

Margaret Trask, AM

Margaret Trask, one of the pioneers of the development of the library and information profession in Australia, died at her Sydney home in November 2002. Margaret was an inspiration and role model for countless students and practitioners and left her mark on many organisations including ALIA, AIMA, and the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

Margaret's early career was based in the State Library of New South Wales, AMP Society, Penrith City Council and the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Library. In 1968 she moved into the teaching of librarianship at the then School of Librarianship at UNSW and developed a special interest in children's literature and school libraries. Her 'Report to the Nation' on the deplorable situation of school libraries was highly influential and formed a basis for the very successful federal government program of investment in school library buildings.

In 1974 Margaret moved to Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education and set up the School of Library and Information Studies. At Kuring-gai Margaret established her formidable reputation as an innovative educator who found new ways to conceptualise information work and the body of knowledge to support effective practice. Thousands of graduates can attest to the influence on their own capacities of the ways of thinking and problem solving they were introduced to — sometimes painfully — by Margaret. During that period Margaret also served on the Association's Board of Education and was president of the Association in 1977.

One of Margaret's greatest achievements was the establishment in 1985 of the Australian Information Management Association (AIMA) which provided leadership development for mid-ranking professionals as well as consultancy services for larger organisations. The huge impact of these activities can be seen today across Australian, New Zealand and South Pacific libraries.

Margaret 'retired' for a second time in 1994 but soon became involved as a council member at the University of Technology, Sydney. She was deputy chancellor from 1998 until a few weeks before her death. Her contribution to UTS was substantial as might be expected given Margaret's talent and commitment to any venture she undertook. She served on the key committees and presided over graduations with warmth and dignity.

Looking back over the history of the profession and libraries in Australia it is evident that Margaret played a very important role over many decades. Apart from the positions she held in libraries and other organisations Margaret was invariably selected as a member of committees or working groups charged with tasks of charting directions such as the Public Libraries Enquiry (Horton) 1975–76; Australian Commission for



UNESCO 1977–85; Australian Libraries and Information Council 1982–85; Australian Libraries Summit 1988; Working Party on Library Provision in Higher Education (Ross) 1990. In short, any activity of significance to the development of libraries and the profession invariably involved Margaret in some capacity and benefited from her involvement.

Margaret's contributions were recognised by many honours — Member of General Division of the Order of Australia; HCL Anderson Award; Fellowship of LAA; Fellow of UTS; and an award, which will be conferred posthumously, Doctor of the University of Technology. A University Medal for the outstanding UTS Information Studies graduate carries Margaret's name.

A glance at Margaret's achievements and the honours awarded might suggest that she was an intimidating figure. She was certainly awe-inspiring but never intimidating. Anyone who had the good fortune to rub shoulders with her, or simply hear her speak on matters dear to her heart, will attest to Margaret's friendliness and generosity. Consequently, wherever she went Margaret built up a network of strong friendships. She kept these friends over many years and was loyal and supportive helping many in their own professional aspirations. The messages received by Margaret's family following her death are tangible evidence of the tremendous impact she had on several generations. We are privileged to have known such a fine woman and to have benefited from her wisdom.

A special issue of the *Australian Library Journal* in late 2003 will commemorate and explore in more depth the significance of Margaret's achievements. Meanwhile, UTS is hosting a celebration of Margaret's life on Friday 28 February at 4:30pm. Numbers are limited so bookings are essential. Contact Gabrielle Gardiner on 02 9514 1330 or gabrielle.gardiner@uts.edu.au.

Mairéad Browne

To celebrate the life of Margaret Trask the Association is seeking recollections of how Margaret touched the lives of those in the library profession.

Stories will be collated and presented to Margaret's family. An electronic copy will also be presented to the University of Technology, Sydney library.

To contribute your story, visit <http://www.alia.org.au/membership/trask/>, or contact Emma Davis at the ALIA National Office, phone 02 6215 8231, or emma.davis@alia.org.au. Contributions are due by 21 February. ■