

Mortlock Wing

The exhibition bays in the historic Mortlock Wing open a window into the history and culture of South Australia, featuring the people, places, issues and events that have contributed to the state's development. Completed in August 2004, the exhibition bays showcase the richness and breadth of State Library collections, with historical and contemporary materials used to illustrate particular themes.

The completion of the Mortlock Wing exhibitions marks the end of the State Library redevelopment, which commenced in 2000 and now provides public access to all Library buildings on North Terrace.

Comprising nearly 1,000 items, the exhibition bay themes highlight areas of particular relevance to South Australia, and largely reflect State Library collection strengths providing an entrée into those collections. The themes include:

A trunk full of books (the State Library)

A rich tapestry (communities)

Wooden walls and iron sides (shipping)

South Australia's Christian heritage (religion)

Taking it to the edge (exploration)

To be a child (children's literature and games)

The radical dream (social and political reform)

This sporting life (sport)

State of the arts (arts and culture)

Wine literature of the world (wine)

From the ground up (architecture)

The State Library aims to ensure the permanent preservation of its collections both in storage and within exhibitions. Every effort has been made to house exhibited items within international standard showcases and the appropriate environments to enable the longevity of items for future generations.

Origins

The Mortlock Wing was opened on 18 December 1884 as a Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery for the colony. It opened with 23,000 books and a staff of three. A grand plan was envisioned for the cultural precinct with this being the first of three buildings planned.

Construction of the building took over 18 years to complete after the initial foundations were laid in 1866. At least three different sets of foundations were laid, due in part to political indecision and delays, design changes and to the fact that the building was situated over an underground stream, which rendered the foundations unstable.

The foundation stone was laid on 7 November 1879 by Sir William Jervois and the building was constructed by Brown and Thompson at a total cost of £43,897.

The building is French Renaissance in style with a mansard roof. The walls are constructed of brick with Sydney freestone facings with decorations in the darker shade of Manoora stone. The original entrance is on the south-east corner facing North Terrace.

The interior is considered one of the finest examples in Australia of a late Victorian library. There are two galleries, the first supported by masonry columns, and the second by cast iron brackets. The balconies feature wrought iron balustrading ornamented with gold while the glass-domed roof allows the chamber to be lit with natural light. Two of the original gas 'sunburner' lamps survive in the office space located on the second floor at the southern end, as does some of the original wallpaper in the Friends lounge on the ground floor.

Restoration of the building occurred in 1985 as a Jubilee 150 project by Danvers Architects, consultant architect to the South Australian Department of Housing and Construction. The \$1.5 million project was jointly funded by the government and the community.

In honour of a substantial bequest from John Andrew Tennant Mortlock, the Libraries Board of South Australia resolved that a percentage of the South Australiana Collections would be housed in the wing and named the Mortlock Library of South Australiana in 1986.

A chronic shortage of storage space for the State Library prompted the 1999-2004 redevelopment, and after assessing collection storage requirements, the South Australiana collections were relocated to the newly developed Spence Wing's state of art storage facility and to centralise the Information Desk in the new public areas of the Spence Wing.

After earthquake remediation as part of the building redevelopment, and renamed the Mortlock Wing in 2003, the building now accommodates a range of functions and allows public accessibility to a much larger portion of the building than previously available. The basement area is home to the State Library's preservation and reformatting teams, providing staff with natural light and giving passers-by the ability to view their work from street level.

The Mortlock Wing now provides a home to the Friends of the State Library and the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia Library.

As well as housing the themed exhibitions, the main chamber is also available for hire after September 2004. Other spaces in the Wing include the Sir Josiah Symon Library, an example of a 19th Century gentleman's library and the Crawford Room, which is set up as a classroom and is also available for bookings. Contact the Venue Coordinator on 8207 7203 Or 0401 125 093.

For further information

Library visitors Request assistance from Customer Service staff at the Information Desk
Telephone enquiry service (08) 8207 7250 TTY (08) 8297 7251 Toll Free 1800 182 013
Facsimile Fax an enquiry to Research Services (08) 8207 7247
Letter Write to Research Services, State Library of SA, GPO Box 419, Adelaide SA 5001
Online Submit an online enquiry form to Research Services via www.slsa.sa.gov.au/ask_us
Email Send an email to info@slsa.sa.gov.au
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