

# — Maroubra Library Fire

The Local Studies Collection is retrievable even though it is looking a little worse for wear. The Genealogical Collection of microfilm has yet to be checked for permanent damage. Loss of all readers has made this task impossible to date. Assessment of audio-visual material is underway. Library staff believe magnetic tape items may not be salvagable.

The ground floor area including work-rooms, lunchroom, the Maroubra children's library and toy and game library were all smoke affected. Staff have since cleaned all the stock.

As structural engineers have yet to make an assessment on the status of the building council has responded to public demand by increasing the opening hours of the two branch libraries. Staff are also operating a book return service from a caravan located at the central library.

Support from library colleagues, council staff, library patrons and Randwick council aldermen has helped keep up the morale of staff working under difficult and dirty conditions. Branch library hours are: Monday — Friday 10.00am — 8.00pm; Saturday 9.30am — 12.00noon.

The Branch libraries are located at: Matraville Branch Library, 1203 Anzac Parade, Matraville (02) 661 6192 and Randwick Branch Library, 90 Avoca Street, Randwick (02) 398 1354.

## LAA Conservator, Helen Price, surveys the scene

When I visited the library on the Wednesday morning after the fire the building was without electricity, water or telephone. Book returns were being accepted in a small caravan outside the street. Staff were waiting for insurance assessors to inspect the library. Workmen were needed to remove building debris. Until the building was pronounced safe it was not possible to enter many areas to estimate the damage and take remedial action.

The most valuable parts of the library collection, AV, reference and local studies, were in rooms adjacent to the circulation desk area which sustained the most fire, smoke and water damage. The books and other items, fittings and furniture throughout the building were covered with a thick black layer of carbon. Many of the metal filing cabinets and cupboards were dented or deformed by either the heat of the fire or falling burning debris.

By the Friday after the fire the debris had been cleaned away. Alison Grellis, the Reference/Local Studies Librarian at Maroubra was at last able to examine her collections and take stock of the situation.

● **AV material:** (VHS video cassettes, language learning cassettes, audio cassettes): generally unusable although stored in wooden drawers. They were close to source of the fire.



● **Art posters, prints:** (Rigid, laminated matt finish) easily cleaned and reusable. Cleaned with ammonia based cleaning fluid (eg 'Spray and Wipe') and plenty of elbow grease. Adhesive attaching pockets to back of prints and posters had affected front surface. Some imperfect or slightly worn items had delaminated in the heat.

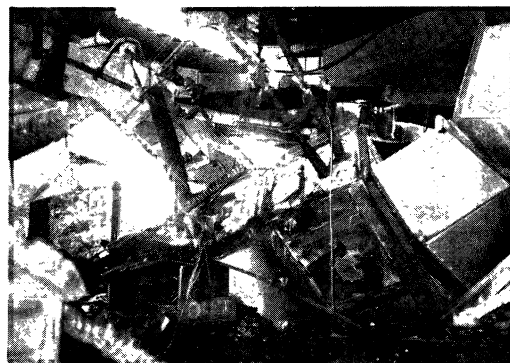
● **Microfilm:** Stored in metal drawers (stated as fire retarding). Individual microfilms in cardboard boxes. Boxes were slightly soiled especially towards front of drawers.

● **Microfiche:** Wooden filing boxes gave good protection. Plastic boxes deformed allowing smoke and heat entry. Ring binders gave least protection. Contents have to be checked.

● **AV hardware:** All AV hardware and electrical equipment was damaged. Some is away being assessed for reconditioning. Their return would only be considered if covered by manufacturers' warranty and service contract.

● **Books:** Reference and local studies books have been removed to alternate premises for drying and cleaning. A few books, which were soaked, were opened out and dried with pedestal fans lent by the State Library of NSW. Books situated on high shelves were more heavily smoke soiled than those on low shelves. Cleaning was carried out using soft dusters, Adenico document cleaning pads and Pelican BW40 ink erasers, both on page edges, spines and boards. Many books will need new spines. Plastic coated dust jackets protected some reference books and reduced cleaning time.

● **Documents:** Stored in vertical filing cabinets with well-fitting drawers. The Roneo-Vickers suspended files have a lip along the top edge which kept smoke out of thin files. Thick files were smoke soiled and documents will need individual cleaning.



● **Newspapers:** Stored on metal shelves. Loose piles were badly burned. Those in ring binders were only singed along edges. Some were damp and needed drying with fans.

● **Photographs:** Stored inside neutral PH polyester bonded envelopes in suspended files inside metal filing cabinets. Envelopes and files are smoke soiled and will need to be replaced. Most filing cabinets can be reconditioned. Photographic prints were undamaged.

Helen Price

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## RESEARCHER'S GUIDE TO AUDIOVISUAL RESOURCES IN AUSTRALIA QUESTIONNAIRE

This LAA publication will provide librarians, archivists, educators and researchers in Australia and overseas with information on the location, scope, organisation and accessibility of substantial and/or unique collections of audiovisual materials.

A questionnaire seeking information on such collections has been despatched to Australian national, state and public libraries and archives, universities and colleges, newspaper and broadcasting agencies, museums and galleries, schools, churches, trade unions, societies etc.

If your library has a substantial and/or unique collection of audiovisual materials of potential interest to researchers, and has not yet received a copy of the questionnaire, please contact: Brenda Pittard, Wordworld, 415A King Street, Newtown 2042 (marking the envelope 'Researcher's Guide') or phone (02) 516 2332.

**Closing date for receipt of data in response to the questionnaire is 30 June 1987.**

