Obituary

Alan Charles Barclay (1947–2006)

Friends and colleagues were saddened to hear of the death of Alan Barclay on 26 July this year.

Alan's story was typical of many of his generation, but he brought special qualities to his work. Respected as an efficient and energetic librarian, he also seemed to effortlessly gain genuine affection from many people,

He was born in Colac, a country town in western Victoria, and matriculated from Colac High School in 1964. It was suggested that Alan try librarianship which offered opportunities for part-time university study while employed. It was a good choice and Alan both gave to and gained from the field. He worked at the Camberwell-Waverley Regional Library in Melbourne as the first Mount Waverley branch librarian in 1968–69, was deputy librarian under Keith McKenzie at Hawthorn in 1970–71, and then City Librarian from 1972 to 1982. He was also active in Minterlib, the umbrella body for municipal libraries in Victoria, and the Public Libraries Section of the Library Association in the 1970s and the early 1980s.

In 1982 he moved to Ryde Public Library in New South Wales, and retired due to ill health in mid–2005 from Central Northern Libraries (headquarters in Tamworth) where he was the Library Services Manager for 15 years. A building program in the Central Northern Region took place during his time as manager, with new libraries at Tamworth and Uralla and a refurbishment at Walcha. As with his years in Victoria he was active in the profession, working on a range of issues with the Country Public Library Association and the Friends of the Library group in Tamworth.

His library years were characterised by involvement with the communities he served. While in Hawthorn he helped establish the Hawthorn Historical Society which still stands today as an excellent example of library/historical society co-operation, and where Alan is remembered for his contributions. He visited Hawthorn in 2004 to honour the 30th anniversary of the Society and, although clearly not well, his warmth and impressive memory for names and dates endeared him all over again to those present.

Alan was part of the post-war generation, the baby boomers. Often the first of their family to attend university, as Alan was, they seemed to sail along, buoyed by parental pride, genuine service ideals, and sixties exuberance. But Alan also worked hard. He upgraded his Registration qualifications with a degree and thrived in an era when librarians were tested by rapid technological change, local government turbulence and some of the excesses of managerialism.

His genuinely pleasant nature and his ability to maintain friendships without compromising his beliefs and standards were key parts of his personality. He was amongst the best, he gave his best, and he left his mark.

Alan was married to fellow librarian Barbara (Scott) whom he met as a librarianship student, and had two sons, Sam and Tarek.

Anne Holmes, Manager Library Services, City of Boroondara Library Service and Gay Sussex, President, Hawthorn Historical Society