

# A Grand Obsession

The DS Mitchell Story

*DS Mitchell*



State Library  
of New South Wales





David Scott Mitchell.

A  
Grand  
Obsession

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## Message from Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO

### 'A Grand Obsession: The DS Mitchell Story' Exhibition Mitchell Library Centenary Celebration

I want to record my profound appreciation to David Scott Mitchell for his bequest to the State Library of New South Wales 100 years ago, of a priceless collection of 40,000 books, manuscripts, maps and pictures, as well as an endowment of £70,000.

The importance of the DS Mitchell Bequest to our state, to our nation, and even beyond, is incalculable.

The documents initially comprising the bequest, together with historical acquisitions subsequently acquired through his generosity, have provided a glorious legacy of the Australian spirit and identity.

I have always said that, if ordered in the most catastrophic of times imaginable, in fantasy, to save just one man-made structure in Australia from destruction, I would immediately nominate the Mitchell Library with all its contents.

There are no words which could adequately record our indebtedness and gratitude for this priceless gift.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Bashir". Below the signature is a long horizontal line that ends in a small dot.

**Marie R Bashir AC CVO**

Governor of New South Wales



DEO FAUENTE

ЕТРНКА



## Foreword

David Scott Mitchell (1836–1907) was Australia’s greatest book collector. He accumulated the world’s pre-eminent collection of books, manuscripts, maps and pictures relating to Australia and the Pacific. On his death in July 1907, his collection was bequeathed to the Public (now State) Library of New South Wales, together with an endowment of £70,000 to fund additions to his collection. The conditions of the bequest were that his collection should be housed separately and known as the Mitchell Library and should be freely available on conditions similar to those in force in the British Museum library, now the British Library.

The Mitchell Library, the first portion of the proposed new Public Library building, opened to the public on 9 March 1910.

Mitchell’s bequest, though, was more than a very generous cultural gift. It at once created a substantial public research collection in an area in which there had been none. That area was one which was crucial to the nation — the study of Australia itself. In this sense, it is no exaggeration to say that Mitchell’s gift is the nation’s greatest cultural benefaction.

This monograph is published to coincide with the exhibition *A Grand Obsession: The DS Mitchell Story* which is on show in the Picture Gallery from 18 June to 30 September 2007. The essays in this volume, written by the Mitchell Librarian, Elizabeth Ellis, and the Senior Curator, Mitchell Library, Paul Brunton, cast fresh light on the man and his collection.

We are very grateful to the Sydney Mechanics’ School of Arts for sponsoring this publication. This Library has benefited from the School’s generosity for the past 20 years and values highly the relationship. The School’s sponsorship is especially appropriate because David Scott Mitchell was a member of the School, which was founded in 1833 and has operated continuously since then.

### **Regina A Sutton**

State Librarian & Chief Executive





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(Right) David Scott Mitchell's Iorgnette, ML R 15

# David Scott Mitchell: A life and a bequest

‘ ... I give and bequeath to the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales all my books, pictures, engravings, coins, tokens, medals and manuscripts ... upon the trust and condition that the same shall be called and known as “The Mitchell Library” and shall be permanently arranged and kept for use in a special wing or set of rooms dedicated for that purpose ... ’

Last will and testament of David Scott Mitchell (extract from typescript copy, ML Q027.5/21A1)





Dr James Mitchell, carte-de-visite photographic portrait by W Hetzer's Photographic Gallery, Sydney, early 1860s, ML PXC 831/1

## The genesis of a collector

There have been many anecdotes, myths and legends, originating in the late nineteenth century and continuing to the present, about the apparently enigmatic founder of the Mitchell collection: about the establishment and history of the library which bears his name; and not least about the collection itself.

What is indisputable is that on his death on 24 July 1907, David Scott Mitchell — known to his contemporaries and ever afterwards as a wealthy private collector of Australiana — bequeathed to the people of New South Wales through the Trustees of the Public Library the greatest single cultural bequest ever made in Australia. It single-handedly established the serious study of Australian and Pacific history as a pursuit open to anyone with the curiosity or inclination to investigate the primary and secondary source material available in the Library which bears his name.

The path leading to this magnificent gesture is interwoven with the history of colonial New South Wales. It begins with Dr James Mitchell, a Scotsman born in Fife in 1792, the son of a farmer. James Mitchell joined the Army Medical Corps in 1810 and three years later qualified as a licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh. He saw active service during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and America and accompanied the 48th Regiment to Sydney, finally settling here in 1821. Mitchell transferred to the Colonial Medical Department in 1823 and was posted to Sydney Hospital where he became Head Surgeon in January 1829, a position he held until 1837.<sup>1</sup>

Astute and ambitious, Dr Mitchell married well when Augusta Maria Scott became his bride in 1833. The match gave him entrée into the colony's social upper class of the pastoral elite. Augusta Maria was the only daughter of a distinguished medical officer, Dr Helenus Scott, who had served for 30 years in India.

Dr Scott died at sea in 1821 en route to Australia, accompanying his sons, Robert and Helenus — then aged 22 and 19, respectively — who were to take up extensive land grants on the rich alluvial flats of the Hunter River near Singleton. They called their main property 'Glendon', and there for 20 years led charmed lives, breeding racehorses and indulging their penchant for architecture by designing their house, outbuildings, and even gates and fences.

By 1832 when their sister and mother immigrated to New South Wales, their landholdings extended to 10,000 acres. Mrs Helenus Scott, another Augusta Maria (confusingly with the same Christian names as her daughter and grand daughter), was a person of some substance and style. She was a member of the wealthy mercantile and banking



Mrs James (Augusta Maria) Mitchell (née Scott), carte-de-visite photographic portrait by Dalton's Royal Photographic Establishment, Sydney, c. 1863–34, ML Min 361



[Cumberland Place] Sydney, watercolour by Charles Rodius, 1831, ML SSV\*/Sp Coll/Rodius/1

[View of Sydney Harbour from the grounds of Cumberland Place], watercolour by Charles Rodius, 1831, ML SSV\*/Sp Coll/Rodius/14



David Scott Mitchell, carte-de-visite photographic portrait by BC Boake, Sydney, 1870, ML PXA 1009/2

Frederick family of London and led an elegant life in metropolitan circles. She was a family friend of the artist Landseer, and was very well read and well connected. She was also shrewd and well-off in her own right.

Her sons, the young Scott brothers in the Hunter Valley, seem to have understood the need to keep her informed and amused in their letters, building up credit for the times when they needed to ask for her financial assistance. Soon after arriving in Sydney, Mrs Scott purchased from Robert Campbell Senior the house he had built on the peak of The Rocks, then called Bunker's Hill. The house was known as Cumberland Place, and had been designed by Francis Greenway in 1825, with early 1830s additions by John Verge.<sup>2</sup> It is long gone, having been demolished just before World War I.

It was to this house, owned by his mother-in-law, that Dr Mitchell and his family moved several years after his marriage. He resigned from the army in 1833 and went into private practice at Cumberland Place, dividing his time with hospital duties until 1837 when he was removed from his post after a bitter official dispute. In the meantime, Mitchell had acquired extensive landholdings and gained a reputation as a shrewd property dealer and financial manager. His business acumen is particularly evident in hindsight. Family legend suggests that he did not acquire land for its apparent grazing potential, but rather, harking back to his boyhood on the Fifeshire coalfields, for its coal-bearing possibilities.<sup>3</sup> This led ultimately to his being in possession of thousands of acres of what became the nucleus of the Hunter Valley coalfields, stretching from Burwood on the coast south of Newcastle, through Rothbury and Cessnock to Muswellbrook.

David Scott Mitchell — or 'DSM' as he is known to some of us to this day, though his friends and family always called him David — was born on 19 March, 1836 in the officers' quarters of the Military Hospital in Macquarie Street, not far from the site where the building housing his collections would later stand. He was an only son, with an older sister, Augusta Maria, and a younger one, Margaret. He grew up at Cumberland Place and attended St Philip's Grammar School, Church Hill, a short distance from his home.<sup>4</sup> One of his first books, an edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, given as a birthday present by his father, is now in the Mitchell Library as are several of his school prizes.<sup>5</sup> It is said that the first intimations of David's propensity to collect books came when he saved some of his father's dusty old volumes destined for the saleroom.<sup>6</sup>

David Scott Mitchell was in the first intake of seven undergraduates at the newly established University of Sydney in 1852. It appears that he was not always a conscientious student, if not lacking ability. An extract from the University Senate meeting of 4 September 1854 noted that Mr Mitchell was to be formally censured for 'the gross and wilful





Sydney University, watercolour by Samuel Elyard, 1865, DG V\*/Sp Coll/Elyard/6

neglect to his studies' as reported by his professors, and deprived of the Barker Scholarship, which he had won the previous year.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, he went on to graduate as a Bachelor of Arts in 1856 and three years later as Master of Arts. In December 1858 he was admitted to the Bar, but never practised the law, or any other profession. One of the anecdotal truths in the story of DSM and the Mitchell Library is that it was his father's eye for coal-bearing land in the Hunter Valley and Newcastle region which enabled him to pursue his own interests.

Many legends have grown up around his personal life as a young and middle-aged man. One thing is clear: David Scott Mitchell was not quite the reclusive hermit without family connections, friends and chosen acquaintances that some have suggested. Dark-bearded and serious-looking,<sup>8</sup> he was part of the tightly-knit circle of leading legal, medical and landowning families which then constituted Sydney society. The main source of information about his life at this time is in letters to his highly intelligent and strong-minded cousin, Rose Scott, then living in Newcastle.<sup>9</sup> She was 11 years his junior, and daughter of his mother's brother, Helenus Scott of Glendon.

David's letter to Rose dated 9 July 1865 observed that he had been 'out nearly every night. A bill of fare for a weeks [sic] dissipation!'<sup>10</sup> Three months earlier he had written to her that 'it is now more than three weeks since I became that "queer beast" an engaged man ...



Rose Scott, carte-de-visite photographic portrait by Croft Brothers, Sydney, 1864, ML PXA 1009/7



Mrs Henry (Emily Matilda) Heron (née Manning), carte-de-visite photographic portrait by Boyd, late San Francisco Palace of Art, Sydney, c. 1880, ML Pic. Acc. 5775/24

It will be a long engagement as I have to make up for a good many idle years but the time will tell more on me than her as I am 29, and she is not yet 20'.<sup>11</sup>

The young lady in question was Emily Manning, daughter of Sir William Manning, a Supreme Court judge and Chancellor of the University of Sydney. It was regarded as an eminently suitable alliance, but within a few months, Mitchell had ceased to make any mention of Emily in his letters. We will never know what happened. As late as 1869, the former Governor of New South Wales and family friend of the Mitchells, Sir John Young, wrote to David's mother: 'I saw Miss Manning in London — looking quite well and handsome — David might do worse than marry her yet.'<sup>12</sup> The only actual evidence of other romantic inclinations Mitchell may have cherished are copied and original poems of a distinctly sentimental Victorian type which he wrote in one of his notebooks,<sup>13</sup> and a later, characteristically enigmatic, exchange of correspondence with his cousin Rose in 1875 about his relationship with her, and vice versa.<sup>14</sup>

Following Dr Mitchell's death in February 1869, a messy court case which involved the family contesting the will was eventually upheld in their favour. The case involved a German-born adventurer, William (or Wilhelm) Wolfskehl, who had been given control of Mitchell's considerable estates by the old and ailing doctor in his declining years. It was another three years before a partial division of the estate was finalised.

David Scott Mitchell acquired his father's Hunter Valley land, including the coal-rich estates of Rothbury, Cessnock and Branxton and part of the Burwood estate; his younger sister Margaret was given what became the coalfields around Booragul and Fassifern on the western shores of Lake Macquarie. She had married William Bell Quigley, sometimes described as a 'coachman', at Cumberland Place in a discreet ceremony after the death of her mother in 1871. There was a later, anecdotal implication that she had married beneath her to a man with a reputation as a drunkard. David's elder sister, Augusta Maria, on the other hand, had made a most satisfactory alliance with Edward Christopher Merewether in 1860, and she inherited most of the Burwood estate with her husband.

Edward Merewether played his own part in what his direct descendant has called 'the wherewithal' leading to the Mitchell Library. Merewether had not only assisted with Dr Mitchell's interests for many years, but also later managed David Scott Mitchell's Rothbury estate, in which the absentee landlord showed no interest whatsoever except for the income it produced as the means to sustain his book collecting.<sup>15</sup>



David Scott Mitchell's house, 17 Darlinghurst Road, Sydney, photograph by NSW Government Printing Office, Sydney, August 1907, ML V1/Res Mit/7a

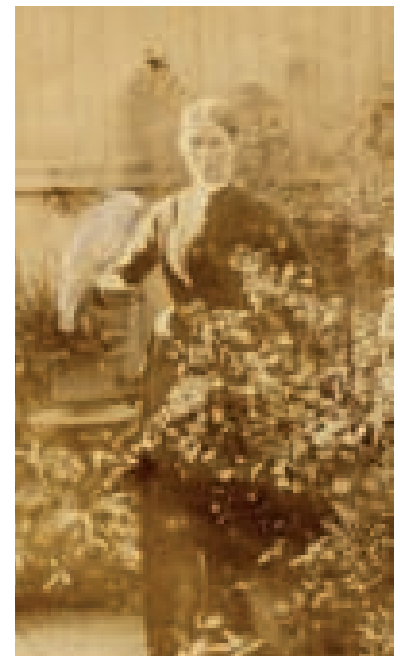


## The legend of 17 Darlinghurst Road

Mitchell's mother had died while all the turbulence surrounding her husband's estate was still unresolved. Up to that time, David had lived in his childhood home of Cumberland Place. Following his mother's death, he moved first to another address in Cumberland Street and, in 1877, to what was then Darlinghurst. His new address was 17 Darlinghurst Road (now 65 Darlinghurst Road). The site of his two-storeyed, seven-roomed terrace house is in the heart of today's Kings Cross, just north of the entrance to Kings Cross Station.<sup>16</sup> There DSM remained for the rest of his life, attended by his faithful housekeeper, Sarah Milligan, to whom he left an annuity of one pound per week on his death.<sup>17</sup>

The conventional wisdom is that after Mitchell moved from The Rocks to Darlinghurst Road, he closed his doors on society, living in an increasingly parsimonious manner, with one great exception: the ever-increasing sums he spent on his single great obsession of book collecting. As Gordon Dalyell Richardson, a former Principal and Mitchell Librarian, noted in his 1961 TD Mutch Memorial Lecture: 'It is almost as if the scholarly and still young gentleman of leisure disappears to re-emerge after a quarter of a century as the venerable, ailing and superficially odd sort of bibliographical patriarch!'<sup>18</sup>

Plan of Rothbury estate ... surveyed by AF Hall ... Newcastle (section), heliograph copy of an earlier edition, c. 1890, ML ZM4 811.25/1890/1



Sarah Milligan, with cockatoo, in back garden of 17 Darlinghurst Road (detail), albumen photographic print, photographer unknown, 1880s, ML PXB 431/4



Fred Wymark, George Street, Sydney, photographer unknown, c. 1930s, ML P1/W

Rose Scott, writing in 1923 two years before her death, to another Principal Librarian, WH Ifould, strongly disputed the idea that Mitchell became an unsociable recluse, and she demanded that an official statement refuting this notion be placed in the Library's records.<sup>19</sup> Rose seems to have had a point, because there is ample evidence that DSM enjoyed (and had considerable skills at) card games, was a regular visitor all his adult life at the Australian Club and had a lifelong interest in cricket, which he had played well in his youth.<sup>20</sup>

Mitchell began his serious collecting with English literature, especially Elizabethan drama and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers and poets. His catalogue of the mid-1870s, handwritten in five small volumes,<sup>21</sup> records a strong emphasis in this field. Some fine examples of incunabula and illuminated manuscripts were amongst his early acquisitions, and one of his most enduring interests were English cartoons and caricatures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including some marvellous examples of the collected works of Gillray, Hogarth and Cruikshank. He also had more than a passing interest in contemporary French literature, owning complete editions of the works of Charles Baudelaire and Stendahl.<sup>22</sup>

DSM's obsession with Australiana came relatively late, although he had been acquiring works about Australian and Pacific history since the late 1860s. By 1880, however, most of his contacts with the outside world were with dealers including Maggs, Bernard Quaritch, Henry Sotheran and Francis Edwards in London, and Muller of Amsterdam, who wrote to him with tempting offers; and locals such as James Tyrrell, William Dymock, and especially George Robertson, David Angus and Fred Wymark of Angus & Robertson. Wymark first encountered Mitchell around 1884, when Wymark was hardly more than a boy working for David Angus. Later in his life, he recorded numerous amusing, illuminating and invaluable reminiscences about this extraordinary client. A Wymark anecdote (alluded to by GD Richardson in the Mutch lecture<sup>23</sup>) dates Mitchell's purchase of the Australiana library of Thomas Whitley in 1887 as the event that set DSM on his ultimate dedicated and all-encompassing pursuit in this field.

The colloquial account of Mitchell's life from this time on is that, unlike his father, who was a prominent public figure and director of numerous companies and boards, DSM's single weekly excursion to the city took place on Monday mornings, starting promptly at 9.30 am when a hansom cab collected him, then took him to various booksellers until 1.30 in the afternoon. His nickname among Sydney cabbies was 'Old Four Hours'. He enjoyed nothing more than rummaging through the second-hand bargain boxes for rare or curious pamphlets and oddities, even browsing in pawnshops or haggling with a bookseller, as he did once over two to three hours of talking down the price of two Conrad Martens watercolours.<sup>24</sup>

A favourite Wymark story tells of the bookseller visiting 17 Darlinghurst Road with a parcel of manuscripts for which he was asking £340. While he was there, a workman called to repair the stove at a cost of 30 shillings, which DSM regarded as robbery and extortion, calling the man a 'damned scoundrel', as he handed over the £340 to Wymark.<sup>25</sup> And yet another tale is that of an inexperienced bookseller who left an album of bookplates with him for appraisal, but omitted to put a price in the front. On his return, DSM thanked him for the gift.<sup>26</sup>

Wymark also told the tale of Mitchell outwitting Alfred Lee, a rival book collector and his most serious local competitor, over items from the collection of Dr George Bennett — probably the greatest assembled in New South Wales from earlier in the century. Lee had made his selections and set them aside in William Dymock's shop. Mitchell arrived and, undeterred on being told the items were no longer available, selected and made off with over two-thirds of them anyway, after paying a well spent £300.<sup>27</sup> It is poetic justice, therefore, that in 1906, the year before his death, Mitchell acquired the whole of Alfred Lee's library, which contained many duplicate titles found in his own collection, in order to secure several great rarities, notably the manuscript journal kept by Joseph Banks on Captain Cook's first voyage around the world on HMS *Endeavour*, as well as the de Quiros memorials.

The bookseller James Tyrrell left a vivid description of DSM's appearance:

In manner and appearance, Mitchell was a typical book collector ... Even his beard, short and turning black to grey, was somehow in character for the part. His usual dress included a black bowler hat, black-cloth paget coat, matching black trousers and black elastic-sided boots. His loose change he carried distributed in his vest pockets — sovereigns in one; half sovereigns in another and silver change in his coat pockets! His daily habits also indicate the same methodical, if eccentric and frugal traits: he ate two meals per day, and both were identical, breakfast at 11 o'clock in the morning and tea at 8 p.m., the menu for both consisting of grilled chops.<sup>28</sup>

After a visit to Mitchell's library in June 1893, local artist Walter Syer made some quick sketches (a 'memory jotting', as he called them) of the bibliophile, unbeknownst to his subject. These were later made into etchings for Sir William Dixson by Lionel Lindsay.<sup>29</sup>

The collecting of Australiana had received limited attention up to the time Mitchell made it his sole pursuit, although it is not correct to assume he was the only pioneer in the field. Some notable predecessors were Justice Edward Wise, who bequeathed his Australian book collection to the Public Library of New South Wales in 1865; Alfred Lee; Sir Alfred Stephen and Dr George Bennett.



David Scott Mitchell, etchings by Lionel Lindsay, 1916, after sketches by Walter Syer, 1893. Original inscription by Syer: 'Memory jotting after visit to his [DSM's] library when ABP [Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson] came "back from de [Boer] War"', DL PX 131, f. 37



HCL Anderson, Principal Librarian,  
1893–1906, platinotype photographic print  
by J Hubert Newman, Sydney, late 1890s,  
ML P1/A (BM)

Smaller collections were also amassed by journalist and newspaper proprietor William Augustine Duncan; by Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse and for the Camden Park library of the Macarthur family, for example.

But it is also true that by the late nineteenth century, some colonials found confronting the unpublished evidence in manuscript records relating to earlier decades of the settlement. When Mitchell was building his collection, New South Wales history — particularly of the relatively recent convict past — was a subject that many people, including a number in high places, wished to forget rather than celebrate. There are tales of pages being cut from incriminating lists of convicts, whose names their descendants wished to excise forever.

At the height of his collecting passion, Mitchell had no patience with this distortion of the facts. ‘I must have the damned thing, if only to show how bad it is’, he is said to have proclaimed.<sup>30</sup> ‘The main thing is to get the records. We’re too near our own past to view it properly, but in a few generations the convict past will take its proper place in the perspective, and our historians will pay better attention to the pioneers’<sup>31</sup> — prophetic words, which have only come to pass in the century after Mitchell’s death.

## ‘One of the greatest benefactors this State has known’

From the 1880s, bookseller George Robertson gave Mitchell first right of refusal on any item of Australiana, and David Angus, Fred Wymark and Richard Thomson (also of Angus & Robertson) pursued desirable objects for their best customer with as much alacrity as he did. For example, Angus, coming across a workman in Rowcroft’s Cordial Factory in Hunter Street about to burn boxes of manuscript papers belonging to Stuart Donaldson, the first Premier of New South Wales, is said to have quickly rescued these for his best client. Increasingly, DSM would acquire entire formed collections to add to his own, as in the case of the outstanding Pacific Islands printings of the famed Colenso collection, which he acquired in 1899.<sup>32</sup>

By the early 1890s, this unbeatable competitor had come to the attention of Henry Charles Lennox Anderson, the astute Principal Librarian. Anderson realised, as he put it, that he was ‘being cribbed, cabined and confined by a dreadful human bogey whose lair was 17 Darlinghurst Road’ in the race to acquire the choicest volumes of Australian history. There was only one solution: ‘if you couldn’t beat him, win him around.’<sup>33</sup> Anderson asked Rose Scott to arrange an introductory meeting with her cousin. And so from 1895, the Principal Librarian became a weekly visitor at the lair, bringing anything of note to the older man’s interest, arranging purchases in London through the

New South Wales Agent-General's Office and generally acting as his agent and collecting broker for antiquarian items. Over the next ten years, Anderson spent £26,000 on behalf of his client.

This did not go unremarked in government and official circles. In fact in 1900 a Select Committee of the New South Wales Parliament was appointed to investigate Anderson's administration of the Public Library. One of the chief criticisms was his relationship with Mitchell, and the main witness against Anderson was William Dymock, who felt he was being sidelined and treated unfairly in terms of sales and exclusivity. *The Bulletin* commented archly that Anderson's association with Mitchell as his unpaid agent and private secretary was a singular position for a public servant to occupy.<sup>34</sup>

One of the matters before the Committee was a verbal agreement which took place between Mitchell and Anderson on 17 October 1898, when Mitchell stated his intention to bequeath his collection to the Public Library, but only if a new building were provided to house the collection separately under the name of the 'Mitchell Library'. He also indicated his intention to provide an endowment of £30,000, later increased to £70,000, for the purchase of additional books, manuscripts and binding. As confirmation of his intent, Mitchell presented the Public Library with over 10,000 of his non-Australian titles which, for lack of space in the Library itself, were kept in the Principal Librarian's house next door. The government agreed to the offer and conditions, which were promptly incorporated into the 1899 *Library and Art Gallery Act*.<sup>35</sup>

While the 1900 Select Committee supported the need for a new building, it took another six years for construction to begin. Frail and ill as he was, by 1905 Mitchell let it be known that if he did not hear something forthwith from the Premier, the Honourable JH Carruthers, his collection would go to the University of Sydney, or even be sold. George Robertson's evidence to the 1905 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works finally gave the parliamentarians a real understanding of the unparalleled generosity and value of Mitchell's offer. Robertson gave an impassioned speech in support of the library becoming a public collection:

When I hear the money value of the Mitchell Collection spoken of, I always feel tempted to break the peace. When safely housed by the State, its value will be what it is worth to New South Wales and the world at large, not what a Carnegie or a Pierpont Morgan would be prepared to pay for it.<sup>36</sup>

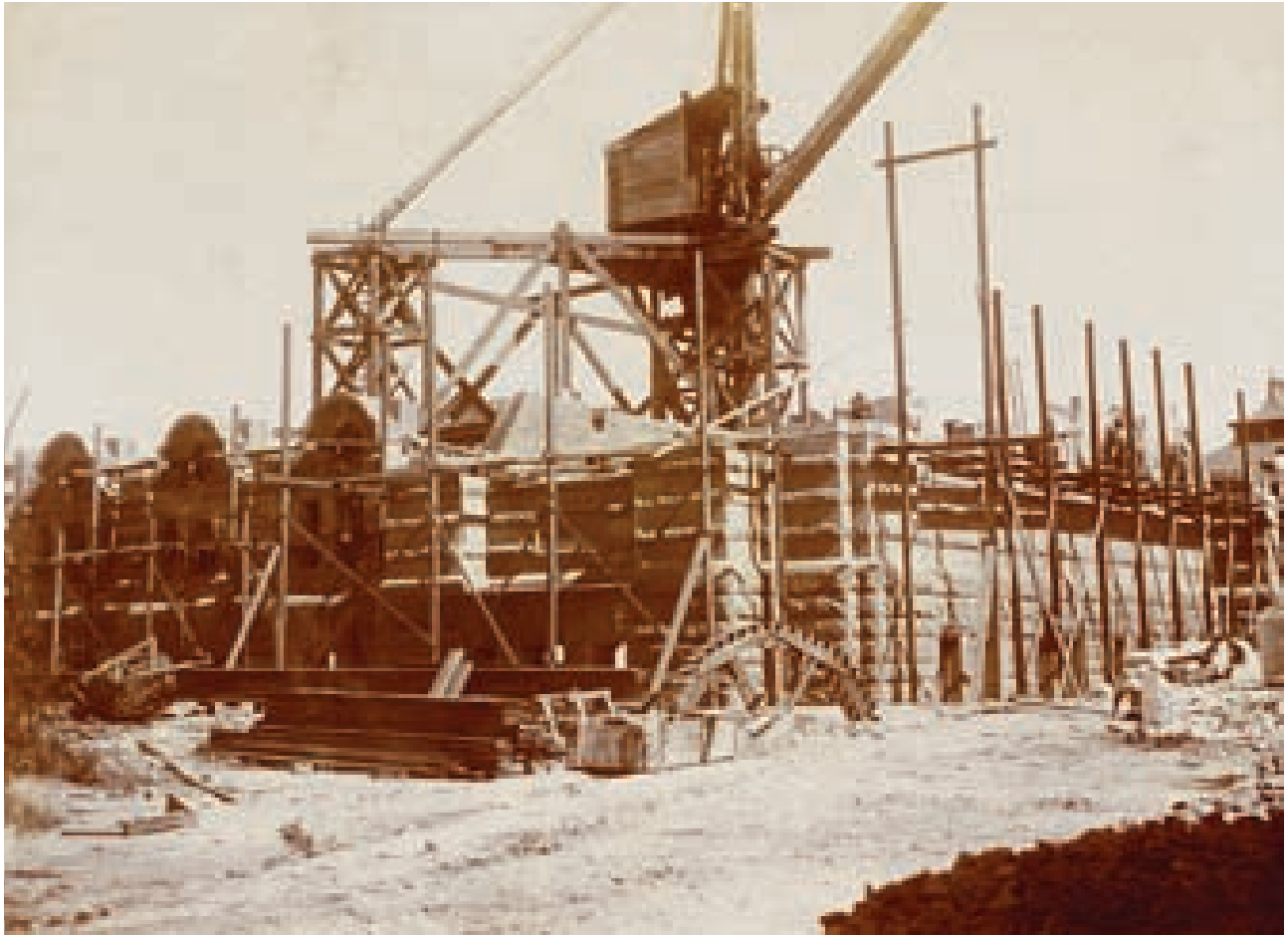
Carruthers capitulated, immediately referring the matter of a building to the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Works, and engaged the Government Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon and his office to begin drawing up plans.<sup>37</sup> The site was next to Parliament, facing the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Domain, where once Governor Macquarie's



Bedroom (detail), 17 Darlinghurst Road, photograph by NSW Government Printing Office, Sydney, August 1907, ML V1/Res Mit/5a



One of David Scott Mitchell's revolving bookcases filled with some of his books. ML XR 37



The Mitchell Library [construction] in progress, photographic print, photographer unknown, 17 November 1906, ML SPF/ Sydney-Libraries-Mitchell Library, 1906 (3)

Light Horse Barracks, later the Female School of Industry, had stood. The foundation stone was laid by the Premier on 11 September 1906.<sup>38</sup>

At the age of 70, Mitchell was by this time too ill to attend the ceremony, but theoretically could have seen the walls of the building rising across Woolloomooloo Bay and the Domain from the upstairs rear windows of his Darlinghurst terrace.

Fred Wymark recalled Mitchell's last days:

I can see him lying on his bed with pillows all around him hardly able to move when he asked me to put some pillows at his back so he could sit up and look at a book I had taken up. His eyes were just as alert as ever, but he looked so fragile, his wrists no thicker than two of my fingers. His life from day to day was still the hope that something would turn up to add to his pleasure and make an addition to his collection.

Wymark was able to give his old patron one final moment of delight. The collector had longed for, but never found a copy of Barron Field's *First fruits of Australian poetry*, the first book of verse published in Australia. On receiving it, Mitchell is reputed to have said: 'I did not think





we would ever see this. I have been looking for it for years.’<sup>39</sup> Wymark continued: ‘With this remark he gave a gasp and fell back on his pillow. I thought he was dead and was going to tell Sarah (the housekeeper), when a voice came from the pillow “So where were we Fred?”’ Mitchell’s character and determination emerge even more strongly in another remark he made to Wymark: ‘If you hear anyone say I was converted, say I died mad.’

Silver trowel with ivory handle, made by Fairfax & Roberts, Sydney. Used by the Hon JH Carruthers, Premier of New South Wales, to lay the foundation stone of the Mitchell Library, 11 September 1906, ML R 915

Dr Robert Scot Skirving, Mitchell’s medical practitioner, recalled the circumstances in less romantic terms in his memoirs, where he wrote of his dismay at the general dereliction — and the dusty, untidy state of the unruly collections crammed into every corner — of the house at 17 Darlinghurst Road at the end of Mitchell’s life.<sup>40</sup>

David Scott Mitchell died of pernicious anaemia and general debility at the age of 71, on 24 July 1907. He was buried under lemon-scented eucalypts in the Church of England section of the Rookwood Cemetery. Only a small group attended the graveside: a few relations, several of the Trustees of the Public Library, HCL Anderson (who was then no longer Principal Librarian), his successor, FM Bladen, some members of the Government and George Robertson. On 25 July Premier Carruthers



Hallway, 17 Darlinghurst Road, photograph by NSW Government Printing Office, Sydney, August 1907, ML V1/Res Mit/1a

took the unusual step of issuing a *Government Gazette Extraordinary* in commemoration of:

the decease of David Scott Mitchell Esquire M.A., an old and worthy colonist, and one of the greatest benefactors this State has known — to whose memory is due an everlasting debt of gratitude for the noble work he has undertaken in gathering together all available literature associated with Australia, and especially with New South Wales, and in making provision that the magnificent collection should, for all time, on his death, become the property of the people of his native state.<sup>41</sup>

In his way and in his fashion, DSM therefore continued a long-established family association with libraries, begun by his father as a committee member of the Australian Subscription Library (which became the Public Library), from 1832 to 1853, then vice-president and president from 1856 to 1869.



### **‘A national monument to his memory’<sup>42</sup>**

Drawing Room, 17 Darlinghurst Road,  
photograph by NSW Government Printing  
Office, Sydney, August 1907, ML V1/Res Mit/8

The new Mitchell Library building was far from complete — it did not open its doors until March 1910. Before the great collections were moved from 17 Darlinghurst Road to temporary quarters, a series of photographs were taken.<sup>43</sup> As Bertram Stevens, another of the exclusive few permitted weekly visits, observed, the books were piled on every available surface, crowded to the ceiling in the hallways, even taking up space in Sarah Milligan’s attic.<sup>44</sup> On the walls, through the gloom, the gilded frames of Mitchell’s favourite Australian artworks — including examples by Conrad Martens, Oswald Brierly, ST Gill and others — could be detected. In the sitting room hung the large, somewhat romanticised portrait by Marshall Claxton of David’s shrewd, worldly-wise father whose eye for coal lands laid the foundations for it all.

The best contemporary accounts of Mitchell’s collection are those of Arthur Jose and Bertram Stevens, published in *The Lone Hand* in September and October 1907.<sup>45</sup> These give detailed descriptions of the range of DSM’s interests and add substantially to Fred Wymark’s anecdotal reminiscences.



Mitchell Library opening ceremony, 8 March 1910, photographic print, photographer unknown, reproduced in the *Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 9 March 1910, ML SPF/Sydney-Libraries-Mitchell Library, 1910 (1)

What occurred next after his death — the enormous task of removing the fabled collection from every corner, nook and cranny of 17 Darlinghurst Road — has affected generations of librarians working in the Mitchell Library right up to the present day, and will continue to do so for years to come.

Mitchell's house was far from well maintained — it was damp and required considerable repairs. The collection, aptly described as a 'fortress of books', needed to be removed posthaste, so it was hurriedly packed into metal damp-proof boxes, loaded onto drays and transported down William Street to the vaults of the Bank of Australasia in George Street until the new Mitchell Library stacks were ready for occupation.

As reported in the 1909 *Annual report of the Public Library*, the final move to the collection's new home was completed by 1 April 1908. The critical point for posterity is that no inventory of the contents was made at the time the collection was moved, and Mitchell had not maintained catalogue lists of his collection since *Australiana* had become his obsession in the 1880s, and it had grown exponentially. Mitchell's pictures, a very small component of the whole collection, comprising



some several hundred items, were described in a basic inventory before being temporarily housed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.<sup>46</sup>

[Mitchell Library Reading Room],  
photographic print, photographer unknown,  
ML SPF Sydney-Libraries-Mitchell Library,  
1911-12

The Mitchell Library was officially opened on 8 March 1910 by Lord Chelmsford, Governor of New South Wales, and his speech on that day is just as relevant almost 100 years later:

As I have pleaded for reverence in the valuing of this library, so I would plead for reverence in using it ... And may I hope that those who are going to mine this quarry will do so in the scientific search of truth ... I believe that ninety-nine out of a hundred of us who go into a library go there not to find out what is the truth, but to find out something that is going to support our preconceived ideas and notions. In this matter we must be students in the school of science ... [to] pursue truth regardless of prepossessions, and regardless of established theories.<sup>47</sup>

After the opening of the Mitchell Library and the installation of the collection in its new home, the Library soon started acquiring new additions. These were incorporated into the Dewey Decimal System sequences of arrangement without any catalogue annotations to distinguish 'DSM' and 'non-DSM' items. The original DSM items were



Bookplate of David Scott Mitchell, with his family's coat-of-arms and the mottoes of the Mitchell family: 'Deo Favente' ('By God's favour'); and of the Scott family, 'Eureka' ('I have found it')

therefore merged with the new acquisitions, and the ability to identify Mitchell's original collection as a whole was soon lost.

Due to the haste with which the original items were removed from 17 Darlinghurst Road, it appears more than likely that the number of items given as 60,000 in the 1911 *Annual report of the Public Library* was not an accurate count and over-estimated the total in Mitchell's collection. The counts of pictorial material, including framed paintings, watercolours, prints and drawings (both separate and in albums and portfolios), miniatures and photographs, and of the maps and the manuscript items have proved more consistent in matching with the original figures — partly because of the lesser quantities and partly because there was, at least for the pictures, an inventory of part of the collection.

Mitchell's coins, medals, tokens, stamps and bookplates have been harder to reconcile, again for the lack of an original inventory and the intermingling with later additions. As with many of his later acquisitions, in 1899 Mitchell had purchased an extant, formed collection of coins, medals and tokens amassed by the anthropologist Walter Edmund Roth. A major portion of the Mitchell numismatic collection was quietly transferred to the Australian Museum between 1935 and 1937, in exchange for items from the great James Cook collection acquired in 1887 by Sir Saul Samuel. The numismatic collection was later transferred to the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences in 1961.<sup>48</sup>

## Capturing the collection

If we come forward almost a century, leaving in our wake all the dramas and stories of the years in between, in mid-2002, with the centenary of Mitchell's death and his bequest approaching, a four-year project was approved by the Library Council of New South Wales, with funding provided by the State Library Foundation.<sup>49</sup> The project's stated aim was to identify and provide electronic bibliographic records and appropriate preservation of the material contained in the Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, the terms of which were described in his last will and testament dated 14 February 1901, with a codicil of 30 October 1905.<sup>50</sup>

The initial task was to agree upon an irrefutable method of identifying DSM collection items. His bookplate pasted onto the front endpapers of many volumes seemed at first a clear indication of his ownership. But it was not to be so, as the bookplate had also been affixed to some of the early non-DSM additions after the opening of the Mitchell Library. In the end, there was only one possibility for printed and manuscript volumes. We needed to work along every shelf, checking every volume for the only definite proof of possession: the firm, clear signature of David Scott

Mitchell, usually inscribed in the top right corner of one of the preliminary pages or the title page of every volume he had ever owned.



Signature of David Scott Mitchell, as it appears, usually top right on the title page, in the volumes of his collection

The question then was how to find suitable people to undertake this gargantuan and extremely time-consuming task. As so often in the Library's recent history, our wonderful volunteers stepped in, and a small but dedicated team was recruited and trained in identification and handling techniques. They quickly formed an enthusiastic band researching and locating further information about the elusive character at the heart of the collection.

To catalogue the items once they had been identified, a new team drawn from our experienced staff was established. Every volume was given preservation treatment in a new book conservation laboratory set up in the Library's Collection Preservation Branch. The Mitchell Bequest Project concluded in June 2007, leaving us with the ability to gather together once again — through the newly created electronic records — the contents of the house in Darlinghurst Road.

For someone whose name has become world famous, David Scott Mitchell the man is remarkably elusive, with most of the details of his life and personality revealed only by anecdotal evidence. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that this is exactly as Mitchell wanted it, and that he would have concurred with the famous tribute to Christopher Wren in St Paul's Cathedral, London — *'si monumentum requiris, circumspice'*, 'if you seek a monument, look around you' — as Joseph Carruthers remarked at the laying of the commemoration stone of the Mitchell Library.<sup>51</sup> That Mitchell was more than capable of making his intentions known is obvious when studying his last will and testament in which, with admirable clarity and perspicacity, he defined the future in perpetuity for his collection of Australiana:

I give and bequeath to the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales all my books, pictures, engravings, coins, tokens, medals and manuscripts ... upon the trust and condition that the same shall be called and known as 'The Mitchell Library' and shall be permanently arranged and kept for use in a special wing or set of rooms dedicated for that purpose ... so that the Mitchell Library may be permanently kept separately from and so as to avoid intermixture at any time with other books and collections and ... that the said Mitchell Library shall be managed and conducted in all respects according to the rules for the time being in force in the British Museum as far as the same are or may be applicable to this bequest.<sup>52</sup>

Those of us who are the present-day custodians of the Mitchell Library, and therefore part of the long continuum extending from 1910 into the future, should always be mindful of these clear and precise words, which are as relevant today as when they were first written.



Mitchell Library, photographic print,  
photographer unknown, December 1923,  
ML Q027.5/M, vol. 3, p. 101

Every morning when the Mitchell Library opens its doors, or when online researchers visit its website catalogue, the vision of David Scott Mitchell to provide public access to the sources of Australian history lives on, just as his foresight within his own lifetime led to his collecting historical material of primary significance to this country at a time when few others were interested. The benefits of this prescience have led to the great institution we know today, and it is our duty and our charge to ensure that we maintain its relevance and continuance for present and future generations.

**Elizabeth Ellis**

Mitchell Librarian

June 2007



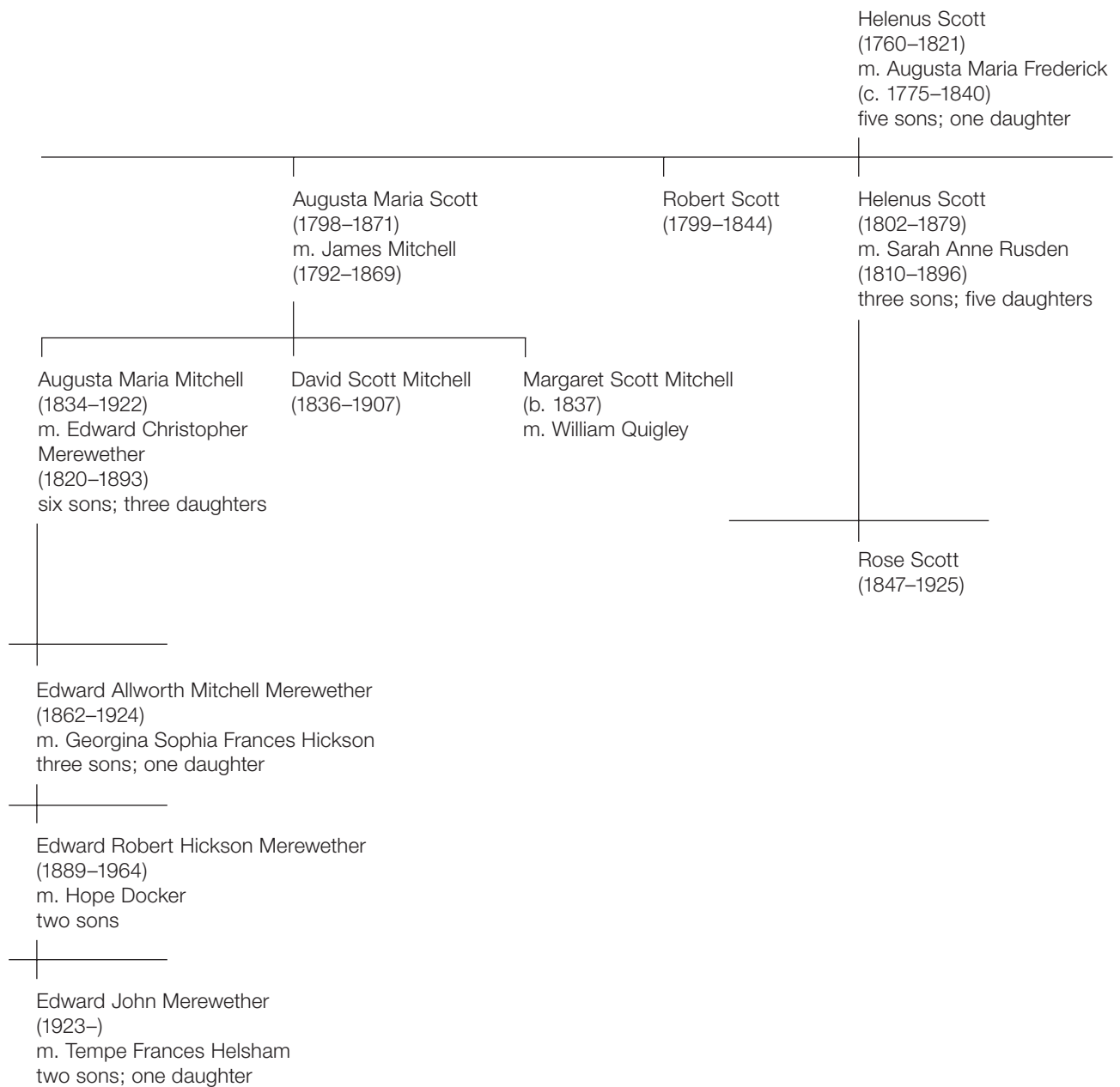
## Notes

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- The best images of Cumberland Place (the house and the view) at the time it was purchased by Mrs Scott are two watercolours by Charles Rodius, painted in 1831 (ML SSV\*/SpColl/Rodius 1 and 14). For a photograph of the house just prior to its demolition, see ML PXA 679, no. 617.
- EJ Merewether, 'David Scott Mitchell's wherewithal: Parts one and two', *Volunteers' Voices*, *State Library of NSW*, August and December 2002.
- The most comprehensive account of David Scott Mitchell's life to date is in Anne Robertson, *Treasures of the State Library of New South Wales: The Australiana collections*, Sydney: Collins in assoc. with the State Library of NSW, 1988, chapter 1: 'David Scott Mitchell: A passion for collecting'.
- Daniel Defoe, *The life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe...*, Edinburgh: Fraser & Co., 1837 (ML DSM 823.5/D314/3K1). Inscribed on front endpaper: 'To D.S. Mitchell from J. Mitchell 19th March 1843'.
- Bertram Stevens, 'The Mitchell Library', *The Lone Hand*, 1 October 1907, p. 581.
- Extract from University of Sydney minutes, 4 September 1854, typescript copy (ML DOC 2513).
- Portrait of David Scott Mitchell, November 1870, carte-de-visite photograph taken by BC Boake, Sydney (ML PXA 1009/2).
- See Judith A Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and revision in feminism*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994, chapters 1 and 2. For a portrait of Rose Scott at this time (1864), see the carte-de-visite photograph taken by Croft Brothers, Sydney (ML PXA 1009/7).
- Letter from DS Mitchell to Rose Scott, 9 July 1865, Papers of Rose Scott (ML ref. A1437, pp. 25–28).
- ibid., 13 April 1865, pp. 21–24. Emily Manning married solicitor Henry Heron (or Hiron) in 1873; they had six sons and a daughter. She became an author and poet, writing under the pseudonym, 'Australie'. See Sally O'Neill, 'Manning, Emily Matilda (1845–1890)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 5 ..., Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1974, p. 204.
- Letter from Sir John Young to Mrs James Mitchell, 9 August 1869, Papers of Dr J Mitchell (ML A2026, pp. 295–98).
- Mitchell, DS, Poems, manuscript (ML refs. B1552 and Am121/1).
- Letter from DS Mitchell to Rose Scott, undated, Papers of Rose Scott (ML ref. A1437, p. 273b). The contents imply that relations between the cousins were complex. Mitchell wrote:  
I have already told you, and I now repeat it, that in all human probability I shall never ask anyone to share my lot ... I have never told you I cared for you, I have never asked if you cared for me, I have never intentionally done anything to make you do so ... I could not understand, nor can I now, what there is to tell your parents. We are not engaged. You are as free as the air.
- EJ Merewether, op. cit., p. 5.
- EJ Merewether, 'Sites of David Scott Mitchell's residences', unpublished manuscript, c. 1990–91 (ML ref. PXA 902/1–14).
- Last will and testament of David Scott Mitchell, typescript, p. 1 (ML Safe3/20a).
- GD Richardson, 'David Scott Mitchell: The T.D. Mutch Memorial Lecture 1961', *Descent*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1961.
- See DS Mitchell Papers, ML ref. A1461, pp. 368–69 for typescript memorandum dated 20 February 1924 by WH Ifould: '... on 8 November 1923, Miss Rose Scott wrote objecting to the repetition of stories relating to the founder of the Mitchell Library, and particularly to the statement that David Scott Mitchell withdrew from the society of his fellow men owing to an early love affair which went awry ...'
- Frederick Wymark, 'David Scott Mitchell', 1939, introduction, typescript, p. 4 (ML Am121/1).
- DS Mitchell, Catalogues of books in his collection, manuscript (ML C368–71; C394).
- Wallace Kirsop, *Australian Journal of French studies*, vol. VI, 1969, p. 341, fn. 21; vol. XX, 1983, p. 254; vol. XXX, 1993, p. 149.
- GD Richardson, op. cit., p. 8.
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- Bertram Stevens, 'David Scott Mitchell', 1919, manuscript (ML ref. C373, p. 34).
- Frederick Wymark, op. cit., 1939, p. 5
- Portraits of David Scott Mitchell, 1893, etchings by Lionel Lindsay after sketches by Walter Syer (ML DLPX 131/39).
- HCL Anderson, op. cit., p. 48.
- Frederick Wymark, op. cit., 1939, p. 19.
- ibid., pp. 14–18.
- HCL Anderson, op. cit., p. 2.
- AGS [AG Stephens], 'N.S.W. Public Library', *The Bulletin*, 9 November 1905, in Mitchell Library Press Cuttings, &c, vol. 1, p. 134 (ML Q027.5/M).
- For a comprehensive selection of press reports on the Select Committee, see Mitchell Library Press Cuttings, vol. 1 (ML Q027.5/M).
- George Robertson, quoted in JR Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 146.
- NSW Parliament Standing Committee on Public Works, *Report ... with minutes of evidence relating to the proposed Mitchell Library ...* Sydney, 1905.
- The mallet and silver trowel presented to the Premier on the occasion of the laying of the foundation plaque, 11 September 1906, are in the Mitchell Library collections (ML R 915). At the time of the Public Library extensions, the plaque was removed from its original position under the north-west window of the Mitchell Wing to the Macquarie Street frontage above the Mitchell memorial window.
- Frederick Wymark, op. cit., 1939, introduction, pp. 3–4; p. 3.
- Ann Macintosh (ed.), *Memoirs of Dr Robert Scot Skirving 1859–1956*, Darlinghurst, NSW: Foreland Press, 1988, pp. 258–60.
- See Mitchell Library Press Cuttings, vol. 2, p. 18 (ML Q027.5/M). Also *New South Wales Government Gazette Extraordinary*, no. 88, 25 July 1907.
- Professor Mungo MacCallum, Speech on the opening of the Mitchell Library, 8 March 1910, 'The opening of the Mitchell Library', *Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday, 9 March 1910, p. 11.
- David Scott Mitchell — selection of photographs of his residence at 17 Darlinghurst Road, 1907 (ML SV1/Res/Mit/1, 6, 7; V1/Res/Mit/1a, 6b, 7a, 9a).
- Bertram Stevens, op. cit., 1919, p. 3.
- Bertram Stevens, op. cit., 1 October 1907, pp. 581–55; Arthur W Jose, 'David Scott Mitchell', *The Lone Hand*, 2 September 1907, pp. 465–70.
- Lists of pictorial material bequeathed by David Scott Mitchell and deposited for safekeeping with the [then] National Gallery of New South Wales, typescript, 1 October 1907 – 25 June 1908 (ML MSS 4344).
- Lord Chelmsford, Speech on the opening of the Mitchell Library, Sydney, 8 March 1910, quoted in Sally Warhaft (ed.), *Well may we say ... speeches that made Australia*, Melbourne: Black Inc., c. 2004.
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- Mitchell Bequest Project, State Library of New South Wales Executive Papers, 4 June 2002, agenda item 6 (File no. 4510).
- The Mitchell will: extracts relevant to the Library, typescript (ML Q027.5/21A1).
- Joseph Carruthers, Address by the Premier, quoted in FM Bladen, *Historical notes: The origin and development of the Public Library of New South Wales, 1826–1906*, Sydney, 1906, p. 82.
- Last will and testament of David Scott Mitchell, op. cit.



David Scott Mitchell, by Norman Carter, 1925, ML 104; oil painting after an 1865 carte-de-visite photographic portrait by Dalton's Royal Photographic Gallery, Sydney

# David Scott Mitchell's family tree



(Right) David Scott Mitchell's armchair,  
ML XR 16; David Scott Mitchell's lorgnette  
(resting on right-hand book page), ML R 15;  
Barron Field, *First fruits of Australian poetry*,  
[Sydney: George Howe, 1819], ML C 674

# The collector collected

'He started collecting books and at last the collection collected him and held him in such a grip that he became a part of his own collection.'

Frederick Wymark, 'David Scott Mitchell', c. 1939, manuscript (ML Am121/1/2-3)





Charles Nicholson, bronze medallion  
by Thomas Woolner, 1854, ML P\*44

## A collector's inheritance

Although the Sydney into which David Scott Mitchell was born on 19 March 1836 was still the administrative centre of a penal colony, increasing numbers of free settlers and the arrival of men with capital were changing the nature of that society. The decade of the 1830s witnessed a dramatic increase in population and more than half this increase was attributable to free immigration.<sup>1</sup>

Bookshops and lending libraries were beginning to be established. Apart from libraries attached to religious institutions, there were, for example, the Australian Subscription Library, established in 1826; the library of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, established in 1833; the Commercial Reading Rooms and Library, established in 1841; and a library especially for young people, opened by William Baker in 1843.

Bookselling was usually a sideline to stationery and printing. William McGarvie (1810–1841) was selling books in Sydney in the late 1820s. William Moffitt (1802–1874) established himself as a stationer and bookbinder in 1833 and also sold books. In 1832, the explorer and surveyor George William Evans (1780–1852) set up as a bookseller and stationer and published one of the earliest Australian novels, *A love story*, by William Christie, in 1841.

In January 1835, the brothers James (1808–1844) and Samuel Tegg (1813–1847+) opened a bookshop in George Street. They were sons of Thomas Tegg, bookseller of Cheapside, London. *The Colonist* of 26 March 1835 said of this establishment that it was 'not unworthy in appearance of the British Metropolis itself'.<sup>2</sup> This may be considered the first serious bookshop in Sydney.

There were also private libraries, some quite extensive.

Sir Charles Nicholson (1808–1903) was collecting rare books and antiquities as early as 1845. A three-day sale of his library took place in Melbourne in May 1861. Unfortunately, no catalogue has survived.<sup>3</sup>

Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse (1806–1873), lawyer and literary patron, collected one of the best libraries of classical, British and European literature in the colony. His library of 3600 titles was bought from his widow by Thomas Walker, a banker, and donated to Sydney University in 1878.

William Augustine Duncan (1811–1885), journalist and public servant, migrated to New South Wales in 1837. Multilingual, he was well read in modern and classical literature and in 1843 established *Duncan's Weekly Register, of Politics, Facts and General Literature*. He amassed a library of 3200 titles. Books with his bookplate which were later acquired by David Scott Mitchell include Polydore Vergil's *Proverbiorum*



George Street looking south, watercolour by John Rae, 1842, showing JJ Moore's bookstall at right, DG SV\*/Sp Coll/Rae/8

*libellus* published in Venice in 1498;<sup>4</sup> a 1765 Dublin edition of Sir John Vanbrugh's plays;<sup>5</sup> James Jarves's *History of the Hawaiian Islands* published in Honolulu in 1847<sup>6</sup> and Victorien Sardou's *Les pommes du voisin* published in 1865.<sup>7</sup>

George Bennett (1804–1893), medical practitioner and naturalist, built up a large library ranging from rare early printings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to contemporary drama. It was sold after his death, having been rejected by Sydney University which refused the £2000 asking price.

The personal library of Dr James Mitchell (1792–1869), David Scott Mitchell's father, was extensive. A notebook he kept categorises his books at June 1858. At that date, he owned 1231 volumes divided into the following categories: Divinity, 286; Law, 29; Scientific, 150; Voyages and Travels, 114; History and Lives, 154; Novels, 211 and Miscellaneous, 287.<sup>8</sup> We know many of the titles because they passed to his son.

Dr Mitchell's library included a complete edition of the works of Jane Austen published in 1833;<sup>9</sup> an edition of Horace's works in Latin published in 1817;<sup>10</sup> a French edition of Plutarch's *Lives* published in



Photograph of William Augustine Duncan, ML PX\*D624 no. 3



Portrait of Augusta Maria Scott née Frederick, watercolour on ivory miniature, 1820, ML MIN 353

1778 in 14 volumes;<sup>11</sup> Samuel Dunham's *History of Poland* published in 1831;<sup>12</sup> the fourth edition of Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the philosophy of the human mind* published in 1811;<sup>13</sup> the second edition of Charles Burney's *The present state of music in France and Italy ...* published in 1773<sup>14</sup> and a ten-volume edition of the works of John Locke published in 1823.<sup>15</sup>

Dr Mitchell gave his son a copy of *Robinson Crusoe* for his seventh birthday in 1843. It was an Edinburgh edition published in 1837 and may have been from his own library, as it appears a signature has been erased and it could well be the 'J. Mitchell' with which Dr Mitchell invariably signed his books.<sup>16</sup>

Dr James Mitchell had married Augusta Maria Scott (1798–1871) in August 1833 and, some time afterwards, they moved to his mother-in-law's home, Cumberland Place, on Bunker's Hill (The Rocks).

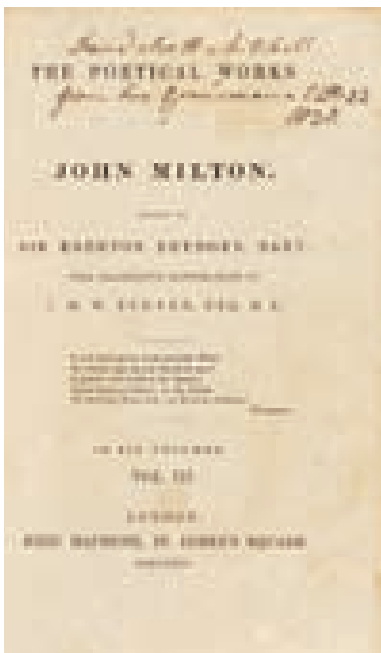
This house had been purchased in 1832 by his mother-in-law, a widow, another Augusta Maria Scott (c. 1775–1840), when she arrived from England with her daughter.

Augusta Maria Scott (senior) was the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Frederick and inherited some of the immense wealth which had been amassed by her ancestor Sir John Frederick, Lord Mayor of London in 1662, a 'prince of merchants'. She brought a personal library with her to Sydney and continued to acquire further volumes right up until her death in 1840.

Augusta Maria was certainly intent on fostering a love of books and literature in her young grandson. While his father was content with giving his seven year old the entirely appropriate *Robinson Crusoe*, Augusta Maria gave her grandson a six-volume edition of the poetical works of John Milton when he was just two years and seven months.<sup>17</sup> The books are inscribed 'David Scott Mitchell from his Grandmama 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct<sup>br</sup> 1838', though the significance of this date is unknown. The volumes included 'imaginative illustrations by JMW Turner' and thereby combined Augusta Maria's love of art with her love of literature. The seed grew. David Scott Mitchell read widely in, and collected extensively, English literature including several editions of Milton. Few grandmothers have been as audaciously perspicacious in their gifts.

Augusta Maria's library contained the usual novels and poetry: Oliver Goldsmith's poems;<sup>18</sup> a two-volume edition of Fanny Burney's *Evelina* (1820);<sup>19</sup> and the second edition of Bulwer Lytton's *The disowned* (1829).<sup>20</sup>

However, she ranged further afield. She owned an 1802 edition of *The orations of Demosthenes*;<sup>21</sup> the first edition, 1811, of George Perry's *Conchology ...* with exquisite hand-coloured plates;<sup>22</sup> a biography of

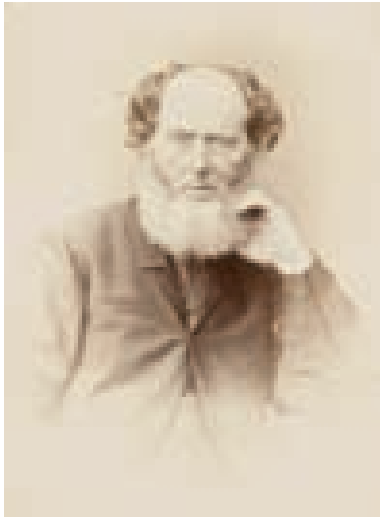


Augusta Maria Scott's inscription in John Milton, *The poetical works ...*, London, J Macrone, 1835, DSM/821.47/M SET v.1–6

(Right) Fan owned by Augusta Maria Scott née Frederick, ivory, 1810–15, ML R545







Photograph of Helenus Scott, 1866–69,  
ML PXC831 no. 10

John Locke;<sup>23</sup> and James Parkinson's book on fossils published in three volumes from 1811 to 1820.<sup>24</sup> Edward Donovan's five-volume *The naturalist's repository, or miscellany of exotic natural history ...* published in 1834 was acquired soon after publication.<sup>25</sup> She certainly purchased some Australiana. George Moore's *Extracts from the letters and journals of George Fletcher Moore ... at the Swan River Settlement ...*, published in London in 1834, was bought in that year.<sup>26</sup>

She was able to read French, as *Les poesies d'Anacreon et de Sapho*<sup>27</sup> (which also included notes in Latin) and *Oeuvres choisies* of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux<sup>28</sup> demonstrate. She also owned Guy Tachard's *Voyage de Siam des pères Jésuites ...* published in 1688.<sup>29</sup>

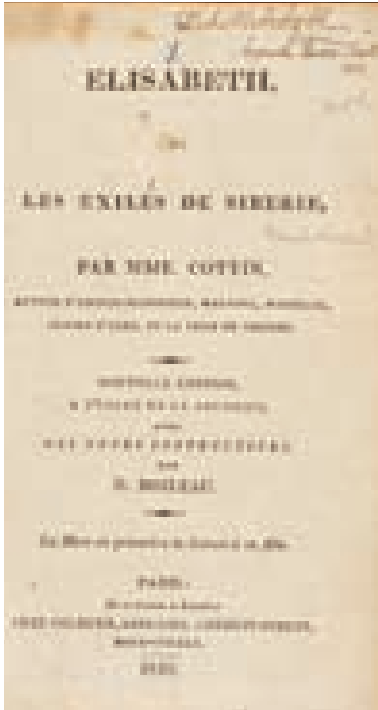
When Augusta Maria Scott died, some of her books passed, in 1842, to her eldest son Robert (1799–1844) who had settled in the Hunter with his brother Helenus (1802–1879) on the property, Glendon, near Singleton. After Robert's early death, some of his library passed to Helenus. But other books, collected by his mother, went direct to Helenus, also in 1842, which perhaps was the year Augusta Maria's estate was settled. Some books were inherited by Augusta Maria's daughter, Augusta Maria Mitchell. Some of these books inherited by David Scott Mitchell's mother and uncles ended up in his collection. But not everything did so and it is probably therefore impossible now to estimate the extent of Augusta Maria's library. For example, at least one volume, now in the Mitchell Library, and bearing the signature of Augusta Maria Scott, was not part of DS Mitchell's collection but was donated in 1940.<sup>30</sup> Another volume is held by Fisher Library, University of Sydney.<sup>31</sup> It does seem clear though that Augusta Maria Scott had a substantial and serious library — probably unusual for a woman in Sydney at this time.

One book, of particular interest, will demonstrate the peregrinations of Augusta Maria Scott's collection. She purchased in 1834 a copy of the second edition of Thomas Dibdin's *A bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour in France and Germany*.<sup>32</sup> Dibdin was at that time the great recorder of, and publicist for, book collecting and whether the acquisition of this book indicates an interest which was passed on to her grandson is impossible to say. But it is a nice thought. This book duly came into the possession of Robert Scott, whose inscription is dated 1842. After Robert's death, it was acquired by Helenus who gave it to David Scott Mitchell in 1874.

Another volume, acquired by Augusta Maria Scott in 1829 and inherited by Helenus Scott in 1842, which passed into David Scott Mitchell's collection presumably on Helenus Scott's death in 1879, is of some interest in the history of bibliophily. It is James Storer's *A description of Fonthill Abbey ...*, published in 1812.<sup>33</sup>

(Right) George Perry, *Conchology ...*,  
London: Printed for W Miller ... , 1811,  
DSMF594/P





Sophie Cottin, *Elisabeth ...*, London: Paris: B Clarke, 1810, DSM/843.69/C

Fonthill Abbey had been built by William Beckford (1760–1844) who had inherited a very large fortune based on West Indian sugar and a substantial book and art collection to which he added. In the late 1790s, he decided to pull down his ancestral home in Wiltshire and build there Fonthill Abbey in the Gothic style and on such a scale that the work took 20 years and was never completed. Beckford purchased Edward Gibbon's entire library of approximately 7000 books and presented this to his physician. He also bequeathed 10,000 books to his daughter, Susan (1786–1859). Susan had married in 1810 Alexander Douglas, from 1819 the tenth Duke of Hamilton (1767–1852) in the Scottish peerage, and Beckford's books were added to Hamilton's. Hamilton's collection was sold by Sotheby's in July 1882. One of the coups of George Robertson, the bookseller, for David Scott Mitchell was to purchase at this sale for £680 a copy of Theodor de Bry's *Historia Americae ...* published in Frankfurt from 1590 to 1634,<sup>34</sup> which had been originally owned by Beckford. Robertson publicly cited this book as one of the great treasures of the Mitchell Library.<sup>35</sup> A copy sold at auction in London in March 2007 for £244,800 (\$590,500).

Although Augusta Maria Scott probably bought the volume on Fonthill because of the fine engravings by James Storer, it is tantalising to speculate whether she was aware of Beckford's role as a book collector and fascinating that one of Beckford's books, and a great treasure at that, would eventually end up in her grandson's collection.

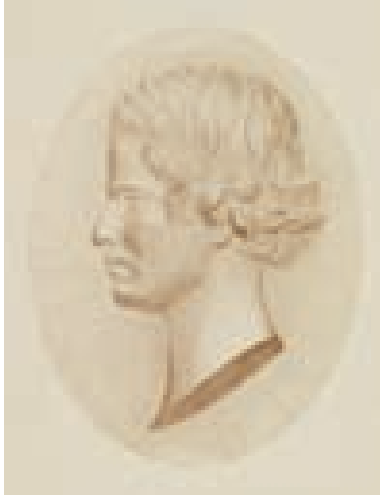
Augusta Maria Scott's daughter, Augusta Maria Mitchell, also added to the books she inherited from her mother: for example, a 1613 edition of the works of Theophrastus<sup>36</sup> in both Greek and Latin and William Drummond's *Origines; or, remarks on the origin of several empires, states and cities ...*, in four volumes.<sup>37</sup>

Augusta Maria Mitchell gave her only son, David, a copy of Sophie Cottin's *Elisabeth: ou, les exilés de Sibérie*.<sup>38</sup> It was an edition especially for children, published in 1810, and is inscribed 'Augusta Maria Scott [as she then was] 1811'. Augusta would have been 13 in 1811 and the book was no doubt aimed at improving her French. David has written, in a youthful hand, 'D.S. Mitchell from' over his mother's inscription so presumably he was given this book at an early age too, also with the idea of improving his French.

David, then, was born into a family of booklovers and collectors. His father has hitherto been cited as a strong influence on Mitchell's development as a book collector. However, it would seem his mother and, through her, his grandmother were also influential. The librarian, HCL Anderson, who visited Mitchell once a week for ten years, wrote that 'Mr Mitchell spoke little of his antecedents, but referred far more frequently to his mother's family, the Scotts, than to his father's family'.<sup>39</sup>

(Right) Theodor de Bry, *Historia Americae ...*, Francofurti: Sumptibus Matth Meriani, 1634, DSM/Q910.8/B SET v. 1–5





Daniel Henry Deniehy, photograph of portrait medallion, ML SPF/H

## The grand obsession

David was educated at St Philip's Grammar School, Church Hill, where he won a number of book prizes for scholastic success.<sup>40</sup> He was among the first intake of students at Sydney University in 1852 and graduated Bachelor of Arts in 1856. The Provost (Chancellor), Sir Charles Nicholson, gave him a copy of a book from his personal library with an elegant Latin inscription wishing him well for the future.<sup>41</sup>

Mitchell was admitted to the Bar in December 1858. Although he never practised, he held on to his law books for a decade, not disposing of them until five months after his father's death in 1869.<sup>42</sup> Was this to appease his father, whose death removed this constraint and provided an inheritance which meant he need never work and could live the life he wanted?

Arthur Jose, who knew Mitchell personally but only as an older man, wrote that Mitchell attended auctions as a boy, using his lunch money as capital, and recounts how the bookseller Dick Lindsay became angry when this young lad bid against him on some choice item.<sup>43</sup>

Whether this is true or not, Mitchell was certainly buying books seriously by 1866 because, in that year, he bought a number of volumes at the auction of the library of Daniel Henry Deniehy (1828–1865).<sup>44</sup>

Daniel Henry Deniehy, a lawyer and man of letters, was eight years older than Mitchell. It seems likely they would have met in the Sydney of the 1850s, particularly as Deniehy had a lot to do with the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, especially its library. He, with others, built it up in the early 1850s to serve tertiary students, as the resources of the newly established University, housed at the Sydney College, in College Street, were inadequate. Mitchell was a member of the School, and attended debates there, and it is likely he used the library while at the University.

Deniehy gave a number of lectures there on poetry and French literature in 1851–53. Both these subjects were of particular interest to Mitchell. Deniehy had completed his legal apprenticeship under Nicol Drysdale Stenhouse, whose fine private library he used. Stenhouse also lectured at the School.

Whatever the links, at the age of 30, and before his father's death while he was still living at Cumberland Place, Mitchell was purchasing books at auction.

A partial catalogue of Mitchell's library, listing works by authors with surnames beginning A to Sc, written in Mitchell's hand, has survived.<sup>45</sup> Internal evidence suggests it was compiled over a period of time, though the length of this period is unclear. It could be months or years.

(Right) Inscription in JFW Herschel, *Outlines of astronomy*, London: Longman, Brown, and Longmans, 1849, DSM/520/H: 'S'. Philips Grammar School/ Dec. 18 1850/ Presented to David S. Mitchell/ by the Rev<sup>d</sup>. Rob<sup>t</sup>. L. King/ as an acknowledgment of the Satisfactory progress made by him in Classics during the year 1850; with an Earnest hope that the information which he has already acquired will be made the foundation of a solid and good Education'

St Philips Grammar School  
Dec 18. 1850.

Presented to David S. Mitchell  
by the Rev<sup>d</sup> Rob<sup>t</sup> L. King

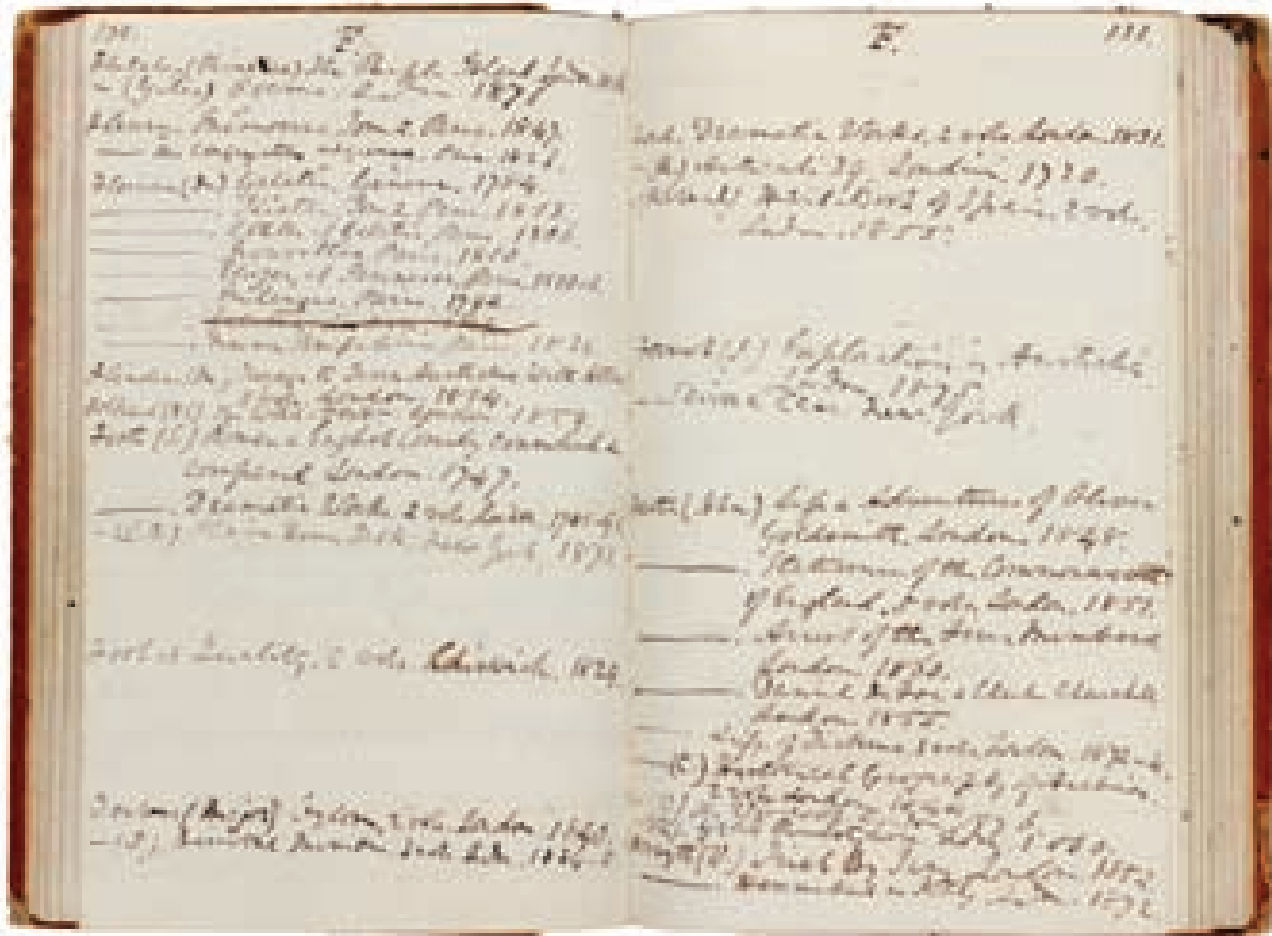
as an acknowledgment of the  
satisfactory progress made by  
him in Classics during the  
year 1850; with an earnest hope  
that the information which he has  
already acquired will become the  
foundation of a solid and good Education.

OUTLINES

or

A S T R O N O M Y.





Catalogue of DS Mitchell's library in his hand, c. 1877, ML C369

The latest publication date for any of the volumes listed is 1877. It may have been compiled at the time of Mitchell's removal to 17 Darlinghurst Road, which was in that year.<sup>46</sup>

Mitchell's collecting interests were wide, including medieval manuscripts, early printed books, Elizabethan drama and voyage literature, the standard writers of the eighteenth century, and nineteenth-century poetry and fiction. The theatre was a lifelong passion. He had performed in some private theatricals in Sydney when young and avidly collected published plays all his life. There are many Australian books in this catalogue, though still a small percentage of the total collection.

(Right) Inscription in Isocrates, *Isokratis=Isocratis: Orations et epistolae*, Parisiis: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1846-47, DSM/Q885.4/1: 'Davidi Scott Mitchell/ Baccalaurei in Artibus gradum/ consecuto/ fausta et felicia omnia/ precatus/ Carolus Nicholson/ Universitatis Sidneiensis/ Praepositus/ Comitii Maximis' [To David Scott Mitchell, graduate in Bachelor of Arts, a prayer for all future happiness and good fortune from Charles Nicholson, head of the Great Assembly of the University of Sydney]

Mitchell's collection contains the standard books on book collecting, some of which he had acquired by the time this catalogue was compiled around 1877. Listed in the catalogue is a copy of Thomas Frognall Dibdin's *Bibliomania, or, book madness*, 1811.<sup>47</sup> Inserted in *Bibliomania* is a sheet of notes signed by the London bookseller, Joseph Lilly, and dated February 1864, so perhaps Mitchell acquired the book as early as that date. Listed also in this manuscript catalogue



Davidi Scott Mitchell  
Baccalauri in Artibus gradum  
consecuto  
fanta et felicia omnia  
precatu  
Carolus Nicholson  
Universitatis Simeonis  
Praepositu  
Comitis Maximis.  
A. S. C1817CCCLVI.—



are editions of William Lowndes's *The bibliographer's manual of English literature ...*, the standard work on the subject.<sup>48</sup>

Other similar works were acquired later. He acquired further works by Dibdin, who provided the nineteenth-century collector with his *vade-mecum*. He bought both the second edition, 1814, and the fifth edition, 1860–65, of Jacques-Charles Brunet's classic *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur des livres ...*.<sup>49</sup> Even in the 1890s, when he had been collecting for 30 years, he could not resist John Herbert Slater's *Book collecting: A guide for amateurs*, 1892,<sup>50</sup> though no-one would call him amateur.

Mitchell had the reputation among booksellers as someone knowledgeable about prices who liked to haggle. It is no surprise then to find that he subscribed to *Book prices current* from volume one (1886/7) to volume seven (1892/3).<sup>51</sup>

The Mitchell Library is known as the Australian and Pacific collection *par excellence*. When did Mitchell decide to collect such material comprehensively?

He had always collected some Australian material and, quite early, he realised the value of this. On 19 July 1868, when he was 32, Mitchell wrote to his cousin, Rose Scott:

You ask me if I like Michael's poems — they are fairly written but there is nothing in them. I have got both John Cumberland & Songs without Music in fact I generally get all the Australian literature I come across not so much for intrinsic merit which I am unpatriotic enough not to find in them as that I think some day anything like a complete collection of Australian books will be curious.<sup>52</sup>

James Lionel Michael's *Songs without music* was published in 1857 and *John Cumberland* in 1860.<sup>53</sup> I do not think we can deduce from this statement alone that Mitchell had decided to collect everything about Australia at this stage.

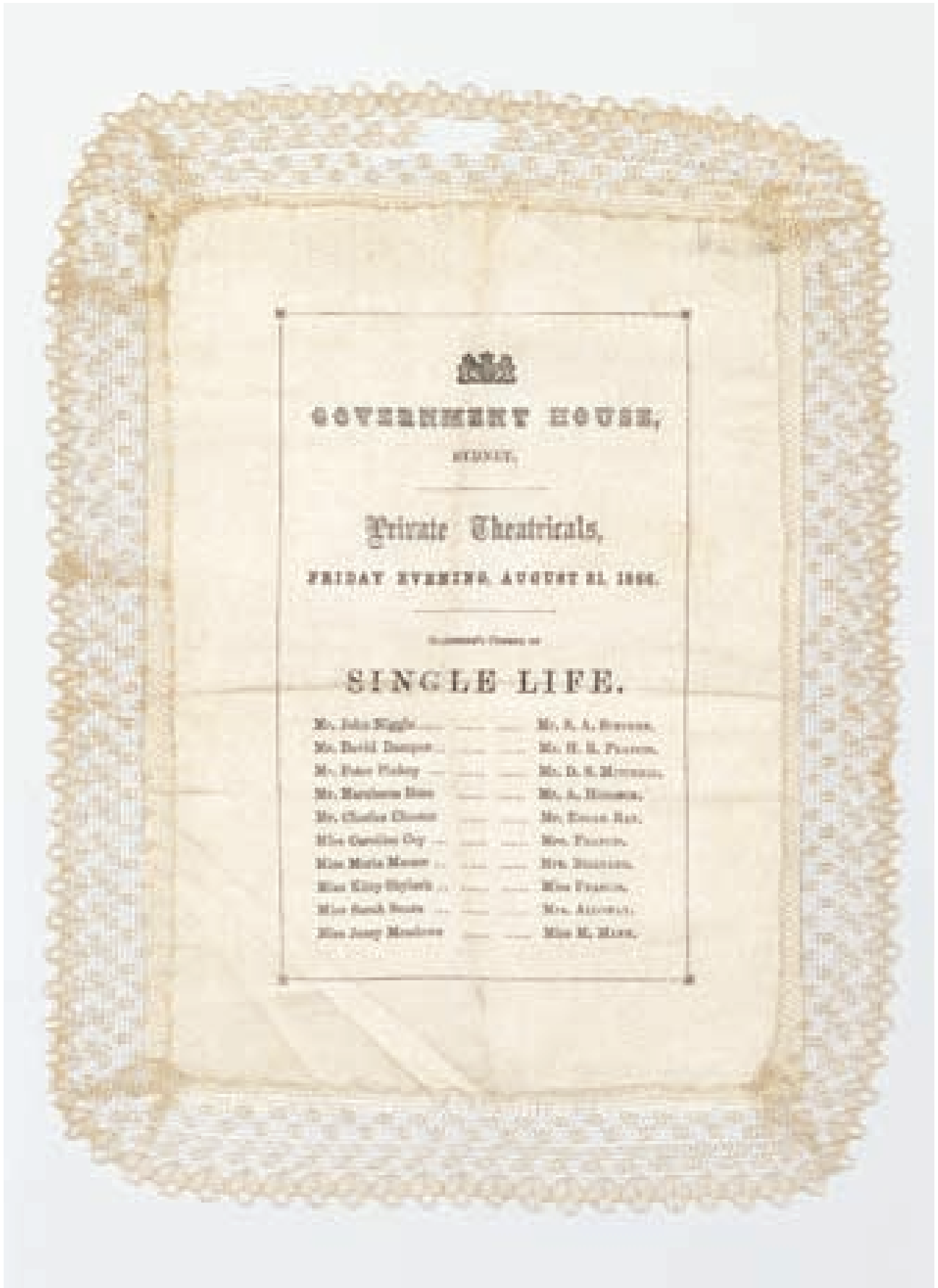
In 1866, GB Barton published his *Literature in New South Wales* which included extensive bibliographies. It was published in Sydney by the Government Printer.<sup>54</sup> Yet Mitchell did not purchase a copy immediately. There are two copies in his collection. One came from Alfred Lee in 1906; the other is a copy formerly owned by Gerard Krefft, Curator at the Australian Museum. It was not given to Krefft until June 1867. We do not know when Mitchell acquired it. But if he were so keen on the bibliography of Australian literature, this book would seem a must to be purchased on publication.

Henry Field Gurner (1819–1883) was Crown Solicitor of Victoria from 1851 until 1880. He assembled a valuable collection of Australiana, a catalogue of which he published in 1878.<sup>55</sup> Yet Mitchell did not acquire a copy.

(Right) Theatrical programme for comedy *Single Life*, silk, 1866, ML ZAm/121/2/1

(p. 40) Letter from David Scott Mitchell to his cousin, Rose Scott, 19 July 1868, ML ZA1437, pp. 79b – 82

(p. 41) George Robertson by Ethel A Stephens, pencil and charcoal, c. 1890s, ML PXD 385 no. 4



**GOVERNMENT HOUSE,  
SYDNEY,**

**Private Theatricals,  
FRIDAY EVENING, AUGUST 21, 1868.**

Presented by

**SINGLE LIFE.**

Mr. John Figgis	Mr. A. A. Stevens.
Mr. David Dunlop	Mr. H. S. Parsons.
Mr. Peter Fisher	Mr. D. S. Morrison.
Mr. Matthew Day	Mr. A. Hanna.
Mr. Charles Clouston	Mr. Edwin Hart.
Miss Caroline O'Byrne	Miss Parsons.
Miss Maria Moore	Mrs. Jackson.
Miss Kitty O'Connell	Miss Francis.
Miss Sarah Scott	Mrs. Abbott.
Miss Jenny Henderson	Miss M. Mann.

them. I have got both John  
Cumberland & Longs without  
Inquire in fact I generally get  
all the Australian literature  
I come across not so much  
for intrinsic merit which  
I am unpatronic enough  
not to find in them as that  
I think some day anything  
like a complete collection  
of Australian books will  
be curious. You are right in  
saying that Carlyle & Browning  
will bear to be read more  
than once. Don't wish to be  
clever it is pleasant to look  
up to those big fellows & there  
is such a thing as being too  
clever for admiration. Good night  
Dearest Rose ever yours affectionately  
Conrad.



It was probably the bookseller, George Robertson, who influenced Mitchell to develop his Australian collection. As soon as Robertson joined in partnership with David Angus to form Angus & Robertson in 1886 he started to promote Australiana and in 1888 he would begin publishing in this field. Mitchell was a known book collector and Robertson a canny bookseller as well as being passionate about Australiana. It would be good business to interest Mitchell in this area. However, from what we know of Mitchell's character, Robertson could not have done this unless Mitchell wanted to be interested. It was an area in which Mitchell could achieve mastery. Mitchell was also a proud Australian who, at a time when a voyage 'home' was *de rigueur* among his peers, never left his native land.

In his collecting, Mitchell left no stone unturned. Booksellers in Australia and abroad would seek out material for him. In Australia, Angus & Robertson was prominent. Mitchell's and Robertson's interests were after all a perfect fit. James Tyrrell was in England for Angus & Robertson in 1897 and Robertson wrote to him: 'Do not purchase any Australian books except for Mr Mitchells order ... Mr Mitchell will always give us a profit on such — you know how keen he is and I would be sorry to miss anything of the kind.'<sup>56</sup>

Mitchell also made a weekly round of the bookshops himself, every Monday morning from the early 1880s to the turn of the century, when he was too frail to continue. He ventured not only to the large establishments but to second-hand booksellers where, as Fred Wymark, of Angus & Robertson, said, 'he liked to go through the 3d, 6d, and one shilling boxes ... and he picked up some very nice items in this way'.<sup>57</sup> Sands's *Sydney and suburban directory*, 1889, for example, lists 62 booksellers, mainly in the city. Some of those visited by Mitchell would have been JWR Clarke, William Maddock, JJ Moore & Co., George Robertson & Co. (not to be confused with George Robertson of Angus & Robertson), all in George Street; Angus & Robertson, then in Market Street; William Dymock in King Street; RW Skinner in Castlereagh Street and Turner and Henderson in Hunter Street.

In addition, Mitchell called on those with suitable items. He clearly did this with some panache. He called a number of times at Rhodes, Ryde, the home of Alice Walker, a grand daughter of merchant and landowner, John Blaxland. Walker wrote to him on 16 July 1894: 'Mrs Nixon and my sister, unite with me in kind remembrances to you, & if Lassie, and Rollo, could understand your mention of them they would be proud, I feel sure they will give you a warm reception, when you come to Rhodes.'<sup>58</sup> Generations of Mitchell Library staff have been making similar visits, and receiving similar letters, all in the tradition of the master.

Others approached Mitchell direct with items to sell. He was always astute regarding price. When buying material, he was not swayed by

(Right) James Tyrrell in front of his bookshop, Castlereagh Street, Sydney, watercolour by James Auld, 1907, ML 1167





Angus & Robertson, 89 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, photograph, 1916, ML PXD 376 no. 7



Photograph of George Bennett, 1886, ML PXA 1023

(Right) Letter from Alice O Walker to David Scott Mitchell, 16 July 1894, ML ZA1461, p. 61

hard cases. For example, in 1895, he would not pay the £70 which Mary Harpur, the widow of poet, Charles Harpur, asked for 30 letters from Henry Kendall to her husband.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, he could be generous to good causes when acquisition of material was not involved. For example, he lent Henry Lawson £25 to travel to England in 1900.

When older collectors died, he purchased at the sales of their libraries. When George Bennett died in 1893, for example, his widow almost immediately sold his fine collection to William Dymock, who issued a catalogue of the more routine items. The rarer and more significant items were sold separately.

Mitchell bought nearly 300 books from the Bennett sale and most of these were non-Australian. He had not given up his other collecting interests. It was at this sale that he acquired Shakespeare's Fourth folio of 1685<sup>60</sup> and also John Conolly's *A study of Hamlet*, 1863, which was a presentation copy from the author to Charles Dickens.<sup>61</sup> Drama was still an abiding interest and his zeal for Australiana did not stop his buying dozens of copies of nineteenth-century editions of British and European plays.



Did you make any  
inquiries about the  
Post Stamps, if so, will  
you kindly let us  
know the result.

Mrs. Nixon & my sister,  
write with me in kind  
remembrance to you, &  
if Lizzie, & Prolo, could  
understand your mention  
of them they would be proud,  
I feel sure they will give  
you a warm reception,  
when you come to Rhode.

Yours sincerely,

Alice O. Walker.



Photograph of Alfred Lee, ML MSS 1508

## A peerless benefaction

In 1898, Mitchell indicated to the Trustees of the then Public (now State) Library of New South Wales that he intended to bequeath his collection to that institution with an endowment. In 1899, he handed over 10,025 non-Australian books — estimated at that stage to be one third of his collection — and from then on it would seem devoted himself to Australian and Pacific material with even greater zeal, perhaps exclusively, attempting to round out and complete this part of his collection.

He purchased the 3300-volume Australian collection of Alfred Lee, for £5700 in December 1906, although most of it was duplicate. This was in order to acquire a few notable treasures which were lacunae in Mitchell's own collection. He knew time was running out and money was now of little consequence.

Alfred Lee (1858–1923) was a Sydney businessman and book collector who started collecting Australiana in the late 1880s. Although rivals, he and Mitchell were on friendly terms and they would discuss their respective purchases with each other. According to Lee, he would bring to Mitchell's attention items which he already held or which were too expensive for him.<sup>62</sup>

Lee had a great coup in 1895 when he purchased from London bookdealer, Francis Edwards, the original handwritten journal kept by Sir Joseph Banks on *Endeavour*, 1768–71. This was a crucial item, without which Mitchell's collection would not be complete. There were some other items Lee had which Mitchell needed, particularly several of the memorials written by Pedro Fernandez de Quiros.

One of the conditions of Mitchell's bequest was that his collection must be housed separately and known as the Mitchell Library.

He did not state why he specified this condition, but some influences may have been at work.

Mitchell would have been well aware of the collection of Edward Wise (1818–1865). Wise, who migrated to Sydney in 1855, was a politician and judge and served on the governing body of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts. He was one of the first to collect Australiana and bequeathed his collection to the State. This was the impetus for the Government establishing the Free Public Library in 1869, by taking over the Australian Subscription Library with which Mitchell's father had long been associated. Mitchell was 33 years old when this occurred and it would be a lesson in how a government might be encouraged to action.

Mitchell would also have been aware of the activities of Sir George Grey (1812–1898), explorer, governor, scholar and book collector. Grey had

(Right) Journal kept on board HMS *Endeavour* by Joseph Banks, 1768–71, ML Safe1/12–13

August  
1763

Plymouth

- 25 After having waited in this place ten days, the ship, & every thing belonging to our being all that time in perfect readiness to sail at a moment's warning, we at last got a fair wind, & this day (Sat) 20<sup>th</sup> took in the fore-weigh anchor, & set sail, all in excellent health & spirits, & perfectly prepared, in mind at least, to undergo with cheerfulness any fatigues or dangers that might occur in our intended voyage.
- 26 Wind still fair, but very light breezes, since this been a shoal of those fish, which are particularly call'd Porpoises by the seamen, probably the Celphionus Phocaena of Linnaeus, as their noses are very blunt.
- 27 Wind fair & a fair breeze found the ship to be but a heavy sailer, but probably the indeed we could not expect her to be any other way built, so are oblig'd to set down with this consideration, as a necessary consequence of her form; which is much more calculated for sturgeon, than for sailing.
- 28 Little wind today, in some sea water, which was taken on board to serve a catch, being a very moderate sea & sweet, which I believe is call'd by the name of Porpoise ground. In the evening very calm, with the small



Photograph of Sir George Grey,  
ML PXA 1023 no. 100

been, respectively, governor of South Australia, Cape Colony and New Zealand, and became Premier of New Zealand in 1877. He visited Sydney in 1891 as one of the New Zealand representatives at the Australian Federal Convention, and one wonders whether he took the opportunity of meeting Mitchell.

Mitchell owned copies of Grey's publications including copies of the various catalogues of his library.

In 1863, Grey had given his then collection of 5200 books and manuscripts to the South African Public Library and Museum, Cape Town, on the condition that it be 'kept wholly separate and distinct from the general Collection of Books in the Library'.<sup>63</sup>

Having given one collection away, Grey began collecting again and in 1872, in New Zealand, he indicated that he would donate his collection of over 8000 books and manuscripts to Auckland if a library were established there. The Auckland Free Public Library opened in 1880 but the building was inadequate. Grey then announced in 1882 that he was ready to hand over his library, perhaps knowing full well that no suitable building existed to house it. He outlined the contents of his library in an address in June 1883, a copy of the published version of which was owned by Mitchell.<sup>64</sup> In 1885, the foundation stone for a new building was laid and the new building was opened in March 1887. Grey's books were installed as a separate 'Grey Collection'.

Perhaps it was no accident that Mitchell announced his intentions to the New South Wales Public Library Trustees in October 1898, one month after Grey's death. Grey's *modus operandi* provided a suitable model for Mitchell. Mitchell's collection would also be kept separate and would also provide the impetus for the erection of a new library building.

We are only at the beginning of an analysis of Mitchell's collection and this essay is a first tentative foray. As Elizabeth Ellis has described in her preceding essay, the identification of which books, manuscripts, pictures and maps, now in the Mitchell Library, were part of David Scott Mitchell's original bequest has only recently been completed. We now know the scope and content of his collection. There remains much work to be done in analysing these volumes, their annotations and inscriptions. I suspect that if the elusive Mr Mitchell is to speak to us at all, it will be through his collection. And that is just as he would have wished it.

### **Paul Brunton**

Senior Curator, Mitchell Library

June 2007

## Notes

1. It has been estimated that the population of Australia in 1830 was 70,039 and in 1840, 190,408.
2. George Ferguson, *Some early Australian bookmen*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1978, p. 13.
3. Wallace Kirsop, 'Bookselling and publishing in the nineteenth century', in DH Borchardt and W Kirsop, *The book in Australia: Essays towards a cultural and social history*, Melbourne: Australian Reference Publications in association with the Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Monash University, 1988.
4. Polydore Vergil, *Proverborum libellus*, Impressum Venetiis: per Magistrum[m] Christophorum de Fe[n]sis, 1498 (DSM/473.1/V49, incunabula).
5. John Vanbrugh, *Plays ...*, 2 vols, Dublin: Printed for J Exshaw, and H Saunders, 1765, (DSM/822.47/I/SET v. 1–2).
6. James Jarves, *History of the Hawaiian Islands ...*, Honolulu: Charles Edwin Hitchcock, 1847 (DSM/999.6/J).
7. Victorien Sardou, *Les pommes du voisin ...*, Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1865 (DSM/842.86/S).
8. ML C374.
9. Published in London by Richard Bentley (DSM/823.74/A SET v. 1–4).
10. London: Rodwell et Martin, 1817 (DSM/874.5/H).
11. Maestricht: Jean-Edme Dufour & Philippe Poux, 1778 (DSM/888.8/P SET v. 1–14).
12. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, 1831 (DSM/943.8/D).
13. London: T Cadell and W Davies, 1811 (DSM/150/S).
14. London: Printed for T Becket and Co., ... , 1773 (DSM/780.94/B).
15. John Locke, *The works of John Locke ...*, London: Printed for Thomas Tegg, 1823 (DSM/192.2/4–13).
16. Daniel Defoe, *The life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, Edinburgh: Fraser & Co., 1837 (DSM/823.5/D314/3K1).
17. John Milton, *The poetical works of John Milton/edited by Sir Egerton Brydges ...*, London, J Macrone, 1835 (DSM/821.47/M SET v. 1–6).
18. Oliver Goldsmith, *Poems ...*, London: Printed by W Bulmer, Shakespeare Printing Office, 1804 (DM/821.64/L).
19. Fanny Burney, *Evelina ...*, London: Printed for FC and J Rivington ... , 1820 (DSM/823.66/B/SET v. 1–2).
20. Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The disowned ...*, London: Henry Colburn, 1829 (DSM/823.84/L SET v. 1–3).
21. Demosthenes, *The orations of Demosthenes ...*, 2 vols, London: Printed for Vernor and Hood ... , 1802 (DSM/885.6/D v. 1–2).
22. George Perry, *Conchology, or, the natural history of shells ...*, London: Printed for W Miller ... , 1811 (DSM/F594/P).
23. Peter King, *The life of John Locke ...*, London: Henry Colburn, 1829 (DSM/Q192.2/1).
24. James Parkinson, *Organic remains of a former world ...*, 3 vols, London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1811–1820 (DSM/Q560/P SET v. 1–3).
25. Edward Donovan, *The naturalist's repository, or, miscellany of exotic natural history ...*, London: Printed for the author ... , 1834 (DSM/Q590/D SET v. 1–5).
26. George Fletcher Moore, *Extracts from the letters and journals of George Fletcher Moore ... at the Swan River Settlement ...*, London: Orr and Smith ... , 1834 (DSM/985/6A1). Signed 'Augusta Maria Scott, 1834'.
27. Anacreon, *Les poesies d'Anacreon et de Sapho ...*, Amsterdam: Chez la Veuve de Paul Marret, 1716 (DSM/884.3/A).
28. Nicolas Boileau-Déspreaux, *Oeuvres choisies de Boileau-Déspreaux*, Paris: De l'imprimerie de Didot L'aîné, 1781 (DSM/847.46/B).
29. Guy Tachard, *Voyage de Siam des pères Jésuites ...*, A Amsterdam: chez Pierre Mortier, 1688 (DSM/915.93.2A1).
30. Thomas Hamilton, *Men and manners in America ...*, 2 vols, Edinburgh: William Blackwood ... , 1833 (ML 917.3/M SET v. 1–2).
31. Charles Middleton, *The architect and builder's miscellany ...*, London: Printed for the author ... , 1799 (Fisher Library, University of Sydney, RB4699.1). Inscribed 'Augusta Maria Scott 1829'.
32. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *A bibliographical, antiquarian and picturesque tour in France and Germany*, 3 vols, London: R Jennings and J Major, 1829 (DSM/010/D SET v. 1–3).
33. James Storer, *A description of Fonthill Abbey ...*, London: W Clarke ... , 1812 (DSM/Q726.7/S).
34. Theodor de Bry, *Historia Americae ...*, Francofurti: Sumptibus Matth. Meriani, 1634 [i.e. 1590–1634] (DSM/Q910.8/B SET v. 1–5).
35. New South Wales Parliament, Standing Committee on Public Works, *Report ... with minutes of evidence relating to the proposed Mitchell Library ...*, Sydney, 1905. Robertson, in his evidence, quoted the figure of £880. However, the price inscribed on the book itself is £850.
36. Theophrastus, *Theophrastou tou Eresiou Hapanta ...*, Lugduni Bataurorum: Ex typographio Henrici ab Haestens... , 1613 (DSM/Q580/T).
37. William Drummond, *Origines; or, remarks on the origin of several empires, states, and cities ...*, 4 vols, London: printed by A.J. Valpy... , 1824–29 (DSM/913/D SET v. 1–4).
38. Sophie Cottin, *Elisabeth, ou les exilés de Sibérie*, London: Paris: B Clarke, 1810 (DSM/843.69/C).
39. HCL Anderson, 'Some reminiscences', manuscript dated 29 March 1920, ML A1830.
40. For example, John Frederick William Herschel, *Outlines of astronomy*, London: Longman, Brown and Longmans, 1849 (DSM/520/H).
41. Isocrates, *Isokratis=Isocratis: Orationes et epistolae/recognovit JG Baiter*, Parisiis: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1846–47 (DSM/Q885.4/1).
42. The books were auctioned by Bradley, Newton and Lamb. See Wallace Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia: Individuals and libraries', in W Boyd Rayward (ed.), *Australian library history in context*, Sydney: University of New South Wales, School of Librarianship, 1988.
43. Arthur W Jose, 'David Scott Mitchell', *The Lone Hand*, September 1907, p. 466.
44. Bertram Stevens, 'David Scott Mitchell', manuscript dated 3 May 1919 (ML A 1830, p. 21).
45. ML C369.
46. Some entries have been deleted and were not in Mitchell's collection when it was received by the Library in 1907, presumably removed at some stage by him. A very high percentage of those not deleted were in the collection in 1907, though some were not.
47. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliomania, or, book madness...*, London: Printed for the author, by J M'Creery ... , 1811 (DSM/010.4/D).
48. For example, William Thomas Lowndes, *The bibliographer's manual of English literature...*, London: W Pickering, 1834 (DSM/015.42/L SET v. 1–4).
49. Jacques-Charles Brunet, *Manuel du libraire et de l'amateur des livres ...*, Paris: Brunet, 1814 (DSM/011/B V1–4), and Paris: Firmin Didot frères, fils et Cie, 1860–65 (DSM/Q011/B vol. 1–6).
50. John Herbert Slater: *Book collecting: A guide for amateurs*, London: S Sonnenschein & Co., 1892 (DSM/010/S).
51. *Book prices current*, London: Elliot Stock, 1887–93 (DSM/018.3/1).
52. David Scott Mitchell to Rose Scott, 19 July 1868 (ML ZA1437, pp. 79b – 82).
53. James Lionel Michael, *Songs without music*, (Sydney: no imprint), 1857 and *John Cumberland*, (Sydney: JR Clarke), 1860.
54. GB Barton, *Literature in Australia*, Sydney: Thomas Richards, Government Printer, 1866.
55. *Books on the colonies and colonial publications in possession of Henry Field Gurner, Melbourne, Victoria, 1878*, Stillwell & Co., Printers, Melbourne.
56. George Robertson to James Tyrrell, 16 August 1897 (Angus & Robertson archives, ML MSS 3269/2/3).
57. Frederick Wymark, 'David Scott Mitchell', 1939, introduction, typescript, p. 6 (ML Am121/1).
58. David Scott Mitchell papers, ML ZA1461, p. 61 (DSM/Q580/T).
59. *ibid.*, p. 86.
60. William Shakespeare, *Mr William Shakespear's comedies, histories, and tragedies ...*, London: Printed for H Herringman, E Brewster, and R Bentley, 1685 (DSM/910.4/S).
61. John Conolly, *A study of Hamlet*, London: Edward Moxon & Co., 1863 (DSM/Y15H11/C).
62. Alfred Lee to HCL Anderson, 21 July 1922 (ML ZA 1461, p. 366).
63. Donald Jackson Kerr, *Amassing treasures for all times: Sir George Grey, colonial bookman and collector*, New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, and Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006, p. 167.
64. George Grey, *Address delivered by Sir George Grey ... June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1883*, Auckland: Wilson & Horton, 1883 (DSM/027.4/G).



(Right) [David Scott Mitchell's pet sulphur-crested cockatoo], watercolour by Neville Cayley, 1884, ML V/Sp Coll/Cayley/2







# Item list

**All items are held by the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. Titles of works appear in italics; where the title has been ascribed, it is not italicised.**

## A collector's inheritance

Charles Rodius  
Sydney, 1831 [Cumberland Street], 1831  
Watercolour  
Purchased 1939  
SSV\*/Sp Coll/Rodius/1

Charles Rodius  
Sydney, 1831 [View of Sydney Harbour from the grounds of Cumberland Place], 1831  
Watercolour  
Purchased 1939  
SSV\*/Sp Coll/Rodius/14

Portrait of Dr James Mitchell, c. 1855–65  
Hand-tinted ambrotype  
Donated 1996  
MIN 360

Dalton's Royal Photographic Establishment, Sydney  
Portrait of Augusta Maria Mitchell, c. 1863–64  
Carte-de-visite  
Donated 1996  
MIN 361

Portrait of Augusta Maria Scott, 1820  
Watercolour on ivory miniature  
Acquired 1995  
MIN 353

John Milton  
*The poetical works ...*, London: J Macrone, 1835  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/821.47/M SET v. 1–6

Daniel Defoe  
*The life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe ...*, Edinburgh: Fraser & Co., 1837  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/823.5/D314/3K1

Augusta Maria Mitchell, née Scott  
Album of watercolour drawings, c. 1816–50  
Watercolours  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
PXC 323

George Perry  
*Conchology, or, the natural history of shells ...*, London: Printed for W Miller ... by W Bulmer, 1811  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/F594/P

Fan, owned by Augusta Maria Scott, 1810–15  
Carved ivory  
Bequest of Miss JAM Merewether  
R545

## Early life

Dalton's Royal Photographic Gallery, Sydney  
Portrait of David Scott Mitchell, 19 December 1864  
Carte-de-visite  
Donated by Helenus Hope Scott Wallace, 1950  
PXA 1009 no. 1

Theatrical programme for comedy *Single Life*, Government House, 1866  
Silk  
Donated by Helenus Hope Scott Wallace  
ZAm/121/2/1

Isocrates  
*Isokratis=Isocratis: Orationes et epistolae/recognovit J.G. Baiter*, Parisiis: Editore Ambrosio Firmin Didot, 1846–47  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/Q885.4/1

John Frederick William Herschel  
*Outlines of astronomy*, London: Longman, Brown, and Longmans, 1849  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/520/H

David Scott Mitchell  
Letter to Rose Scott, 9 July 1865  
Original manuscript  
ZA1437, pp. 25–28

## The connoisseur

BC Boake, Sydney  
Portrait of David Scott Mitchell, c. November 1870  
Carte-de-visite  
Donated by Helenus Hope Scott Wallace, 1950  
PXA 1009/2

Cumberland Place, c. 1860s  
Albumen photoprint  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
SPF/388

Book of Hours, Rouen, c. 1500–10  
Ink, gold and pigment on vellum  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe1/7e

Geoffrey Chaucer  
*The woorkes of Jeffrey Chaucer ...*, [imprinted at London: By Ihon Kyngston, for Ihon Wight ... , 1561]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
MRB/Q821.17 (16th century)

Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell [i.e. Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte]  
*Poems*, London: Smith, Elder, 1846  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/C611

## The collector's collector

New South Wales Government Printing Office  
Interior and exterior of David Scott Mitchell's residence, Darlinghurst Road, 1907  
Photographs  
SV1/Res Mit/1 & 7; V1/Res Mit/1 & 7

Ethel A Stephens  
George Robertson, c. 1890s  
Pencil and charcoal  
Angus & Robertson Archives  
Acquired 1977  
PXD 385 no. 4



Photograph of Mitchell Library in course of construction, March 1907, ML V1/ Lib/Mit/2

Neville Cayley  
[David Scott Mitchell's pet sulphur-crested cockatoo], 1884  
Watercolour  
V\*/Sp Coll/Cayley/2

Playbill for *The Recruiting Officer and The virgin unmasked, Sydney, March 1800* [Sydney: George Hughes at the Government Press, 1800]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe1/107a

Playbill for *Henry the Fourth and the Irish widow, Sydney April 1800* [Sydney: George Hughes at the Government Press, 1800]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe1/107b

David Scott Mitchell  
Letter to Rose Scott, 19 July 1868  
Original manuscript  
ZA1437, pp. 79b – 82

Henry Kendall  
*Poems and songs*, Sydney: JR Clarke; London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1862  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/C517

Gregory Blaxland  
*A journal of a tour of discovery across the Blue Mountains in New South Wales*, London: BJ Holdsworth, 1823  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe/C129

*New South Wales general standing orders ...*, Sydney: Printed at Government Press, 1802  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe1/17a

Thomas Watling  
*Letters from an exile at Botany Bay ...*, Penrith [Scotland]: Ann Bell, [1794]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe 1/115

### 'Old Four Hours'

Henry King  
Royal Hotel and Dymock's Book Arcade, George Street, Sydney, c. 1891–95  
Photograph  
SPF/187

Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1916  
Photograph  
Angus & Robertson Archives, acquired 1977  
PXD 376 no. 7

Joseph Banks  
Journal kept on board HMS *Endeavour*, 1768–71  
Original manuscript  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
Safe 1/12

Henry Lawson  
*Short stories in prose and verse*, Sydney: L Lawson, [1894]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
C755/1

Alice O Walker  
Letter to David Scott Mitchell, 16 July 1894  
Original manuscript  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
ZA1461, p. 61

### The Mitchell Bequest

Mitchell Library in course of construction, March 1907  
Photograph  
V1/ Lib/Mit/2

TM Hocken  
Letter to David Scott Mitchell, 28 March 1898  
Original manuscript  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
ZA1461, p. 130

H Hubert Newman, Sydney  
Portrait of HCL Anderson, 1894–1900  
Photograph  
P1/A (BM)

### The legacy

James Lind  
*A Treatise of the scurvy ...*, Edinburgh: Sands, Murray & Cochran, 1753  
Acquired 2007  
MRB/90

Frederick Thomson  
*An essay on the scurvy ...*, London: Printed for the author ... , 1790  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/616.39/T

### Freestanding items

David Scott Mitchell's armchair  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
XR 16

David Scott Mitchell's lorgnette  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
R 15

David Scott Mitchell's revolving bookcase  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell 1907  
XR 37

Barron Field  
*First fruits of Australian poetry*, [Sydney: George Howe, 1819]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
C 674

Theodor de Bry  
*Historia Americae ...*, Francofurti: Sumptibus Matth. Meriani, 1634 [i.e. 1590–1634]  
Bequest of David Scott Mitchell, 1907  
DSM/Q910.8/B SET v. 1–5



