

The Minister for the Arts, Hon. Race Mathews, M.L.A., held a media conference in the Queen's Hall of the State Library of Victoria on 23 December, 1984, to announce various Government decisions on accommodation for the State Library of Victoria and Museum of Victoria.

Mr Mathews said that the State Government had given a green light for further development of proposals which could provide Melbourne with a magnificent new museum-library complex in Swanston Street, while preserving the historic reading room in the present museum building.

Copies of a preliminary report prepared by leading Melbourne architect Darryl Jackson were also released. The report had been commissioned by the Government with a view to identifying options for a new State Library building on the site of the present Queen Victoria Hospital together with additional museum facilities either exclusively on the present museum site or as well on part of the hospital site.

A further three-month study is to be carried out to allow issues associated with the project to be fully explored. A committee has been appointed to work with Darryl Jackson on the project.

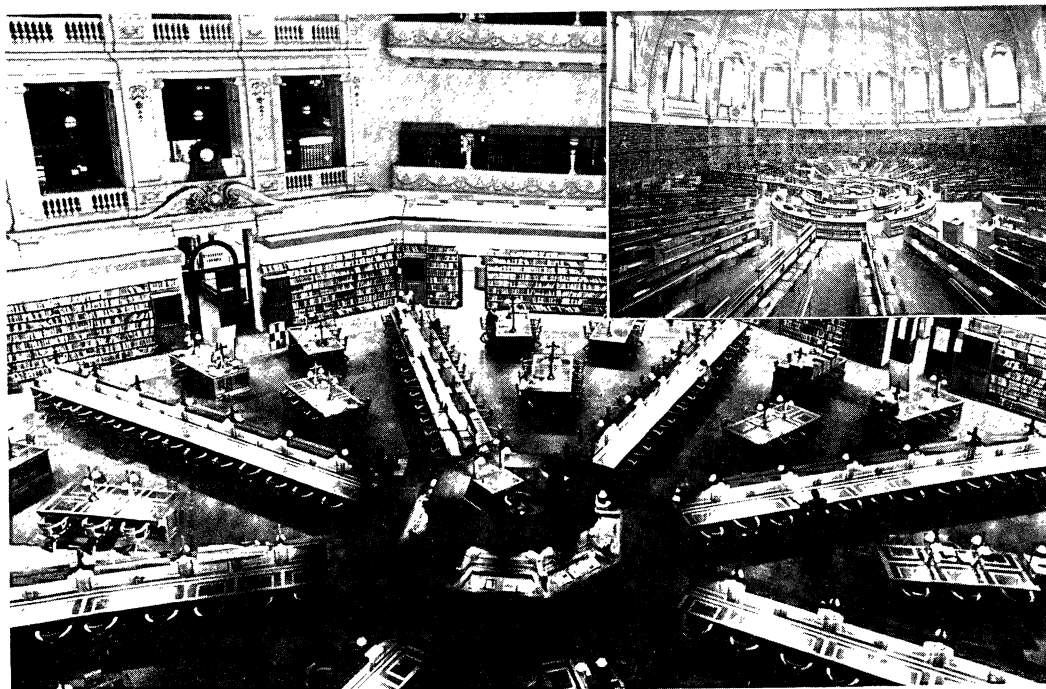
The committee will be chaired by Professor John Legge, Dean of Arts at Monash University, and its members are:

- Ms Barbara Carson, Secretary, Royal Australian Nursing Federation
- Mr Robert Edwards, Director, Museum of Victoria
- Mr John Devenish, Public Works Department
- Hon Caroline Hogg, M.L.C.
- Mr Warren Horton, State Librarian of Victoria
- Ms Joyce Nicholson, D.W. Thorpe, publishers
- Mr Justice Sir John Starke, Q.C., President, Library Council of Victoria
- Mr Neil Walker, Department of Management and Budget
- Mr Harold Wexler, Consultant
- Professor Jean Whyte, Professor of Librarianship
- Mr Ray Morgan, Local Government Department
- Mr David Yencken, Ministry for Planning and Environment
- Professor James Warren, President, Council of the Museum of Victoria

One of the most important issues has been the future of the reading room at the State Library. The Jackson Report offers three options for consideration in overcoming the problem of developing a new State Library and retaining the reading room. Mr Mathews said that he favoured the suggestion of retaining the reading room by linking it with a bridge to the new complex.

The State Library/Museum Buildings Advisory Committee will be required to consider reports and recommendations concerning the planning and construction of a new State Library/Museum of Victoria building on the present Queen Victoria Medical Centre site.

Reading room to be saved



Melbourne's historic reading room and (inset) the very similar reading room in the British Library.

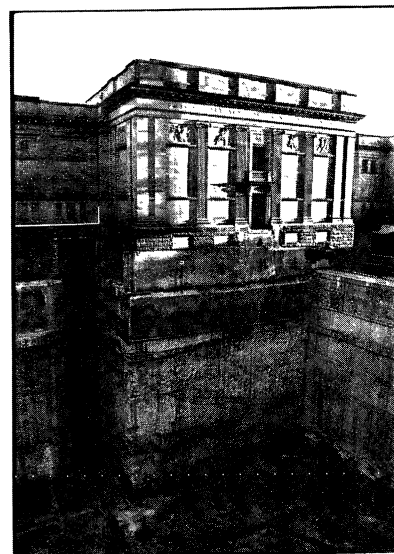
There's a hole in Macquarie Street

Tenders were called on 25 January 1985 for the construction of the new building for the State Library of NSW (see *InCite* vol. 5 no. 12, 27 July 1984, page 1). The excavation, which began in December 1983, is now complete and is one of the deepest excavations carried out in the City of Sydney. The bottom of the excavation is generally 22.5m below the level of Macquarie Street.

It is expected that a contract will be let in late April 1985 and that construction work will begin almost immediately. Much preparatory work, such as drainage lines and column bases, has already been done.

The new Library building should be ready for an official opening during the Bicentennial year. Extensive remodelling of the present building will also be carried out, including increased accommodation for the Australian and Pacific collections of the Library and reinstated gallery spaces.

State Librarian, Russell Doust, is enthusiastic about the design of the new building and its relationship to the existing historic structure. 'The design architect really has taken great care to ensure that the new building will complement its historical surroundings', he said. 'This has meant some compromises, for example in the height of the building. Height constraints and the need to squeeze as much storage space as possible into a smallish site account for the unusually deep excavation. Lower floors will be stacks. Two new reading rooms will actually be below ground level, but will have huge skylit conservatories with



On the brink: the southern facade and the excavation.

Photo: Phil Mulhall, Sydney

exotic planting to eliminate that underground feeling'.

Upper floors will have an extensive services grid to provide maximum flexibility in the use of computer equipment. Special attention has been given to the working environment here and elsewhere, as Russell Doust puts it, 'to make it an efficient and a safe place to work in and, to use — but still be an interesting place, a people place'. The users and the workers, it seems, have a lot to look forward to in 1988.

David J. Jones