Library a trail blazer even in the early years

As part of our contribution to the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the University, Marta Chiba, a former Library director and branch manger, is writing a history of the Library. Here she gives us a glimpse of the early years.

Libraries are at the heart of all universities. This was particularly true in the mid twentieth century, in the age of print and before the advent of electronic age. Leading librarians and academics of Monash University were determined to build a great library in both quality and size. The first two decades of the University Library was focused on building, collection through purchase, donation and exchange, and on introducing new services.

First University Librarian appointed

The Library started in a bedroom of the Vice Chancellor's house. As it continued to grow, it was moved into the gardener's cottage, then into a warehouse of the Volkswagen Factory and later to the ground floor of the first science building of Monash University.

One of the first actions of the Interim Council of Monash University was to appoint Ernest Clark, a scholar and a man of definite ideas, as University Librarian. Ernest Clark and his small group of senior staff: Brian Southwell, Chief Reference Librarian (later to be appointed as University Librarian) and Ken Horn, Acquisitions Librarian (later to become State Librarian of Victoria) laid down the principles governing the design of the Monash University Library.

Four branches planned for research

Monash University was originally designed to serve a population of 12,000 on the Clayton campus. Under the first building plan, the University was to have four libraries, designed to function as one library system. The 'Main Library' would serve the faculties of Arts and Economics and house library administration, technical services and provide the main reading accommodation, the 'Hargrave Library' the faculties of Science and Engineering, the 'Biomedical Library' Life Sciences and Medicine, and there would also be a 'Law Library'.

The aim was to break down the barriers between different disciplines, and to create a broad culture, with effective communication within the library and between the branch libraries and the user population. The idea was not to create two cultures

Humanities and *Sciences*, but provide connection and inspiration for all fields of knowledge. Monash University was first to adopt in Australia a model with major branch libraries, rather than the traditional small, departmental libraries under the control of a large central library.
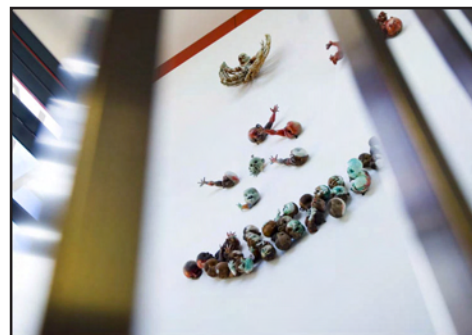

Reading room, Hargrave Library, 1962

Hargrave Library built

The Hargrave Library (now Hargrave-Andrew Library) building was the first permanent library on the Clayton campus. Initially it provided access to collections and services and functioned as the main library.

The Hargrave Library building was designed by Architects Bates, Smart and McCutcheon. It cost £330,000 and together with books and furniture it represented an initial investment of £500,000. The library at this stage housed 80,000 volumes, including donations from Australia and from countries overseas. The building was named after Lawrence Hargrave, the great Australian aviator, explorer and astronomer. The choice of name indicated the intention to create a great library. In

The original John Perceval sculpture honouring Lawrence Hargrave was reinstalled in the Hargrave-Andrew Library after the 2006 refurbishment

1962 only the collection of the Fisher Library in the University of Sydney had approached the size of 1,000,000 volumes.

The Hargrave Library was officially opened on 15th December 1962, by Sir Keith Hancock, Professor of History and Director of the Research School of Social Sciences at the newly established Australian National University. In his address at the opening Sir Keith Hancock spoke of the value of good library collections for specialist research and supported the concept of four major branch collections to be built at Monash.

Main, Biomedical and Law libraries constructed

The Main Library (now Matheson) was already under construction in 1962, and was officially opened on the 4th April, 1964. The first stage of the Biomedical Library building was completed in 1966, but almost immediately the library moved to temporary location, as the size of the building was too small for collection, seating accommodation and services. An additional two floors and a penthouse were erected on the single storey first stage building before the library moved back to its permanent location. The Law Library occupied central position in the newly completed building of the Law School.

Library buildings models for future

The floor plan and the internal arrangement of furniture in the Hargrave Library was claimed in contemporary literature as a model library for the future, with its natural lighting, reading accommodation around the perimeter of book shelves, special purpose facilities such as conference, typing and discussion rooms. Furthermore, there was a special reading room for academic staff. The Main Library, when it opened, was similarly described in glowing terms. All Monash library buildings were well planned and widely acknowledged by clients and other academic libraries.

Article in Australian Factory *1962 extolling the virtues of the Hargrave Library architecture.*

This was an exciting time for staff and students. Leadership in the university and the library was hard working and forward looking. We had a shared vision for a great University with a great library. We were a dedicated team. The Vice Chancellor, Prof Matheson, with his wife visited the homes of senior staff, including the chief librarian and the foundation librarian of Hargrave. We created a 'Monash-family' of staff and students.