Lt Col Boyd Travers Finniss, ex British Army officer, assistant surveyor to Colonel Light in Adelaide. The exploring party sought to establish a permanent settlement in Adam Bay at Escape Cliffs, Adelaide River in what is now the Northern Territory. The



Members at the Society's 8th Annual General Meeting on 24 June 2015: (l-r), Juanita Hattersley, Nicholas Ingleton, Mark Ferson, Bronwyn Vost, James and Barbara Fellows, Richard Hattersley

expedition of surveyors, staff and workers departed Adelaide in April 1864 aboard the Barque *Henry Ellis* attended by the schooners *Yalta* and *HMS Beatrice*. It is assumed that this book was aboard one of these vessels on its journey to Adam Bay. This attempt to establish a permanent settlement failed, the Escape Cliffs settlement was abandoned in 1867 and the surveyors and settlement party returned to Adelaide. When Finness's attempt was abandoned it is presumed the book returned with the expeditioners to Adelaide. Which member of the settlement party was actually responsible for the books accompanying the expedition is uncertain, but an additional item of provenance in the book may provide a clue. On the reverse of the front free endpaper are the pencilled initials 'J.K.D.' According to the *Journal of Alfred Charles Webling*, which makes a number of references to him, Mr Davies was the storekeeper of the expedition.¹ Is it reasonable to assume that the storekeeper for the expedition may have acquired some books from the stores and supplies following the abandonment of the settlement? Were the pencilled initials those of Mr Davies? Nothing further is known about the history of this book until it was purchased in 1999 from a second hand dealer in Harden-Murrumburrah (NSW) by a Canberra collector for \$20.

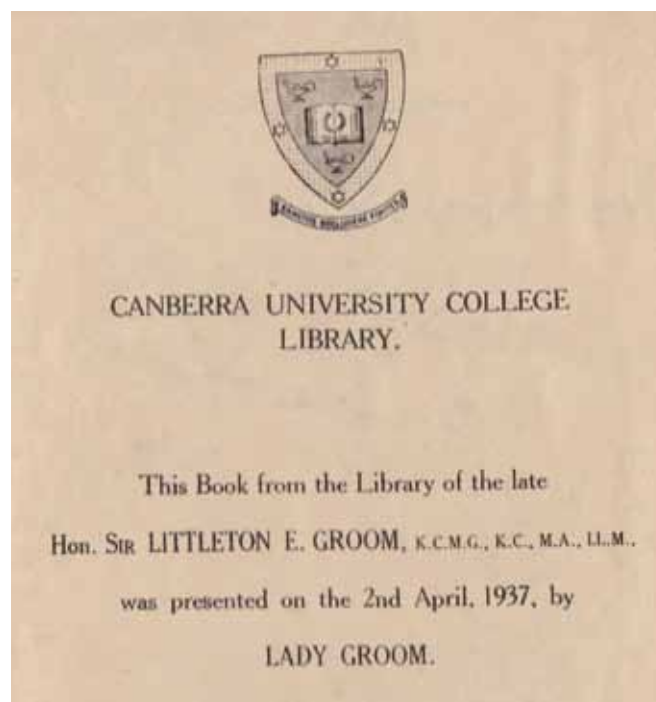
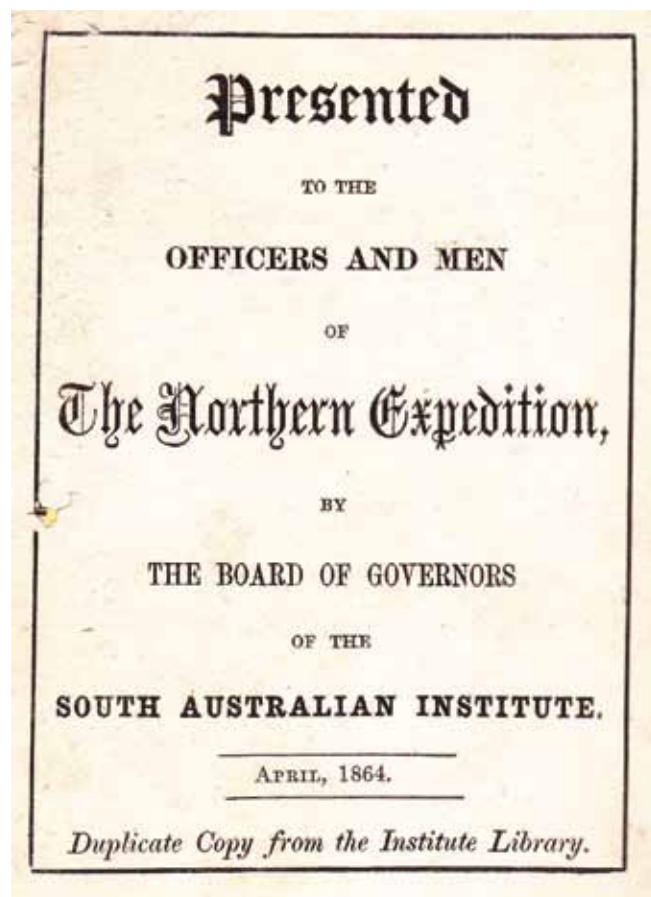
The bookplate information in this book raises another related series of questions. What was the size of the book collection donated to the exploring expedition? Did the South Australian Institute furnish the expedition with many duplicates? What does the presence of such a 'special event' bookplate tell us about the perceived significance of the expedition at the time? Was this special collection just a small shipboard library? Was it unloaded at Escape Cliffs with the intention of being the foundation of a permanent settlement library? Finally, when the Escape Cliffs settlement was abandoned, what happened to the rest of the books of which *The memoirs of the life of Sir Walter Scott* was just one title among many? Is there any record of other books bearing this bookplate having been located?

James Grant

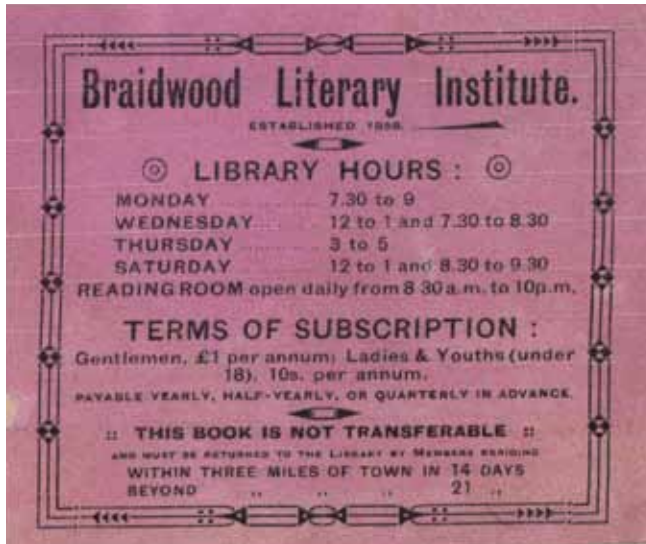
British heroes in foreign wars, or cavaliers of fortune.
(London: Routledge, 1873)

The presence of an institutional bookplate, a book label and a signature are revealing: this book was originally in a personal library, then gifted in 1938 to an institutional library, the Canberra University College Library, and then discarded in 1983, then it found its way again into a personal library. The original owner whose book label and signature appear on the front free endpapers was Sir Littleton E Groom, a member of the first Australian Federal Parliament, who later, as Federal Minister for Works, was closely associated with the construction of Canberra in its formative years.²

The text of the bookplate reads, '*Canberra University College Library, This book from the Library of the late Hon. Sir Littleton Groom KCMG, KC, MA, LL.M., was presented on the 2nd April 1937 by Lady Groom*'. Groom's signature on the front free endpaper is dated 1880 when Groom was just 13 years old, at that time attending Toowoomba Grammar School. He most probably received this book as a school prize, as he was a brilliant scholar, 'a brilliant student winning many prizes'.³ This is supported by the fact that the Canberra



University College bookplate appears to have been pasted over a school presentation prize plate. Groom was a keen advocate for the establishment of a national university in Canberra. The Canberra University College was a College of the University of Melbourne and became part of the Australian National University in the 1950s. Grant, the author of this book, a 'new edition with coloured illustrations' published in 1873, wrote over 50 books, including boys' adventure stories, popular in the late Victorian era.⁴ This edition has a green cloth binding, gilt



lettering on spine and cover, with a colour frontis and numerous colour illustrations throughout. It is a rather handsome edition most suitable as a school prize.

Sir Charles Lyell
*The geological evidences of the
 antiquity of man*
 London, 1863

The third example with an institutional bookplate is a book of some nineteenth century geological significance. It was originally in the library of the Braidwood Literary Institute, and its bookplate leads us to the fate experienced by many books originally part of libraries of Literary Institutes, Schools of Arts, Mechanics' Institute and other institutions of that genre. At the peak of the popularity of such subscription libraries in the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, it has been estimated that there were 432 of these institutes throughout NSW, and in 1914 they held a total of 734,623 books.⁵ During the last 100 years all but a handful of subscription institutes in each Australian state have been closed, sold, demolished or taken over by local municipal and shire authorities. In the large majority, the books have been dispersed, with a few notable exceptions such as the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute Library, the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, the Melbourne Athenaeum, and a few small local institutions, like the Lambton Mechanics' Institute, the Carr's Creek School of Arts and the Maldon Mechanics' Institute, which somehow still retain the bulk of their original libraries

The Braidwood Literary Institute was established in 1858 and its library of approximately 5000 volumes was comparatively large for a country town institute. When it closed in 1958, its library was placed into storage where it remained until 1971 when the local government authority gave all the remaining books in the library (about 3000) to the local Apex Club which sold them all by the box in a 'white elephant' auction. I attended this auction held on 11 April 1971 and purchased a couple of boxes containing books – many with the Institute bookplate pasted in – such as the Lyell volume.

Thus, the Braidwood Literary Institute bookplate illustrated here is symbolic of the dispersal of most institute libraries over the last 80 years.

References

1. D D'A Webling, *The Journals of Alfred Charles Webling*. Canberra, 1995; pp. 29, 82.
2. Jim Gibbney. *Canberra 1913-1953*. Canberra: AGPS, 1988; pp. 64, 74-5.
3. *Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 9*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983
4. See entry for James Grant in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP, 2004-15
5. *The Official Year Book of New South Wales*, 1916, NSW Government Printer, Sydney 1917, p.162
6. *Catalogue of Books in the Library of the Braidwood Literary Institute*, 1897.

Marketplace report

By Robert C Littlewood, Melbourne

Most collectors of ex libris bookplates would have thought the State Library of New South Wales and the Archives of the Art Gallery of New South Wales shared the entirety of the Lane Mullins collection, but not so. Like a ghost from a past era, some two hundred books and bookplates once belonging to John Lane Mullins (1857-1939) were offered for sale by auction at Australian Book Auctions, Melbourne on 1 June 2015. The vendor was Sancta Sophia College, the University of Sydney, and the auction items once a donation to that institution from Lane Mullins.

John Lane Mullins is not only the 'father of the Australia ex libris movement' but, in a sense, he was the alpha and omega of the first wave of the bookplate movement in Australia. John Lane Mullins (1892) by Percy Spence was the first pictorial bookplate designed in Australia whilst Lane Mullins' death in 1939 brought to a close the formalised activities of the Australian Ex Libris Society of which Lane Mullins was the first and only President during its sixteen years of energetic activity.

Auction results on 1 June 2015 reinforced the notion that books about Australian bookplates are highly collectable. On this occasion, the very fine condition of the books and loose bookplates combined with the magic of the Lane Mullins provenance resulted in strong prices being offered up by book dealers and a few irrepressible collectors.

Here are some examples:

Lot 31. John Lane Mullins' album of 38 original bookplates seriously pasted into a contemporary binding started at \$650 and sold for \$3120.

Lot 32. A small box of printer's process blocks including two original woodcuts started at \$300 and sold for \$2160.

Lot 33. An archive of about 150 loose bookplates plus some correspondence suggesting they were exchanged by collectors started at \$500 and sold for \$1140 which on reflection appears to be exceptionally good value.

Original prints of Australian bookplates from 1895 to the 1950s were systematically stripped out of the open marketplace in the 1980s and most serve as ex libris archives in public institutions. For this reason, any bookplates that come up for sale in the open marketplace will always be highly prized.

Mention should be made of Lane Mullins' early habit of embossing in gold his armorial ex libris onto the front cover of books in his library. Rarely seen in new world personal libraries, this habit harks back to the same use of ex libris by aristocratic families of Europe.

Not in Peake –

Dr William Thomas (Tom) Lesslie

By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

Ever on the lookout for linocut bookplates – as grist for a very long-term project 'Linocut bookplates in Australia' – at the Wahroonga Lifeline Book Fair held on 12 July 2014, I spied the illustrated 'Lesslie' apple-green linocut bookplate in a copy of *Daphnis & Chloe*, translated by Jack Lindsay and published by the Daimon Press, London in 1948. Unsigned, and perhaps not the work of a professional artist, I suspect that the bookplate was executed by the owner; as another book picked up at the same sale was signed Tom Lesslie, 17 Tintern Rd, Ashfield, an internet search led me to believe that the bookplate most likely belonged to William Thomas Lesslie (1 February 1917 to 2 November 2005).

Tom was born in Sydney and as a young man travelled to Scotland in 1938 to study medicine, there also marrying Janet

Turner who had sailed from Sydney on the last liner to leave Australia for Europe after the outbreak of World War 2. After Tom gained his medical degree from Edinburgh University in 1943, he worked as house physician for six months at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, and probably worked his and Janet's passage home by signing on as ship's surgeon for the Port Line. Back in Australia at the end of the year, and with Janet expecting their first child, Tom applied for a commission as a medical officer in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), holding the rank of flight lieutenant till his discharge in 1946. The bookplate shown depicts a caduceus, a winged rod entwined with two snakes, similar to the RAAF medical officer insignia dating from World War 2. In about 1950, he established himself in medical practice in Lithgow, and after 20 years Tom retired from general practice and took up the position of Commonwealth Medical Officer at the Small Arms Factory, one of Lithgow's major employers.

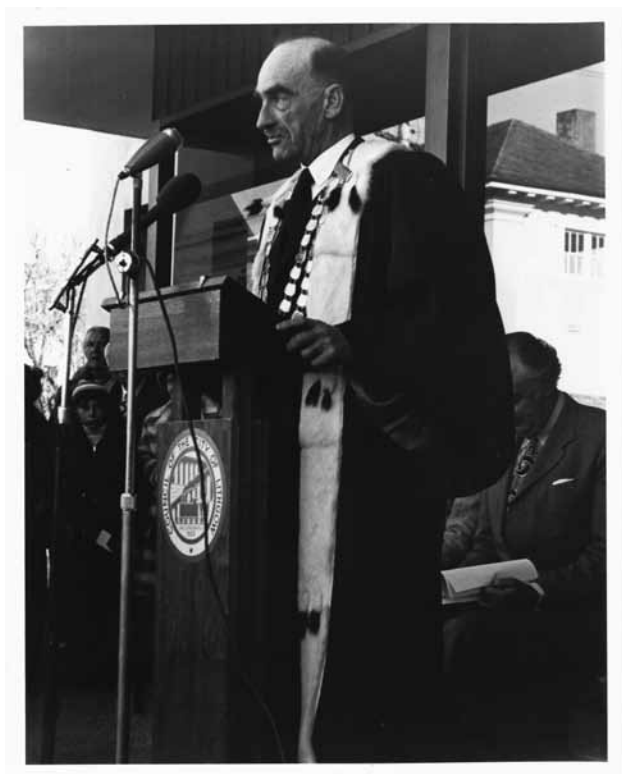
He was involved in many community activities, and established a school for people with learning disabilities; he also served as an alderman on Lithgow Council, holding the office of Mayor for four terms in 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1979. A street in South Bowenfels, the suburb of Lithgow where Tom and Janet lived, was named after him.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Kay Shirt, Local History Library Officer, Lithgow City Council.

Further reading

A wartime marriage has lasted 60 years. *Lithgow Mercury*, 15 Apr. 2000; p. 3

Death of Dr Tom Lesslie. *Lithgow Mercury*, 3 Nov. 2005; p. 2



Above: Dr WT Lesslie, Mayor of Lithgow, 1974
(photo courtesy Lithgow City Council)
Right: Linocut bookplate for William Thomas Lesslie



Notes and happenings

Recent publications

CHARLES STITZ. The continuing adventures of *Australian book collectors*. *Biblinews and Australian Notes & Queries*, no. 385, Mar. 2015, pp. 3-11

Show bookplates for W P Hurst and Bruce L Evans

The history page. *Useful knowledge* (Magazine of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.), no. 35, Spring 2014, p. 33 Shows bookplates of the Manly Literary Institute (Sydney) from c. 1940

MIV news – Record scanning for you. *Useful knowledge* (Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.), no. 36, Summer-Autumn 2015, p. 12

Shows bookplate for the Miners Rest and Dowling Forest Mechanics' Institute and Free Library.

Launceston's conservation & innovation. *Useful knowledge* (Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.), no. 36, Summer-Autumn 2015, p. 15

No bookplates shown but the article draws attention to the remarkable survival of some 20,000 titles from the former Launceston Mechanics' Institute library, now held at the University of Tasmania. Of particular interest is the blog pointing to a site with images of nineteenth century bookplates found in the collection, at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/launcestonmechanicsinstitute/sets/72157644908732268>

Beauty find from the Children's Library. (The history page). *Useful knowledge* (Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.), no. 36, Summer-Autumn 2015, pp. 31-2 Notes and shows the find in an early edition of *Black Beauty* (London: Collins, c. 1920s) of a bookplate for the Children's Free Lending Branch, Free Library and Mechanics' Institute of City of South Melbourne. Founded in 1923, this was one of the earliest Australian libraries dedicated to children.



International Ex Libris Competition – Museo Nazionale della Montagna, Turin, Italy

Notice has been received of this international bookplate competition, which is being conducted by the Museum in collaboration with the Associazione Italiana Ex Libris. The competition will culminate in an exhibition to be held in the first half of 2016, and so the closing date for entries is 30 November 2015. Entries must be in the form of original prints (computer generated design is not accepted), and the subject of the bookplate must be either the Museum itself, an alpine or mountain subject, or skiing, climbing or other mountain sports. Copies of the competition regulations and entry form may be obtained from the Editor.

Editorial

The Society has just held its eighth annual general meeting (covering activities and finances in 2014), and despite the small numbers attending, there was a great deal of constructive discussion about ways in which we might celebrate the Society's tenth anniversary, which will fall during October 2016. The formal business was followed by a 'show and tell' which revealed much interesting material related to printmaking and bookplate history – both Australian and international.

There is some degree of overlap of both interests and membership between our Society and the Book Collectors' Society of Australia. One of the individuals who forms a link between the two, and who in fact has a very broad network in book and printing history and the book arts, is Juergen Wegner, and I am grateful to Juergen for suggesting that Book Collectors' member Dr Geoffrey Burkhardt might allow us to publish in the *Newsletter* the talk he gave on institutional bookplates to the 2014 Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand conference. I am glad to say that Geoff's paper appears in the current *Newsletter* – rather than being about bookplates as

art, it highlights the historical value of some bookplates and their associations with interesting or significant personalities, events and, sometimes, failures.

Speaking of institutional bookplates, I recently joined two societies involved in promoting and supporting the cultural organisations known variously as mechanics' or literary institutes or schools of arts; a century ago, such buildings could be found in every country town and every urban municipality. I have been collecting their bookplates for many years, and Geoff's article – which features the bookplate of the Braidwood (NSW) Literary Institute – spurred me to contact the Mechanics' Institute of Victoria Inc and its NSW counterpart, the Association of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art. The e-newsletter of the Victorian association in particular makes reference to institute bookplates from time to time, and these now appear as bibliographic entries in our own *Newsletter*.

I would finally like to thank Robert Littlewood for his 'Marketplace report' which draws attention to the significant but little publicised sale by auction in Melbourne of the collection of books that John Lane Mullins donated to Sancta Sophia College at the University of Sydney in about 1926. By one of those coincidences that seem rife in the very small world of Australian bookplates, our 'show and tell' at the recent annual general meeting featured some items secured at the very same sale!

Correction

The author of 'They served their country. New Zealand bookplates associated with World War I – some biographical jottings', which appeared on the first two pages of *Newsletter* no. 36, has drawn my attention to an editorial error which suggests that the Vickery bookplate by G D Perrottet was for Hadden Kingston Vickery, where in fact it was for his daughter Shirley Kingston Vickery. A more complete version of Ian Thwaite's article, with correct information, is available on the Society's web site at <http://www.bookplatesociety.org.au/anzac-bookplates>