

The NLA as phoenix

Menna Thomas describes the transformation in accommodation, access and services that has emerged from more than three years of building

THE RECONSTRUCTED and refurbished ground floor of the National Library was formally opened by the Director-General, Warren Horton, on Friday 3 April.

The initial purpose of the major capital-works program, under way at the Library since 1988, was to upgrade the fire-prevention infra-structure. The Library took the opportunity, concurrently, to reorganise the layout of the ground floor, increasing the size of the reading room areas, creating a visitor orientation centre, a new exhibition gallery, a Friends' Room, an education room and a cafe, and relocating and enlarging the Library Shop.

The aim is to give the community greater access to the Library's collections through new services, an automated catalogue and the introduction of new technology, and through exhibitions, displays, publications and educational programs. In his speech at the official opening, the Director General repeatedly emphasised the importance that the NLA places in this improved access.

The new and the redesigned public

areas are interlinked by the Visitor Centre, an elegant, broad, welcoming concourse framed by glass cabinets containing displays about the Library's collections, services and activities.

The Visitor Centre and the Main Reading Room are divided and united by a circular information desk. One side provides general information, brochures and education kits for school groups; the other, staffed by reference librarians, provides advice and assistance to readers.

The NLA's Main Reading Room formerly provided seating for 110 readers; now it seats 260. ▶



The new Main Reading Room offers excellent facilities for study and research



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► The old card catalogue has been replaced by an automated catalogue accessible through 40 terminals. This online catalogue holds records for the greater part of the Library's collections, over 1.6 million entries for Australian and overseas material. The facilities in the technology access area include CD-ROM players, a video player and a Kurzweil Personal Reader.

The Petherick Room, an advanced studies room, has been enlarged and has its own bank of terminals and reference collection. The range of services has been increased and encompasses access to the Rare Books and Music Collections.

The Library has been gradually converting its records to machine-readable form since 1980 in preparation for the provision of an automated catalogue. In May 1991, after a long period of evaluation and testing, the Library selected the DYNIX library management software running on an IBM RS6000 model 950 Unix processor as the platform on which to provide the service. The National Library's database, with 1.8 million records, is one of the largest



Students through the concourse and visitor centre lined with exhibition cabinets

databases running on the Dynix system and the IBM UNIX machine underpinning it is one of the largest of its type in Australia.

This machine is linked to the machine on which the Library operates ABN, so that cataloguing records can be transferred online from ABN to the online catalogue database.

The Library is currently planning to offer remote access to the online catalogue. This will mean that anyone with the right kind of terminal or PC and access to telecommunications facilities will be able to search the catalogue from anywhere in Australia. □



Warren Horton to continue as Director General of National Library of Australia

The Hon Wendy Fatin, Minister for the Arts and Territories, has announced the re-appointment of Warren Horton as Director-General of the National Library of Australia for a further 7 years from 28 July 1992, under the provisions of the National Library of Australia Act.

inCite joins all Warren's friends and colleagues in offering him hearty congratulations and best wishes for a successful second term of office. □