



Librarian from 1956 to 1973, who was instrumental in creating the Baillieu Library. He worked tirelessly for decades to create the much-needed, purpose-built library and to continually campaign for more resources for the university's library.

Those involved in the 50th anniversary would surely agree it has been a privilege to celebrate the Baillieu Library: its history, its stories, and its people.

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## Developing a regional collection – the University of New England Library Special Collections

From as early as the 1920s, many New Englanders harboured aspirations of self government: breaking free of New South Wales and creating a new state. This environment promoted a vigorous approach to regional development within the community, leading to the creation of a university college in Armidale in 1938, following extensive fundraising.

As the library founded in the college that became the first regional university in Australia, the Dixon Library of the University of New England was, from inception, influenced by this community. In response, the institution sought to capture materials that provided a true reflection of the broad community of interest that forms northern New South Wales.

Two distinct special collections were established to ensure that Dixon Library met these community expectations. First, the New England Collection was dedicated to ensure the preservation of published works related to the New England region, including works published by academics at UNE. Second, a university archives was dedicated within the library in 1957 at the recommendation of University Librarian Frank Rodgers. In defining the mission for his first professional archivist in 1960 Frank directed him to “collect all research material likely to be of value in throwing light on the historical, economic and social development of Northern New South Wales.”

This umbrella approach of sharing resources while providing a high degree of autonomy to both the archivists and librarians allowed for rapid expansion of the collections. Archivists collected from the coast to the far west while the New England Collection was systematically expanded by library staff as part of the acquisition and cataloguing regime. In addition, collaboration with firstly the Mitchell Library and then the N.S.W. Archives Office after its establishment in 1960 reinforced these regional programs and saw the relocation of State Archives relevant to the region into the University of New England Archives from 1964.

Today, both the New England Collection and the UNE & Regional Archives continue to collect both the publications and community records that are of value for future research. The archive now occupies a building dedicated as a Heritage Centre by the university, but remains organisationally as part of the University Library Division.

The community concept of region over 50 years has changed dramatically with a demographic swing from the mountains to the fast-developing north coast and the waning of the region's political demands for cessation from New South Wales. The changes in the region can be studied by future generations due to the foresight of our predecessors.

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## A rude awakening leads to opportunity at VU

In 2007 our annual Client Satisfaction Survey indicated that while our students were satisfied with library skills training programs they had attended, they didn't actually value or rate as important the vast amount of work we do in providing information literacy training – when rating the overall importance of library skills training programs they ranked them 36th out of 39 total items (39 being the lowest importance). As can be easily imagined this was disappointing news indeed, and a somewhat rude awakening. It made us question what we are doing in our current practice, what we might do in future, and how we could improve the value rating of our information literacy practice in the view of our students. Thus the idea of taking a serious look at our information literacy practice came to be and our 2008–2009 Information Literacy Review was born.

We wanted to firstly identify our activities and coverage, and then survey our clients to see what they were really thinking. Our aim overall was to identify models of practice that are a good or better fit for our students. Our review strategy included:

- the usual suspects of a literature review and environmental scan,
- an in-house survey of library staff who provide information literacy training (that is, our liaison and reference librarians) to identify our current activities and gain a perspective on what our trainers think we need to be doing in future, and
- a survey of students, their information-seeking behaviours, and what they think of the library and our library and research skills training programs.

In designing our student research skills survey we partnered with Insync Surveys (formerly Ambit Insights and Rodski Survey Research), a research provider that collaborates with their clients to create effective surveys, analyse results, and provide detailed reporting. We worked with Mike Samarchi – their representative and a librarian himself, who has been involved in designing many library surveys during his time at Insync – to create a tool that was going to help us discover what our students really need and want from us.

We identified the following objectives:

- evaluate students' information seeking behaviours when doing course-related research,
- evaluate students' awareness of available information sources,
- trace their steps in the information seeking process, and
- seek students' perceptions of the role of the library.

Aiming for 600, we actually achieved a total of 779 completed surveys. All campuses (we have eleven!) were represented and, according to the demographic information we collected, we achieved a good coverage across all the student population on-campus, off-campus, domestic and international, undergraduates, post-graduates, full-time and part-time.