

## *Adelaide Law Librarians Farewell Dick Finlay*

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*On 29 June 2001 Dick Finlay retired from the position of Law Librarian at Adelaide University after an association with law libraries and law librarianship of almost forty years. The Australian Law Librarians' Group (South Australian Division) hosted a formal dinner on 18 May at the Public Schools' Club, Adelaide, to mark Dick's retirement. An enthusiastic group of thirty present and former colleagues attended to share this occasion with Dick.*

*Helen Culshaw spoke on behalf of the well wishers and presented Dick with a gift from the South Australian Division. The text of her speech is reprinted below.*

I feel that it is a great honour to make this address. The retirement of someone of Dick's eminence certainly does not happen every day! Equally, it is quite a challenge to fit all that should be said into ten or so minutes. So I'll speak about Dick in the context of law libraries and law librarianship. I'm sure that his many other contributions will be recognized at other functions over the next several weeks.

I would like to thank several people for their assistance in preparation of this speech: Barbara Coat, Barbara Holbourn and Renee Amyot.

My first memory of Dick Finlay was of an earnest young man sitting in the Law Library office at Adelaide University. At that time the Law Library was located in the Napier Building, the multi-storey building to the north of the Law School's present Ligertwood Building. And what was Dick doing in this first memory? He was filing cards into a card tray – serial receipt cards, I suspect. Little did any of us know at that time that he would have such an important role to play in law librarianship! The date for my snapshot of my first meeting with Dick was 1964.



Margaret and Richard Finlay



Jacqui Elliott, Margaret and Richard Finlay

Barbara Holbourn has an even better first memory of Dick. Barbara, in 1964, was very newly arrived from England to settle in Australia. She was thrilled, for her first job in Adelaide, to obtain a position at the Adelaide University Law Library. Barbara was very keen to learn all about the Oz way of life and to acclimatize quickly. At the Law Library there was this charming young man who was assistant to Gwenda Fischer. He spoke 'Australian' with a cultivated accent and had a great interest in words. Over morning tea in the Law Library the young assistant kindly gave Barbara some helpful hints on Australian slang. Barbara was told for example, that anyone with red hair could be called 'Blue', and if you wanted to say to someone that everything was going well and was under control you should say 'she's right' or, even better, 'she's apples'. So Barbara went around happily at the University calling people 'Blue' and taking particular delight in saying 'she's apples'. She has since been told by friends of the amazement this caused at the time.

Dick was educated at Walford (when small boys attended the school for junior primary education), at Westbourne Park School and St Peters College. He holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Adelaide University, majoring in English and French, and, like many of the more mature members of the profession, the Registration Certificate of the then Library Association of Australia.

Dick's life in the workforce started in 1954 with a position at the Department of Social Service. He then spent a year working for an accounting firm and in 1956 commenced his career in librarianship by joining the then Public Library of South Australia. In 1963 he transferred to Adelaide University libraries.

At the Public Library Dick worked in a number of areas including Periodicals, Newspapers and Reference, and was in charge of the Periodicals Department for some time. At Adelaide University his first position was as assistant to the then Law Librarian Gwenda Sargeant (later Fischer) who was in effect the foundation Law Librarian of Adelaide University Law Library. Dick spent two years as Assistant Law Librarian and then was appointed as Serials Librarian at the Barr Smith Library. During this time, Gwenda married the State Archivist Gerald

Fischer and they decided to move to Sydney. Dick was then appointed Law Librarian at Adelaide University. He has worn that mantle with distinction since that time. In fact, Dick's name is synonymous with that of law librarian in South Australia. Whenever in conversation I mention that I'm a law librarian, I very often get the response: 'Oh, you must know Dick Finlay'.

However, we all know that being an outstanding Law Librarian was not sufficient for Dick. He is truly the renaissance man, the well-rounded individual with a wide range of interests. I know when I think of Dick myself, I think of the scholar of English literature and of history, of Dick the cricketer, Dick the film buff, Dick the gourmet and wine connoisseur.

And of course, Dick with his family: Margaret and his two sons, and now a grandson, too. And the fact that Dick is such a well-rounded person is not surprising. He is a member of a very illustrious family. His father was a musician, music teacher, organist and choir master. His grandfather was W. H. Langham, a scholar and 'man of letters' who is actually very famous in library history. He was the President of the Board of Governors of the South Australian Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery in 1937 at the time of the Munn Pitt Report.<sup>1</sup>

Dick willingly confesses his passion for cricket. He sees it as part of his work rather than a separate hobby. He is a long standing member of the Adelaide University Law Staff cricket team and points out that there is hardly a lawyer in Adelaide of the male variety (Dick's words) who has not been a member of either the staff or student cricket team at one time or another. So cricket really is networking and job related. I am told that part of the passion for cricket is borne out in the great fondness Dick obviously had for a very decrepit cricket hat which he wore to work for years and years and years.

And Dick as a person. He is always fun to be with, whether you are the latest staff member to join the team or someone who has known him for decades. Those of us who worked at Adelaide University Law Library in the late 60s and 70s remember

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<sup>1</sup> Munn, Ralph and Pitt, Ernest R. (1935), *Australian Libraries. a Survey of Conditions and Suggestions For Their Improvement*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne.

with great affection the riotous bun feasts which used to take place on special occasions for morning tea.

I think of Dick's contribution to law librarianship in two aspects: firstly his work in maintaining and developing that excellent facility, the Adelaide University Law Library, and secondly, his interactions with other librarians, with the Law Library users, with the community, and more formally through his contribution to the Australian Law Librarians' Group.

In terms of the Adelaide University Law Library collection, Dick and his staff selected, catalogued and maintained the principal legal collection in the State. It remains the most comprehensive collection still and an invaluable research facility for librarians and the legal community.

Dick's early training as a serials librarian has stood him in very good stead and has enabled him to manage a Law collection so effectively. In Dick's early years at Adelaide funding for library collections was at least reasonable, if not plentiful, and Dick was able to enjoy building this great collection. Many Adelaide law firms are very pleased to be institutional members of the Adelaide University Law Library and benefit from this early work.

Dick says that the principal satisfaction to be found in his job at present is participating in the staff team at Adelaide University Law Library. He has always taken great pleasure in working amongst a team of intelligent, dedicated people.

Dick has always been generous with his time in helping other librarians. I'm sure that each one of us here can think of an example where Dick went out of his way to assist individuals. My particular example was with the establishment of Flinders University Law Library in the early 1990s. Dick helped me in so many ways with collection building, advice as to procedures appropriate to a university library, and, possibly most important of all, being there to talk through the knotty issues which abounded in grafting a separate law library onto an existing university library.

For Barbara Coat, the particular help that he gave her was to assist with some very complex international law queries. Renee specially remembers her student placement days at Adelaide University Law Library. Although Dick was not her supervisor, he was happy to share with her his knowledge on a wide range of areas: the history of the collection, the Law School, the Law Faculty, library and university politics, the community of law librarianship

And now the ALLG. Dick was there at the first official meeting held at University of Sydney Law School on Tuesday 2 December 1969. He was the sole South Australian representative amongst the twenty-four attendees. He and two delegates from the ACT were the only people to travel from interstate. Everyone else was from Sydney. So he was there to represent South Australia then, and was for a time the only contributor for South Australian law librarians in the provision of data or perspectives relevant to South Australia in the early projects and activities of the ALLG: the *Directory of Australian Law Libraries*, published in 1976; the *Union List of Periodical Holdings in Law Libraries*, published at Monash by Ted Glasson; and works published in the 1970s and 80s on subject headings and cataloguing codes. The South Australian Group started to have a life of its own around the mid 1970s, and since then his presence, in working or advising on whatever was the current project, or supporting those who at the time were office bearers, has made him the backbone of the South Australian Division. Before the days of email, where we are in touch daily, if necessary, with our interstate colleagues, Dick was the person who was known to all the interstate law librarians. He was thus also the foreign relations minister for the South Australian Group.

He has been the constant South Australian presence in university law libraries since the early 70s also. Of his many contributions he is best known for his work on the standards for Australian university law libraries<sup>2</sup>

His personal qualities of being a very good listener, of being patient and tolerant and loyal are all obvious in his work with the wider group in ALLG as well as in

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<sup>2</sup> *Australian Law School Libraries: a Position Statement and Standards*, June 1995 (revised September 1995. <http://www.law.newcastle.edu.au/cle/cald/libraries.html>)



the Adelaide context. When Ingrid Zuesse interviewed Dick in 1991 he painted a very realistic picture of the skills required to be a successful law librarian.<sup>3</sup> These are the skills and attributes which are not particularly ‘fashionable’. One needs an eye for detail, an ability to cope with the mundane as well as the exciting times, to be willing to ‘dig in and get your hands dirty’, to be intelligent and a good listener. He did not mention all of his other remarkable skills and attributes. I think that Dick’s modesty, one of his greatest attributes, shines through in this picture. And of course, I have not mentioned Dick’s great gift of eloquence. This is how he shares his wit and his great knowledge with others.

So, on behalf of us all, I wish Dick joy in his retirement. We will remember him in his law library days as a ‘thorough-going gentleman’, always a pleasant and affable companion, with a passion for law libraries and for life itself.



Richard Finlay

<sup>3</sup> Zuesse, Ingrid (1991), ‘Interview with Richard Finlay’, *ALLG Newsletter*, No. 105, pp. 101-8.