

To Work Under Her Was A Privilege And A Challenge

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I first met Phyllis Mander-Jones in 1944. She was then the Public Library of New South Wales' Bibliographer and lectured in its Library School on the history and care of the book. She had already made a major contribution to the bibliography of Australia and the South West Pacific. Soon after this she moved to the Mitchell Library, becoming its Librarian in 1946.

The Library was just coming out of its war-time dormancy. The collections, sent away for the duration of the conflict, were coming back into the building to join the crates of newly deposited material which lay in every corner of the stacks. The staff was small and mostly young and inexperienced. Phyllis immediately embarked on an ambitious programme of training staff, organising the collections, augmenting them, and spreading the Mitchell's name abroad.

From her pen flowed all manner of procedure notes, short bibliographies and guides intended for the many local historical societies who sought her help. For she was always ready to give the benefit of her knowledge and scholarship to those in need of it. She would lend her critical attention to a painting brought in by a dealer wanting to determine its authenticity, help a scholar to compare a text, translate Dutch inscriptions on an old map and write meticulous notes on variant editions of rare books.

The Mitchell Library had been a jealously guarded treasure house where catalogues might not be consulted freely. There was not the wealth of published studies we have today. On many subjects primary sources alone existed and bibliographies were sadly lacking. Phyllis planned catalogues and indexes, edited texts for publication, addressed learned bodies at home and abroad.

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For the world of librarianship those post-war years were a time of development. Phyllis Mander-Jones took an important part in this. With Heather Sherrie she brought out a *Short list of subject headings* for use in school libraries and in the many municipal libraries then being established. She served in the Library Association of Australia and was instrumental in forming its Archives Section. The Association made her a Fellow in 1963 and in 1981 conferred upon her the H.C.L. Anderson Award. In 1976 she was elected an Honorary Member of the Australian Society of Archivists.

Her greatest achievement, for which her name will not cease to be revered by research workers everywhere, is her monumental *Manuscripts in the British Isles relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Canberra, A.N.U. Press), published in 1972. It was an immense task and for this work she was honoured with an M.B.E.

Her involvement with Australian studies sources did not stop there. Indefatigable, she filled her last years with more painstaking work. The Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, S.A. Branch Inc., has recognised her contribution with an Honorary Membership.

To work under her was both a privilege and a challenge. Her standards were high; she demanded the same meticulous care she herself gave, and she was adept at putting people on their mettle. She took a warm personal interest in her staff and was generous of the hospitality of her home. Her many gifts included sketching and linocutting. She was skilled in several languages and delighted in the arts and in the beauties of nature. To the last she enjoyed discussing books in her chosen fields. Throughout her long career she was in constant touch with many scholars all over the world and with past associates, with many of whom she formed a life-long friendship.