

DAVID SCOTT MITCHELL: THE MAN AND THE LIBRARY

You may have been up and down the steps to the doors many times but have you ever given a moment to think about the name of Sydney's famous Mitchell Library? Art Historian and NSW Premier's Literary Award winner Eileen Chanin did – and now she's written a book about the extraordinary collection of David Scott Mitchell and how it came to be the foundation of one of the finest libraries in the world.

Eileen says the wonder is that Mitchell had not attracted attention before. Somehow, even though his collection was recognised as far back as 1910 as one of the greatest in the world, he has escaped detailed attention.

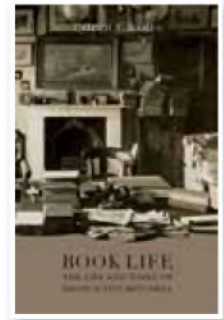
"Other collections and histories fail to give account of the Libraries and Museums Movement that gripped the late-Victorian world," says Eileen.

"They do not explain the widespread belief held during the Victorian era in the importance of cultural institutions like libraries which benefactors envisaged would promote their region."

Eileen was inspired to write *Book Life, The Life and Times of David Scott Mitchell* while a Currey Fellow at the Library, taking three years to complete her study of who Mitchell really was, who were his friends, who and what inspired him and his collecting and why he gave his magnificent collection to the people of New South Wales.

Eileen says it has been acknowledged that Australian history could not be written without the contents of the library Mitchell assembled through his life.

"In Australian terms, David Scott Mitchell single-handedly created Australia's first research facility for history, gave reason to erect a library building for the State of New South Wales in 1910, and left a bequest to continue developing the library's collection. Today it is said that 'no other act of philanthropy in Australia has performed such a cultural coup'."



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