The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6068

Harrison, Anne

(1923 - 1992)

Born	19230101
Died	19921231
Occupation	Librarian

Summary

Anne Harrison spent the duration of her professional life in the medical library of the University of Melbourne. She joined the staff as Assistant Librarian in 1948 and was promoted to Librarian in Charge the following year. She completed her librarianship studies in 1966.

At a time when most library staff were employed as 'general staff', Anne's staff record notes that she was a 'Senior Librarian (Lecturer Status)'.

Anne planned and executed the Central Medical Library Organization, which won her national acclaim. She also helped pioneer Medline in Australia and was a foundation member of the Australian Medical Librarians Group.

Details

Anne Harrison, who took her BA from the University of Western Australia, spent her professional life from the age of 25 until her retirement at the age of 60 in the medical library of the University of Melbourne, which was named the Brownless Medical Library when it moved into its own building in 1966. She joined the staff as Assistant Librarian in 1948 and was promoted to Librarian in Charge the following year, completing her librarianship studies in 1966.

Her influence extended well beyond the confines of the University Library as K.F. Russell notes in his history of the Medical School.[1] Her standing with the Medical Faculty is perhaps indicated by the fact that at a time when even the most senior Library staff were employed as General Staff and not entitled to the 'sabbatical leave' granted to academic staff of the period, Anne Harrison's staff record notes that she was a 'Senior Librarian (Lecturer Status)'.

The project which won her national acclaim was the Central Medical Library Organization, planned and executed by Anne Harrison and established in 1953. It was intended, in a pre-digital age when the cost of essential journals (especially in science, technology and law) was rapidly overtaking the capacity of library budgets, to allow institutions to exchange duplicate material and to consolidate complete sets in a central location. Membership was open to all Melbourne medical libraries that employed a librarian. The University contributed a subscription of £300 with the other 18 libraries each paying one of £25. In the first year no fewer than 289 bound volumes of journals, 523 complete unbound volumes and 2952 unbound issues were obtained by exchange and distributed to libraries requesting them. The CMLO became an indispensable part of Melbourne's medical library services.

Anne Harrison helped pioneer the introduction of Medline into Australia and was a foundation member of the Australian Medical Librarians Group. She was made a Fellow of the Australian Library and Information Association in 1989. The Anne Harrison Award of ALIA Health Libraries Australia was established to commemorate her work, and to encourage others to make their own contribution to the development of health librarianship.

[1] K.F. Russell. *The Melbourne Medical School, 1862-1962*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977. p. 189.

Published resources

Book

40 Years 40 Women: Biographies of University of Melbourne Women, Published to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the International Year of Women, Flesch, Juliet, 2015, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/4040/

Author Details

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