**Entry type:** Person
**Entry ID:** AWE6089

# Turnbull, Valerie Ruth Skene

(1926 - 1993)

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| **Born** | 19260101, Melbourne Victoria Australia |
| **Died** | 19931102, Burwood Victoria Australia |
| **Occupation** | Librarian |

## Details

Valerie Ruth Skene Turnbull spent her entire working life in the University of Melbourne to which she came from St Michael's Grammar School in 1943, taking her BA (Hons) in 1947.

Initially employed as a Library Assistant, she became Acquisitions Librarian in 1953. For the next quarter of a century she was responsible for all aspects of the Library's acquisitions, including relations with publishers and booksellers and maintaining the important exchange agreements between her library and those of other organisations worldwide. Her most important duty was allocating the funds of the Library so as best to satisfy the requirements of teaching and research in the University. It was never an easy task: despite significant donations and constant representations, funding never kept pace with demand.

In 1978, following a reorganisation of the University Library, Valerie Turnbull assumed the newly-created position of Coordinator – Branch and Departmental Libraries. It was a fortunate choice. There were several dozen separate libraries to deal with, many independent of the University Library and many in which the collections significantly replicated its holdings. Valerie Turnbull, intimately acquainted with the librarians and academic staff, was ideally suited to the negotiation involved in trying to avoid unnecessary duplication of resources.

She had not acquired this capacity through the Library alone. Val Turnbull was a dedicated supporter of the staff club, University House, as well as an organisation which may seem quaint today, the Staff and Distaff Social Club, which was established in 1928 for wives of University academics to welcome newcomers to Melbourne and provide a social network. Membership was subsequently widened to include female academics and non-academic staff. The final meeting was held in 1993.[1] Valerie Turnbull was also a committed member of the Friends of the Baillieu Library and of Zonta International.

It is, however, as a social facilitator that Valerie Turnbull made her greatest mark on the University she served for 39 years, whether this was over lunch at University House, hosting dinners for publishers, booksellers or fellow librarians, at librarians' conferences, or in her own house, she was a welcome and congenial companion.

[1] Staff and Distaff records are held in the University of Melbourne Archives.

## 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/

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