

My favourite bookshop

A series of visits with the Friends of the Baillieu Library

Juliet Flesch

Collection Management Librarian, & Executive Secretary of the Friends

The Friends of the Baillieu Library have just concluded a series of visits to some of Melbourne's most interesting bookshops. Spread over three Thursday evenings in February, March and April, visitors spent an hour or so in each shop (which was closed to other shoppers at the time) with the opportunity to talk to the owners, sip a glass of champagne, nibble a sandwich and look at the stock.

The shop owner took a few minutes to tell us why this was his or her favourite bookshop and to answer questions and, at the conclusion of proceedings, those who wished went on to dinner at a nearby restaurant.

The first visit, on 3 February, was to **Kay Craddock Old and Rare Books**. This bookshop is a delight which too few people know about. Deterred perhaps by its posh location, perhaps a little intimidated by the beautiful furniture and fittings, too many passers-by glance at the goodies in the windows without venturing inside. This is a pity, for those of us who frequent the shop know it as a cornucopia of enormous variety, a

maze of things we want to read, to handle and to own, through which we are expertly and capably led by friendly people. Kay gave a brief history of the enterprise which she and her mother Muriel have made such a feature of the Melbourne book world, and 20 or so members and their guests were able to browse at leisure among shelves containing everything from incunabula to old green Penguins. Dinner was at the appropriately literary Charles Dickens Bistro.

March saw a disappointingly small group visit **Pages of Kew**, one of Melbourne's newer children's bookshops. The small attendance meant a low return to the Friends of the Baillieu Library, but, of course, had the advantage of allowing those who attended room to move easily around the bright and well-appointed shop and ask questions of Meredith Horton, the proprietor.

Meredith and Ian Horton come from a background in teaching and educational administration and the shop contains a fair sprinkling of books for parents to consider buying for themselves while their children are making their selection. Everything from rag books to teen fiction is available for the younger reader. Dinner that evening was at the Jade Kew Restaurant, under the baleful eye of a tank of

crayfish daring any of the diners to point a chopstick in their direction.

The final evening of the series was held at the **Melbourne University Bookroom**, and although very few of the Friends availed themselves of the opportunity of seeing round the shop with expert guidance from Jenny, Dominic, Rebecca and Bruce and without the normal hordes, our numbers were swollen by the welcome arrival of ten Friends of Essendon Library.



Bruce Allardice, University Bookroom



Meredith Horton, Pages Bookshop

Bruce Allardice, barely disembarked from a plane from Perth, told us a little of the history of the Bookroom, which goes back to 1920, making it the oldest of the shops we visited, and pointed out some of the areas of special

strength which one might not have expected in a shop on a university campus. Dinner was at University House, good value as always.

Although the low atten-

1990. Friends, friends of Friends and others welcome.

On Saturday 6 August, the University Archivist, Frank Strahan and Senior Archivist, Cecily Close will join John



Pictured at Kay Craddock Old & Rare Books: clockwise from top left: Juliet Flesch, Kay Craddock, Alison Sayers and Muriel Craddock.

dance at these functions meant that they were not very successful in their primary aim of raising money for the Library's collections, they were certainly successful in giving those who came a very pleasant evening, and, we hope, made some new friends for the shops we visited. The cooperation of the shop owners was crucial to this, and for many of the visitors, the feeling that they know where to go and who to consult when choosing a special gift was the greatest benefit of the evenings.

The Friends have a number of interesting activities planned for the next few months, notably their Annual Dinner and a Saturday Seminar.

The Dinner will be held at University House on Thursday 28 July. The speaker will be Dr Janet McCalman, prize-winning author of *Journeys: the biography of a middle-class generation 1920-*

Lack from the Department of History and Liza Davey from ScienceWorks in presenting *From Quill to Optical Disk*, followed by afternoon tea and a trip to the Archives. The Seminar will be held in the Reader Education Room of the Baillieu Library. It will last from 2.00 to 4.30 and cost a miserly \$15.00. All welcome.

Enquiries about Friends of the Baillieu Library activities

Book review

Bookshops of Victoria; a reader's guide

Juliet Flesch

The first edition of *Bookshops of Victoria** was published in 1988, and many of us have been hanging out for the new one, as we grappled with the frustration of finding that shops had closed, moved, changed their phone numbers, expanded their coverage, etc., etc.

The new edition is similar in structure to the first, with the descriptions of individual shops preceded by a series of essays on various types of bookshop. The entries for the shops are alphabetically arranged, with subject and locality indexes at the end.

It's a nicer-looking book than the previous edition, and the cover reproduction of June Stephenson's *Girl reading* is especially pleasing. As before, the entries provide address, phone number, hours of opening, details of specialisation, the shop's own description of its services, reader comment and details of special services, such as phone or mail order, credit cards accepted and accessibility by wheelchair.

While your own opinion may differ from that of the anonymous "reader" the comments are generally useful and agreeably idiosyncratic. It's

nice, too, to see an increase in the number of country shops covered. As always, prohibitions on advertising sex-shops have meant that you will consult the index in vain for any of the profusion of "adult" bookstores of Melbourne, so the researcher in this area must continue to rely on the Yellow Pages.

The only other thing missing is some maps. This is a wonderful book to give to visiting friends and relatives with a couple of days free in Melbourne and it would be even better if it had a few sketch maps showing where the shops are.

That said, however, it's an extremely useful and enjoyable book, well worth the \$19.95 and this reader has found only one bookshop which has had the temerity to change its address since the guide was published!

**Bookshops of Victoria; a reader's guide. A project of the National Book Council (Victoria). 2nd edition. North Blackburn, Collins Dove, 1994. Review copy supplied by the National Book Council (Victorian Committee)*