

the library at the end of the world

natural science and its illustrators



edited by Anita Hansen and Margaret Davies







the royal society of tasmania library: a history

Previous page: John Gould and Henry Constantine Richter, Ithaginis cruentus, [Blood Pheasant]. Hand-coloured lithograph, 10.24 x 14.78, Gould, J. 1850: The Birds of Asia.

With the founding of the Society in Tasmania in 1843, as the Botanical and Horticultural Society of Van Diemen's Land, it was agreed that a Library would be a part of the establishment process. In 1845, the Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, Sir Eardley-Wilmot, wrote to the Royal Society in London, the Antiquarian Society and the Linnean Society (he being a member of each) and other societies asking for books for a library which was to be established in the cottage previously occupied by the Governor's Secretary (and now part of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery complex). The first purchase however, was not made until 1846, when *Loudon's Encyclopaedia of Plants ...* was added to the developing collection. It can be assumed that various volumes already constituted the Library, but that these had been acquired by donation of volumes from earlier societies that predated The Royal Society of Tasmania and were effectively subsumed by it.

By 1848, it was reported that "a Library is now being got together" and that it was to be a public library "in support of Members of this Society and of the community... At this time it comprised 80 volumes, besides pamphlets, almost all of which were presentations from members."

By 1849, the collection consisted of 250 volumes many of which were acquired through the donations of the members and it was the practice of the Society to record these donations in the Annual Report together with the names of the donors. A progressive perusal of the annual reports reveals the donation of not only single monographs, but also copies of proceedings of kindred organisations, papers from similar groups and a significant number of pamphlets. Purchased items were also recorded by title and for a number of years the number of purchased items more or less equalled that of donations.

The establishment of the Tasmanian Public Library in 1849, allowed the Society to restrict its acquisition programme to materials more directly related to the objects of the Society and thereafter its collection developed around more scientific subjects.

A catalogue was published in 1850 that listed 329 books and pamphlets, and this was followed by a second catalogue in 1856, and a third, compiled in 1885 by Alexander Morton, Curator of the Royal Society's Museum.

The Library, in its early stages, was effectively an adjunct to the Royal Society's Museum collection and the housing of the printed collection presented a continuing problem for the Society. In 1854, it was recorded that the books would subsequently be "placed in convenient glazed cases instead of being crowded, as at present, into a close dark press, or left out on dusty shelves."

A property in Harrington Street, Hobart was leased in 1852 and the Society's Museum and Library moved there from the Legislative Council Chamber where it had been housed since 1848. This move however, involved the payment of rent and the Society worked thereafter on the option of acquiring its own premises and applied to the Crown for a museum site. These negotiations resulted in an option for a building on the old landfill site at Fitzroy Crescent



James Sowerby Aloysia verbenaceae etching, Loudon, J. C. 1829: Loudon's Encyclopaedia of Plants ...

Title page, Loudon, J. C. 1829: Loudon's Encyclopaedia of Plants ...

AN
ENCYCLOPÆDIA
OF
PLANTS;

COMPRISING
THE DESCRIPTION, SPECIFIC CHARACTER,
CULTURE, HISTORY, APPLICATION IN THE ARTS,
AND EVERY OTHER DESIRABLE PARTICULAR RESPECTING
ALL THE PLANTS
INDIGENOUS, CULTIVATED IN, OR INTRODUCED TO
BRITAIN:

COMBINING
ALL THE ADVANTAGES OF A LINNEAN AND JUSSIEUEAN SPECIES PLANTARUM,
AN HISTORIA PLANTARUM, A GRAMMAR OF BOTANY,
AND A DICTIONARY OF BOTANY AND VEGETABLE CULTURE.

The whole in English;

WITH THE SYNONYMES OF THE COMMONER PLANTS IN THE DIFFERENT EUROPEAN
AND OTHER LANGUAGES;
THE SCIENTIFIC NAMES ACCENTUATED, THEIR ETYMOLOGIES EXPLAINED;
THE CLASSES, ORDERS, AND BOTANICAL TERMS ILLUSTRATED BY ENGRAVINGS;
AND WITH
FIGURES OF NEARLY TEN THOUSAND SPECIES,
EXEMPLIFYING SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS BELONGING TO EVERY GENUS INCLUDED
IN THE WORK.

EDITED BY J. C. LOUDON, F.L.S. H.S. &c.
THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERS BY AN EMINENT BOTANIST;
THE DRAWINGS BY J. D. C. SOWERBY, F.L.S.; AND
THE ENGRAVINGS BY R. BRANSTON.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1829.



970



but eventually resulted in the acquisition, in 1860, of the Argyle Street location where the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery still resides today.

In 1853, the Society acquired the “highly-finished and well contrived cases and fittings of the Franklin Museum at *Ancanthe*, New Town.” These were progressively brought to Hobart and re-erected at the Harrington Street site. It can be assumed that some of these cases were subsequently used to house some of the library materials.

By 1867, the Annual Report combined the donations and the purchases in a single acquisitions list, merely indicating the donations with an asterisk and the name of the donor. Individual issues of magazines and journals are included in these listings and, at this stage they would appear to be purchased issues and not donations. The programme of exchanges, so important to the development of the library in subsequent years, seems not to have been established at this early time, although the lack of sophisticated postal services throughout the world would have made such a programme almost impossible.

In 1868, a figure of £55/2/5 is recorded in the financial statement of the Society as having been spent on “books and stationery” for the library. This figure represents approximately half the annual expenditure that year for the Society itself, the larger expenditure for the Society-controlled Museum and the Botanical Gardens being listed separately.

The early reports give no indication of a dedicated librarian, but it is assumed the Museum Curator (on a salary in 1870 of £125) and an Attendant (who was paid £52 that same year) were responsible for maintaining the library collection as part of the broader Museum duties.

In 1870 the library expenditure was £42/17/6, and in 1872 the expenditure was £54/14/4. [It is interesting to note that the Attendant received 10/- less in 1872 than in 1870.] With library expenditure in 1881 of £46/4/3 it would seem to indicate some variation in expenditure was not determined by any pre-set figure, but dependent on the acquisitions themselves as and when they were affordable.

It was recorded in the Annual Report of 1884 that the Curator (Alexander Morton) “has done excellent work in properly classifying all the books and pamphlets, and compiling a complete catalogue...The manuscript of the catalogue is now in the hands of the Government Printer” and in 1891 it was proudly reported that the “rare and expensive work *The Birds of Asia* by J. Gould was completed with the donation of the remaining 23 parts being a munificent gift to the Society by the Hon. J.W. Agnew, M.D.”

As is always the case where collection growth is partly developed by the receipt of donated materials, a number of items were received which were either outside the scope of the collection, or were duplicates of items already held. In 1908, a Committee of Fellows reviewed the collection and “set apart a number of duplicates and miscellaneous publications unconnected with the objects of the Royal Society, so that they should be available for exchange or sale.” The obligations of the Society to this Committee of Fellows was recorded.

John Gould and Henry Constantine Richter, Gyps bengalensis [White-rumped Vulture]. Hand-coloured lithograph, 10.24 x 14.78, Gould, J. 1850: The Birds of Asia.



CYPS BENGALENSIS.

J. Gould and B. C. Beckwith del et lith.

Hallman del & Watson, imp.



By 1908 a separate figure for the insurance of the collection is recorded and a sum of £2/5/- is listed as is “a sum of £7/8/9 to Messrs Walch and Sons for Books etc.” The former payment would indicate awareness by the Society of the valuable nature of the collection. In 1910 the insurance figure was £4/10/- for a collection value estimated at £2000. A figure of £4/19/- was also specified in 1910 for binding (presumably for serial volumes).

In 1913 the Annual Report indicated that the collection had grown to about 9,000 items, and that accommodation was a serious problem. The Library room lacked proper shelving and hundreds of works were distributed in other rooms of the Museum, in basements and in cupboards. Significant re-arrangement took place at this time and duplicated material was removed and placed in a designated storeroom. Additional shelving was erected and the library was able to accommodate about 12,000 volumes. It remained necessary, however, to keep some material, including the Medical Library, which had been separately housed for many years, in other rooms of the Museum building.

Also in 1913, the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Librarian undertook to prepare a revised catalogue of periodical titles and authors’ names and to re-house the collection according to the “Brussels system of classification.” This project resulted in the closure of the library for some months whilst the re-shelving and re-labelling of materials took place. In conjunction with the reorganising of the collection, a systematic stock-take was undertaken which resulted in revised statistics and revealed books and pamphlets numbering 10,359, over 300 maps, 500 newspapers and about 400 manuscripts, prints etc. Growth during this particularly busy year saw the collection statistics rise to 11,315 books and pamphlets, and 1,267 maps, newspapers and manuscripts by the end of 1914. At this time, the Society also recorded the difficulties in funding the Library due to increased costs in the production of the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*.

The Annual Report of 1913 was also an opportunity for Council to remind members of the value of the library collection and to solicit donations of material from members. It is interesting to note the awareness of Council of currently insignificant items that would become more valuable in time. A willingness to allow members of the public to use the collections, albeit under supervision, was also recorded. Also included for general information in the 1913 report was a list of institutions, national and international, to which copies of the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* were presented. This list of 148 institutions gives a clear indication of the growing importance of publication exchange on which the development of the library much depended. Subsequent annual indications of the exchange arrangements reflected the growth in this method of disseminating the work and intellectual achievement of the Society and the attendant growth of the library collection.

Further shelving was added to the end wall of the library in 1915, which, it was suggested, “should suffice for several years,” and at the same time “rules on the use of the library and the borrowing procedures were framed to greatly improve this important branch of the Society’s work.”



Photographer unknown, Original Library, photograph, Sommerville, J. 1944: The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843–1943. Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, 1943. 199–221, Plates I–IX.

Photographer unknown, New Library and Meeting Room, photograph, Sommerville, J. 1944: The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843–1943. Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, 1943. 199–221, Plates I–IX.





The work associated with the expanding exchange programme and the cataloguing and indexing of the publications received, led the Council to appoint a paid officer to undertake the work. The value in such a person being associated with other aspects of Society work and being in continuous touch with the Library and the general business of the Society led to the appointment of Clive Lord, Assistant Curator of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, as Secretary and Librarian, a position he held until his death in 1933.

By December 1917, the collection totalled 12,800 books and pamphlets and over £100 was spent on library activity the following year. The statistics given for December 1918 indicate 13,054 volumes, but states that pamphlets are excluded. Some variation in counting and categorisation would seem to have developed by this time and the perennial and universal problem of counting methods for library collections was now in evidence. In addition, the Council reported in 1919 that no books had been purchased for some years due to “the risks of transportation” during World War I, but that funds from the Morton Allport Memorial Fund would be used to acquire volumes subsequently.

By this time, the Society maintained rooms at the Tasmanian Museum by authority of the *Royal Society Act 1911* (Tasmania). However, the adequacy of the accommodation in the Argyle Street Room was soon compromised by library growth and the Museum was unable to allocate more space, being itself considerably overcrowded. Council recorded this difficulty in the 1924 Annual Report but was reluctant to press the issue due to its understanding of the accommodation issue for the Museum as indicated by the Museum Trustees. After several more years of negotiation and discussion, it was reported in 1930 that Council expressed its gratitude to the Trustees of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery for the provision of a new Library and Meeting Room (accommodating an audience of 350). The new room, where the problem of accommodation and space was successfully addressed, at least for the requirements of the time, was used until the transfer of the Library to the Morris Miller Library at the Sandy Bay campus of the University in 1969.

The decade after the move to the new accommodation in 1930 saw progressive growth for the Library. Two new bookcases were funded in 1935, from a members’ appeal and one life membership subscription, at a cost of £26/11/6.

The death in 1936 of the esteemed botanist Mr Leonard Rodway resulted in an appeal to establish a memorial for him that would provide funds for the purchase of botanical books for the library. Mrs Rodway thereafter donated her husband’s books to the Society and the whole collection was subsequently housed separately in the Museum’s herbarium, now at the University of Tasmania’s Sandy Bay campus.

By 1940, the Library boasted 20,125 volumes and an exchange programme of 278 journals and papers from British, American and international organisations. The sum of £43/9/5 was expended on the Library from four fund sources, namely The General Fund, the R.M. Johnston Fund, the Morton Allport Memorial Fund and the Beattie Memorial Fund. Council also considered the question of removing the more valuable items from the

John Gould and Henry Constantine Richter, Mycerobas carnipes [White-winged Grosbeak]. Hand-coloured lithograph, 10.24 x 14.78, Gould, J. 1850: The Birds of Asia.





collection for safer keeping and solicited assistance from members in this matter. The transfer in 1943, of some Tasmanian Museum books to the Royal Society Library might suggest that this matter resulted in the *status quo* being maintained. By now, the Society had a Secretary/Librarian (Dr Joseph Pearson) and an Assistant Librarian (Mrs Clive Lord). Library exchanges were withheld, firstly from European institutions and later from British institutions, until the conclusion of World War II in all but a few special cases. Clearly these were all re-established after the war and the 1946 Annual Report indicates 284 existing exchanges and several new exchanges with war-torn European nations. The Library volumes numbered 21,385 in December 1946.

Cataloguing the collection had always been an issue for the Society with the time and effort not always available. In 1947, the Society made an arrangement with the University Library whereby Miss Megan Griffiths would undertake to catalogue the Society's collection (using the Dewey classification system) in return for the Society making a copy of its author catalogue available to the University. Cards were added to the University catalogue and remained there until the University Library changed its classification in 1973 and developed a new card catalogue. Miss Griffiths continued on her project for four years, even working full time in 1949, before moving to another position in government service at the end of 1950, by which time the collection numbered 24,393 volumes. Her place was filled by Miss B. Veale, who was transferred to the University Library where she continued undertaking The Royal Society of Tasmania Library cataloguing.

Miss E.M. Geddes was appointed Librarian in 1954, a position she retained until after the move to the University Library. At the time of her appointment the collection numbered 30,000 volumes. In 1950 the insurance value of the collection was increased from £5,000 to £7,500 and a further insured sum of £2,000 was added for "malicious damage, burglary, house breaking and larceny."

1968 was a momentous year for the Library when the negotiations between The Royal Society of Tasmania and the University Librarian (Dan Sprod) came to fruition. The newly enlarged Morris Miller Library at the University was to house the Royal Society collection henceforth under an agreement that gave University Higher Degree students and staff access to the collection. The Library thus vacated the Tasmanian Museum building, which it had occupied since 1863 and moved to the University of Tasmania at Sandy Bay in 1969. Miss Geddes, who retired soon after the move to the University, was replaced by Mrs Jean Bowerman, the last library employee funded by the Society. On her departure, the daily maintenance and development of the collection fell to University Library staff with the Royal Society collection forming part of the University Library's Rare and Special Collections.

The University provided part-time staff until 1977, when Mrs D.A. Lewis was transferred to the full time position of Royal Society Librarian. Mrs Lewis undertook the massive task of re-organising the collection and dealing with a problematical binding backlog. This task continued to the end of 1979 when Mrs Lewis retired. Access to the University Library

John Gould and Henry Constantine Richter
Eophona personata [Japanese Grosbeak].
Hand-coloured lithograph, 10.24 x 14.78,
Gould, J. 1850: The Birds of Asia.



Bindery now allowed for significant inroads into the binding backlog and throughout the 1970s decade much progress was made in completing serial volumes in bound form. During this period, significant work was undertaken to tidy up the exchange programme. New exchanges were established and other inactive arrangements were formally terminated.

Various members of the University Library professional staff filled the position of Honorary Royal Society Librarian from 1977. Depending on the other University duties these people were expected to undertake, the Library continued to grow and function within the University Library. Exchange programmes were further reviewed in the 1980s, and the binding backlog continued to be addressed. With the transfer of Graeme Rayner to the position of Librarian, Special Collections, in 1991, and his subsequent and concurrent positions within the University Library, the administrative and operational activities of the library were gradually and progressively absorbed by relevant sections of the University Library, rather than being undertaken by dedicated staff within the Special Collections. By the time of Mr Rayner's retirement in 2010, all work associated with the day to day maintenance of The Royal Society of Tasmania Library had been absorbed by other University Library sections, leaving the research and development work to the Rare and Special Collections staff.

Significant reviews were undertaken in the last years of the 2000s, with the disposal of duplicated material and a rationalisation of titles held by both the Society and the University. At the same time a reclassification and re-cataloguing programme begun in the 1990s was progressively completed until all Royal Society of Tasmania Library materials now appear in the University Library catalogues. Library staff have recently completed a momentous digitisation programme that makes Royal Society documents, images and records available on the internet, including the complete set of the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* (the final two years being embargoed).

Recent developments in the availability of electronic serial publications have greatly impacted the serial exchange programme, with many institutions ceasing to produce paper versions of their intellectual output. This factor, combined with the high costs of printed production by non-commercial organisations, has seen a reduction in recent years of the Library intake of printed materials. The availability of the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* in on-line form, and the digitisation of other documents, happily have provided the Society with new avenues of recognition and access rates to our resources. Hit rate statistics of access to our materials is very encouraging, as indeed are the requests to access the rare and special physical items that form part of the Library heritage. Now comfortably housed with the University rare collections, the Royal Society rare books are in constant demand by researchers and historians. They often form a significant part of the many displays and exhibitions within the University and provide a high profile for the Society, its work and its Library.

Joseph Wolf, Aptenodytes pennantii [King Penguin]. Hand-coloured lithograph, Wolf del et lith, 31.0 x 20.0, Richardson, J. 1844: The Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Erebus & Terror, ...



Wolf del et lith

Printed by Hollisnhead & Walling

APTENODYTES PENNANTII G.R. Gray