

# FOND FAREWELL TO LESLE SYMES

AFTER A LONG ILLNESS Olga Lesle Symes, MBE, ALA, FLAA, died on Saturday, 30 January 1982.

There would be very few people in Australian librarianship who did not know Lesle, either personally or by reputation and there are many who were privileged to be counted among her friends. And those of us who were aware of her terminal illness and who kept in touch with her almost to the end could not but admire her fortitude in adversity. Lesle was a shining example of physical, professional and moral courage and integrity.

Lesle was born and educated in Sydney. She attended the University of Sydney and subsequently the University of New England and was one of the earliest students of the first Australian library school, conducted within the Public Library of New South Wales. In 1944 she obtained the Preliminary Certificate at the first examination conducted by the then Australian Institute of Librarians, the forerunner of the Library Association of Australia.

After several 'tours of duty' at the Public Library of New South Wales, the Newcastle Technical College and the Fisher Library, Lesle left librarianship when she married Frank Symes in 1951.

Between 1951 and 1958 Lesle had four children and very shortly after the birth of her youngest child returned to the fold as Chief Librarian, Email Technical Library and in 1961 she moved to Australian Consolidated Industries Ltd as officer-in-charge of their technical library and information service. Very soon she was designated manager – a rare and highly prized distinction for a librarian in industry, in those days.

In 1970 Lesle was awarded the honour of Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) and in August 1971 she was elected Fellow of the Library Association of Australia. In addition Lesle was an Associate of the Australian Society of Accountants and an Associate of the London College of Music.

Lesle retired from ACI in mid 1971 and formed her own company, Lesle Symes Information Services Pty Ltd, a consultancy firm which advised large organisations in the private and public sectors on organisational and operational aspects of library and information services.

Lesle made her name in the special libraries field. Apart from the ACI library, always

a Mecca for special librarians seeking advice or assistance, Lesle was instrumental in advancing the profession through organising, under the auspices of the Special Libraries Section, seminars of several days duration in which prominent overseas professionals took the leading roles. Lesle was one of the founders of LASIE which saw the light of day as Libraries Automation Group (LAG) at a seminar at Armidale in 1965.

Lesle served on the Special Libraries Section executive as President for several years and on the committee. She represented the Association at the ASLIB and AESIS conference in 1969. She served on the Council of the NSW branch of the Association and edited the branch newsletter, NB, in 1965. From 1967 to 1971 she represented special libraries on the Australian Advisory Council of Bibliographic Services and has been a member of the New South Wales Book Resources Committee.

While Lesle Symes did not publish extensively she frequently addressed meetings of librarians and non-librarians both in Australia and overseas.

Lesle was an early convert to automation in libraries and soon developed a well-deserved reputation in this field. She was of considerable assistance to the LAA Board of Examiners in developing the syllabus for the new subjects that covered data processing and information retrieval.

I began this sad task by describing Olga Lesle Symes, a wonderful human being and would now like to conclude on the same note. She will be missed by all of us and the profession will be the poorer for it. Our heart goes out to Frank and her family. *Vale* Lesle.

*H. J. Zwillenberg*

Director of Technology, 1975-80,  
National Library of Australia

## Chinese influence

MELBOURNE WRITER MORAG LOH is working on a project to record the contribution of Chinese immigrants to Australia.

During the nineteenth century, the Chinese were the largest non-Anglo-Saxon group of immigrants to Australia, but there is little documented evidence about them.

She has been given a grant by the Australia-China council for the project which will take about five years. She will be taping family histories, especially with older Chinese people who can remember back to the turn of the century.

When complete, the information will be stored in a special archive at the State Library of Victoria. Morag Loh also hopes to write a book about the subject. She has already written six books, mainly about groups of people who have been largely overlooked in history, such as women, children and immigrants.

Anyone with material or information of interest should ring Morag Loh (03) 21 1570. She is prepared to travel to country districts to collect material and tape interviews.

## Student Grants

THE LAA SCHOOL LIBRARIES SECTION, Victorian Division seeks applications from student members of the LAA for study grants of up to \$100 to assist original research studies related to school librarianship.

Applicants must be financial members of the LAA, engaged in research in some aspect of school librarianship at a recognised Victorian tertiary institution and their plan of study must be endorsed by their supervisor before application.

Criteria governing the selection of those papers to be assisted by the Committee of the School Libraries Section are: relevance to the Victorian scene, applicability and usefulness, size of the task involved, level of study and an accurate estimate of expenditure.

It is expected that these studies will be completed within the academic year of application. The grant will be given upon receipt of a notice from the supervisor that the work has been satisfactorily completed and upon receipt of a copy of the research paper.

Although the copyright of the completed studies is vested in the students themselves or with the institutions they attended, the Victorian Section of the LAA would retain first option for the publication of papers of successful applicants.

Students wishing to apply for a grant during 1982 should send full particulars, including evidence of membership to the LAA to: Mrs. Rosemary Graham, 39 Bordeaux Street, Doncaster, Vic. 3108.

Closing date is 30 June 1982, and all applicants will be notified of the results before 31 July 1982.

## Spreading the Word

MILDURA REGIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE has recently initiated a special service.

Holidaymakers and other visitors to the area are invited to borrow books and read newspapers from around Australia. So far the response has been excellent; borrowers are asked only for some means of identification and their holiday and home addresses – and of course to return the books before they leave Mildura.

The Regional Library Service is also promoting historical interest in the area. Visitors can look at newspapers dating back to the establishment of the Australian Irrigation Colonies, and there are also a number of publications for sale concerning the River Boat Days and other aspects of local history.

## Good home wanted

RIVERINA COMMUNITY LIBRARY SERVICE has received a donation of 350 books from the Riverina Lending Library, a subscription library which closed soon after the opening of the public library in Wagga.

They are mainly mysteries and westerns, published from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s. They have jacket covers cut and glued to the inside cover and the early titles include the bookplates from the Riverina Lending Library.

A good home is wanted for the books. Would interested people please contact Marion Brown, Wagga City Library (069) 21 5244 or write c/- P.O. Box 20, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650.

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Ultimo is a developing area of Sydney, the building being 2 kilometres from the GPO. It is close to NSW Institute of Technology and the University of Sydney. Parking should not be a problem for visiting members. At the moment we are engaged in getting an architect's report and approval from the Council to use the building for our particular purposes before contracts are exchanged. There are still many bridges to be crossed but we are optimistic. I shall keep you informed of progress.

*Susan Acutt*  
Executive Director