Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0125

Arnot, Jean Fleming

(1903 - 1995)

Born	19030423, Pymble New South Wales Australia
Died	19950927, Potts Point New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Feminist, Librarian, Trade unionist

Summary

Distinguished librarian, trade unionist and feminist, Jean Fleming Arnot, worked at the State Library of New South Wales from 1921 until her retirement in 1968. During her life Arnot was a member and leader of numerous women's organisations. Arnot was appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (Civil) on 12 June 1965 for her community services in Sydney. She died in Sydney on 27 September 1995, at the age of 92.

Details

Born at Pymble, New South Wales, Jean Arnot was educated at Fort Street Girls' High School. She never married. Her distinguished career in librarianship was served with the Public Library of New South Wales from 1921 until her retirement in 1968. She was extension librarian in charge of services to country areas, 1944-1948; head cataloguer, 1950-1968; and acting Mitchell librarian, 1956-1958. In 1948-1949 Jean received grants from the British Council and the Carnegie Corporation of New York to study library services in Great Britain and North America. She was a member of the Australian delegation to the First International Conference on Cataloguing Principles, held in Paris in 1961.

A founding member of the Library Association of Australia (LAA) in 1949, she was convenor of its Cataloguing Code Revision Committee, 1962-1968, and elected Fellow in 1963. With the LAA's precursor, the Australian Institute of Librarians, she had served as a councillor, general secretary,1941-1943, and president of the New South Wales branch, 1941-1942. After she retired, Miss Arnot became honorary librarian of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 1975-1980. Her expertise remained much in demand; she advised on the cataloguing of private libraries and assisted the booksellers, Berkelouw.

From 1937 Jean became an active campaigner for equal pay for women. In 1944 she was the recipient of the Gold Medal of the Public Service Association of New South Wales. An accomplished and popular public speaker, Miss Arnot addressed a range of issues ranging from the historical to the contemporary. She had honed her debating skills through her involvement with the women's service organisation, the Kooroora Club, in the 1930s. The Club's affiliation with the National Council of Women of New South Wales led to Jean's long-time association with the latter, becoming president from 1960-1966, and elected honorary vice-president in 1972.

In 1959 she was the only female representative at the Conference on Unemployment, convened by New South Wales Premier, R. J. Heffron. She was also prominent in the activities of several other organisations. Arnot was president of the Business and Professional Women's Club, 1953-1954 and 1959-1960; president of the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women, Division of New South Wales; founding member in 1961 and executive council member of the Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign; vice-president of the League of Women Voters, 1974-1980; longtime member of and fund-raiser for the Pan-Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association; and multiple office bearer of the Women's Club (Sydney, New South Wales).

Jean Fleming Arnot was appointed MBE in 1965 for services to the community.

Published resources

Edited Book
Who's Who of Australian Women, Lofthouse, Andrea, 1982

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
Ros Bowden - interviews with people who knew Ida Leeson, former Mitchell Librarian, 1985

State Library of New South Wales - Jean Arnot interviewed by John Macallister about her career in the State Library of New South Wales, 1991

State Library of New South Wales - Jean Arnot interviewed by Rosemary Block about her life after she retired from the State Library. She also speaks in some detail of her colleagues Miss Nita Kibble and Miss Nita Dobbie, 1994.

State Library of New South Wales - Jean Arnot interviewed by Rosemary Block, 1994

Jean Fleming Arnot - personal and professional papers, 1890-1995

Jean Arnot - interviews, 1974-1994

Jean Arnot Memorial Luncheon - Book of Honour, 1994-1997, being a selected compilation

Jean Arnot Memorial Service - papers, 1995

Jean Fleming Arnot - pictorial material and medals, 192--1995

Jean Fleming Arnot papers, 1931-1976, mainly relating to equal pay and status of women

Jean Fleming Arnot papers, 1907-1988, including files relating to librarianship, bibliography, social issues and invitations received

Ros Bowden - interviews conducted for radio programs and documentaries, ca.1975 - 1989

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection
Jean Arnot interviewed by Amy McGrath [sound recording]

Author Details
Clare Land

Created 24 September 2002
Last modified 7 October 2026