

A | INTRODUCTORY

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

AT THE END of my first year as Chairman of the Council of the National Library of Australia, I am pleased to be able to reflect on the enormously successful year of centenary celebrations that ended with a major international exhibition, *Treasures from the World's Great Libraries*. This exhibition, which captured the imagination of the Australian public, together with other events such as the Open Day and the 100th Birthday BookSearch, brought into prominence the importance of the role of libraries as keepers of our history and culture.

The significance of the Library's collections was also recognised with the inscription of two items on UNESCO's Memory of the World register—the *Endeavour* Journal written during Captain James Cook's first voyage to the Pacific, and the 'Mabo Case' manuscripts which include the personal papers of Edward Koiki Mabo and the legal and historical materials relating to the landmark High Court ruling. These are the first Australian items to be listed on the register.

Developing the collections remained a key focus for the Library during the year. While a growing number of Australian publications were acquired in digital form, there was also a notable increase in the number of older Australian publications received through donation or purchased to fill gaps in the Collection. The Library's collections were also enhanced by the acquisition of the works of many well-known Australians, including the distinguished composer Peter Sculthorpe.

During the year the Library continued to develop new systems and services to meet the changing needs of its users. This was influenced by

an increasing emphasis on finding ways to deliver information directly to users, and by collaboration with libraries and other cultural institutions to improve access to documentary materials at a national level. The Library made the creation of digital copies of original Australian materials—such as maps, manuscripts, sheet music, paintings and photographs—a priority.

The Library also hosted two important forums on behalf of the Australian library sector, developing agendas for collaborative action at the national level—the meeting of the Peak Library Bodies, and the Forum on Library Services for People with Disabilities.

Preparation of a new strategic directions statement for 2003–05 has commenced and this is providing members of Council and Library staff with the opportunity to establish key objectives and priorities for the next three years. The need for libraries to ensure that users have rapid and easy access to information resources held across a range of libraries and other cultural institutions, is guiding our thinking.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of Council and the staff of the Library for their support during my first year as Chairman. I have found it both challenging and rewarding.

SIR JAMES GOBBO, AC

