

By June 1989 Julie Phillips started culling serials and dealing with pressing housekeeping matters, discovering valuable personal papers tucked away by Keith Hindwood in his collection. These were catalogued and eventually microfilmed.

By now the Library shelves contained about 10,700 books and 250 serial titles; at the end of June 1990 the books numbered about 13,000.

The Museum's staff and the Library soon moved to new premises in the Hamilton Centre, Mitchell. The move provided additional shelf space and more room for microfilm readers and other aids.

Two new major collections also arrived. About 500 volumes came from Dr Fred McCarthy, the retired curator of Anthropology at the Australian Museum, Sydney, and first principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (later the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies). About 1500 volumes came from Dr Robert Edwards, then chairman of the Museum Council and former curator at the South Australian Museum and director of the Museum of Victoria. These two collections enhanced the Library's strength in archaeology and anthropology.

A second part of the Edwards library arrived the following year. The Library now began to build up its collections in environmental areas. But it was entering a lean funding period, as other priorities took precedence.

Despite little funding for acquisitions the Library has grown. It will likely continue to acquire significant personal libraries from retired academics and other specialists. Acquisitions must also be supported by targeted purchases, especially in museology and conservation, worldwide disciplines with few books published in Australia.

When the Library is moved to Acton why not make an appointment with the Librarian, and discover this hidden Museum treasure?

**'The Midwife' helped nourish the Library when it was born.**

**'The Midwife' has written earlier about the birth of the Friends and the demise of the Conservation course at the University of Canberra**



*Farmer's fashion book, summer 1940-41, Sydney.  
Cummins Collection, NMA.*

## THE CUMMINS COLLECTION

**We all know what trade catalogues are: they arrive regularly in our letter boxes, the brightly-coloured lists of goods and services – most of us call them 'junk mail'. Yet these flimsy things we usually discard without a second thought can, in time, become a fascinating window on the past, valuable to illustrate our cultural history.**

Colin Cummins, owner of Canberra's Capital Bookbinders, has found them so. Over 20 years, he assembled a collection of more than 200, from the 1860s to the mid-20th century, covering a wide range of products.

But he was running out of room. Colin reluctantly parted with the collection he had so lovingly built up (binding many of the catalogues himself) earlier this year, when the Museum acquired them.

The Cummins collection now resides in the Museum's Library as a fully-catalogued collection, bearing Colin's name. It will provide a valuable tool for researchers and curatorial staff for many years to come, enabling them to identify objects and reconstruct the world of the everyday things with which we surround ourselves.

We can see the latest fashions of 1937 and the pick of the newest linoleum floorings in 1925, available from Anthony Horderns. There's an example of the famous Sears-Roebuck mail-order catalogues from which products were sold and distributed to the burgeoning settlements of the United States. We can explore the goods stocked by the Army/Navy Cooperative Society stores in England in 1939 (many of which must have had to last the war!), and the 'presents' that could be 'purchased' in Sydney up until the 1960s with labels collected from packets of Bushells tea.

The collection contains more than just catalogues of homewares and fashion. There are catalogues from firms selling hardware and ironmongery, model railway locomotives (and full-sized industrial ones), jewellery and shoes, tools and engineering supplies, instruments and laboratory equipment.

Some catalogues are large and heavy tomes, containing hundreds of pages, filled with illustrations and written descriptions. Others are only a few pages long, or even only leaflets of one page.

The collection also includes two weighty volumes describing the industrial exhibits from the British section of the International Exhibition of 1862 in London, and the biography of the founder of the MacRobertson's confectionery company (creators of Cherry Ripe) published in 1921.

**Gael Williams is acting Librarian.**