

# The Remarkable Benefits of Philanthropy

The delights and treasures of the Tasmaniana Library are brought to light by Christopher Bantick

Tony Marshall (Senior Librarian, Heritage Collections of the State Library of Tasmania) in an address to the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand on 16 October 2004, assessed the riches of the Heritage Collections of the State Library of Tasmania in these terms:

Tasmania has been disproportionately fortunate in the skill, tenacity and especially the philanthropy of its book collectors. The State Library of Tasmania has benefited remarkably, in one way or another, from Cecil and Henry Allport, Sir William Crowther and Clifford Craig.

Together with the Allport Library, the Tasmaniana Library forms part of the Heritage Collections maintained by the State Library of Tasmania. For readers and researchers interested in Tasmanian books, maps, pamphlets, ephemera, audio visual and digital publications, the Tasmaniana Library is a cornucopia of bibliographical delights.

The guiding principle of the Tasmaniana Library is simple. It collects and preserves Tasmanian published material including collecting, under legal deposit, everything published in Tasmania. It does not matter what the subject is; everything which is about Tasmania, by Tasmanians or has substantial Tasmanian content, no matter where it is published, is collected.

Moreover, the library provides the Tasmanian Index which contains references to articles in Tasmanian newspapers and periodicals. Beginning in 1966 as a card index, which is still accessible in the Tasmaniana Library, the online version of the index dates from 1994. The facilities that this index provides are substantial and include the Stilwell Index of references to 19th-century artists and architects, the Properties Index and the Index to the Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania.



Together with the National Film and Sound Archive Hobart Access Collection, and several smaller, named special collections—not least a Children's Literature Collection originating in the 1960s—the Tasmaniana Library houses three significant collections.

The J.B. Murphy Collection came to the Tasmaniana Library through the generosity of a family member. J.B. Murphy (c.1865–1958) was a New Zealand-born singer, trombone player and stage band conductor. He arrived in Hobart from Melbourne around 1896 and was soon appointed manager of the Theatre Royal—a position he held for over 45 years. In the early 1980s, Murphy's descendent, Bradley Smith, rediscovered his great-grandfather's collection of 364 theatre and cinema posters and 385 theatre programs. Smith presented the material to the State Library of Tasmania where it forms one of the richest collections of theatrical and film posters held anywhere in Australia.

The W.L. Crowther Library is the jewel in the not inconsiderably adorned crown of the Tasmaniana

above:  
Margaret Harman, librarian in the Tasmaniana Library, with Tony Marshall, Senior Librarian, Heritage Collection, State Library of Tasmania

below:  
Unknown photographer  
*Exterior Side View of the State Library of Tasmania in Hobart* 1963  
Archives Office of Tasmania  
Image reference PH30/1/2205/2





above:  
Unknown photographer  
*Hon. W.L. Crowther, FRCS, ENG (Sometime Premier of Tasmania) 1817–1885* 1880  
sepia toned photograph; 30.0 x 25.0 cm  
State Library of Tasmania  
AUTAS001125643528

below:  
Unknown artist  
*Sailors Boarding Whaleboats after Sperm Whale Hunt—Scrimshaw on Sperm Whale's Tooth* 18—  
whale tooth; 16.0 x 6.0 x 4.0 cm  
State Library of Tasmania  
AUTAS001127114866



right:  
Unknown photographer  
*Sir William Crowther, Dr Clifford Craig & Dr G.L. Grove* 1948  
b&w photograph; 12.0 x 16.0 cm  
State Library of Tasmania  
AUTAS001126073014

Library. William Edward Lodewyk Hamilton Crowther (1887–1981) was a Hobart-based medical practitioner, soldier, bibliophile and historian. Over his long life he collected a vast array of books, maps, manuscripts, photographs, pictures and objects. In the 1960s, he gave the largesse of a lifetime of collecting to the State Library of Tasmania. In response to his generosity and diverse community service, he received the honour of Knight Bachelor in 1964. The Crowther family had settled in Van Diemen's Land in 1825 and had made a substantial contribution to Tasmanian society; it is appropriate, therefore, that the collection is named the 'W.L. Crowther Library' in honour of Crowther's grandfather, William Lodewyk Crowther.

Besides collecting books, maps, prints and other printed material, Crowther had a life-long interest in whaling and wrote extensively on the subject. Owing to the proximity of Hobart as a whaling port to whaling vessels, Crowther was able to collect scrimshaw, along with documents and original manuscripts, not to mention pamphlets. As a result, the Tasmaniana Library has the largest collection of scrimshaw in Australia (some of which is on display) and, indeed, the single most represented subject in the W.L. Crowther library is whaling.

Besides J.B. Murphy and W.L. Crowther, another significant collector of Tasmaniana whose material is represented in the library is Dr Clifford Craig (1896–1986) of Launceston. Where Crowther trawled the south of the state for collectable material,



Craig based his collecting interest, and professional life, in the north of Tasmania.

After serving as an enlisted man in the AIF's medical services in World War One, Craig studied medicine at the University of Melbourne and in 1926 became Surgeon-Superintendent of the Launceston General Hospital. He lived in Launceston for the rest of his life.

Craig is remembered not only for his medical service but also for his sense of the importance of collecting and preserving Tasmanian material including books, prints, paintings and furniture.

Besides sharing similar interests and a background in medical matters, both Craig and Crowther collected Tasmanian material simultaneously. In fact, it was Crowther who encouraged Craig to embark on his collection in 1938. For the next 30 years, the two men corresponded and visited each other and the influence of Crowther on Craig's collecting was enduring and significant.

In 1975 at the age of 79, Craig, concerned about high insurance costs and the value of his collection, decided to take it to auction. According to Tony Marshall, the availability of the Craig Collection was of great interest to the State Library of Tasmania.

The State Library became aware of the impending sale of the Craig Collection in June and it initially hoped, with undue optimism, to acquire the entire collection. It began its campaign by seeking advice from the Solicitor-General about the possibility of compulsorily acquiring the collection. The answer was 'no'.

At the same time, and on the basis of appraisals by Geoffrey Stilwell and James Dally, the Library sought a special allocation from the state government of \$200 000.

Letters seeking financial assistance were dispatched to the National Library of Australia, the Commonwealth Department of the Special Minister of State and the Minister himself, and the Commonwealth Committee of Enquiry on Museums and National Collections. All of their replies, as well as an unsolicited letter from the Prime Minister, offered

moral support; the single Commonwealth agency to offer financial assistance was the National Library, which provided \$15 000.

In the end, the State Library outlaid \$127 152, including Dally's commission. It comprised a special allocation of \$50 000 from the state government, an additional \$10 000 from the Library's own funds, about \$52 000 from the funds of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts Management Committee and the National Library's \$15 000. Altogether the Library considered that it had acquired everything that it wanted from the Craig Collection.

The importance of the Craig Collection is hard to estimate. Of the 1636 lots available, some of the Craig items were the only ones known to exist. The State Library of Tasmania secured about a third of the lots under auction.

As much as Craig and Crowther were friends and fellow collectors, another similarity is that their collections are now part of the Tasmaniana Library. When Crowther handed over his collection to the State Library in 1964, Craig gave the address on what was a momentous occasion. He noted: 'I found Dr Crowther to be a superb teacher, evocative and inspiring, and with an extraordinary knowledge of his subject. He is undoubtedly the greatest living authority on the collection of Tasmaniana'.

Then, in Crowther's last letter to Craig in 1979, he reflected on his association with Craig: 'I shall treasure till my death my memories of our meetings and reporting the minor triumphs of something for one's Collection—to say nothing of our exchange of precious items, and I always thought they were a fair deal—both of us satisfied'.

Margaret Harman is one of the four librarians in the Tasmaniana Library. She says that in the spirit of Crowther and Craig, the library collections are for the benefit of anyone with an interest in Tasmaniana.

We have the full gamut come here. This can be school students, university students and professional historians. Family historians also come in looking at their genealogical background. We get a lot of online enquires as well. With our photographic collections, people often want copies of photos and possibly [pictures of] convict ships their forebears may have come out on and even old houses that people may be renovating. We can burn them onto CD, email them out or make a hard copy.



We get a lot of enquires as to how popular events were celebrated, such as Federation or even what the convicts ate for Christmas Day at Port Arthur.

Harman says that although the Tasmaniana Library receives a wide range of enquiries, from the dates of the fishing season to the national dress of Tasmania, one of the most requested is a cook book. Published in 1864, Edward Abbott's *The English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the Many, As Well As For the 'Upper Ten Thousand'* is a collection of recipes, history, quotations and science and it is considered to be the first Australian cookery book. According to Harman, 'We get a lot of enquires about this and people want to look at this and see what recipes are in it'.

The collections, particularly of ephemera, are growing all the time and Harman says that, as people learn about the library and its collections, they will sometimes offer personal material to the collection.

Most of our material comes from legal deposit. Still, it is surprising that a lot of people come in when they have been cleaning up their parents' house or they may be downsizing. A lot of people bring in material as they think it is too important to throw out. We can take a lot of it if it is Tasmanian.

The Tasmaniana Library can be contacted by telephone: (03) 6233 7474 or email: [Heritage.Collections@education.tas.edu.gov.au](mailto:Heritage.Collections@education.tas.edu.gov.au)

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Frontispiece and title page of *The English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the Many, as Well as for the 'Upper Ten Thousand'* by Edward Abbott (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1864)