

CELEBRATION MARKING THE DEATH OF JENNY KING, 12 JUNE 2021

I would like to talk briefly about Jenny King's life as a librarian. Other friends will talk about other aspects of her life.

I first met Jenny in February 1955, when I started at King's College in Otahuhu, "a whining school-boy ... creeping like snail unwillingly to school". Jenny had obtained the Diploma of the New Zealand Library School in 1953, and was the librarian of King's College from 1954 to 1957, as well as teaching chemistry and other subjects (she had both B.Sc. and B.A. degrees).

After leaving school at the end of 1959 I enrolled at the University of Auckland, and there was Jenny again, the Head of Library Lending Services, a position she held from 1961 to 1964. Jenny ran the Circulation Department with a rod of iron, and woe betide the hapless student who was late returning a book, or requested more than two recall cards a day !

In 1964 Jenny was appointed University Librarian at the University of Waikato. So when I attended the New Zealand Library School in 1967, what could be more sensible than I took my three weeks' Practical at the Waikato Library, and at the end of the course sought my first employment at Waikato. I thus kept following Jenny around: she gave me my first love of librarianship, and of research, and was a tremendous influence on me for most of my life.

The Library at Waikato had begun as a branch of the University of Auckland Library in 1960, but achieved independence when the University became independent in 1964. Jenny succeeded the first University Librarian, Tom Nuttall, who "died in office", and held that position until her retirement in August 1994 after 30 years of service. Under her guidance the Library grew from a collection of a few hundred books and a handful of staff, to a collection of some 710,000 books valued at more than \$85 million, serviced by 74 full- and part-time staff, and including two branches (Education and Law) in addition to the Central Library.

In her first years in Hamilton, Jenny lived in a small house in Morrinsville Road with her faithful Boxer dog Tara. Every day she took Tara for a run – Jenny riding a bicycle and Tara running alongside. The Vice-Chancellor, Don Llewellyn, used to say (rather unkindly) that it would be better if Tara rode the bicycle and Jenny ran alongside !

During Jenny's time at Waikato there were major developments in the Library and its services. A huge amount of time and effort were devoted in the early days to building the collections virtually from scratch, to meet the teaching and research needs of the University. And while only a limited number of subjects were first offered – Education, Humanities, Mathematics and Social Sciences – this quickly changed as new courses and new Schools were introduced – Science in 1970, Management Studies in 1972, Computer Science in 1974, Women's Studies in 1980, and Law in 1990. The growing collections meant that the Library was always short of space, and nearly every Summer vacation was spent moving all books and serials yet again, as the Library gradually took over the whole of the building in which it was first housed (Block A), and then spread into adjacent temporary buildings. All Library staff took part in these moving exercises, from the University Librarian down.

In January 1977 a new stand-alone, purpose-built Library was opened, enabling the Library greatly to expand its existing services and to offer new ones, particularly in the area of electronic information retrieval. And Jenny's last year of service, 1994, saw the completion of the long-awaited and much-needed extension to the first stage of the Central Library building.

Other major developments included the gradual automation of the Library's processes from 1984, the establishment of a Law Library within the Central Library in 1989, and amalgamation with the former Hamilton Teachers' College Library in 1991. As University Librarian, Jenny of course was actively involved in all these developments.

Beyond the Library, Jenny made a substantial contribution to the wider University. She was a member of the Professorial and Academic Board from 1966 to 1992. She served on a number of University committees. For several years she combined her role as University Librarian with that of Equal Opportunities Officer and later Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor on Equal Opportunity Matters – a role which saw Jenny actively involved in University-wide staff recruitments and appointments, general and academic staff salary reviews, conflict resolution, industrial negotiations, and other staffing matters. All this was a very far cry from her first involvement in recruiting staff for the Library – in 1966, for example, she came down to the Library School in Wellington, took a number of potential employees out to lunch, and offered them positions at Waikato there and then, all without benefit of such modern marvels as position descriptions or Staffing Registrars.

Jenny also developed close relationships with a number of teaching departments, most notably the Māori Department, and undertook some tutoring in Social Anthropology.

Beyond the University, Jenny assisted in the foundation of the Waikato Branch of the New Zealand Library Association and played an active part in its work, particularly in its early days. She was involved in training for librarianship when this was undertaken at a local level. She was a member of the Vice-Chancellors' Standing Committee on Library Resources, and of CONZUL, the Committee of New Zealand University Librarians. And as manager of the largest library in the region, Jenny naturally played a major role in liaising with other librarians and assisting with the co-ordination of library services in the Waikato.

Jenny was always a very hands-on librarian. I have in my midden a pair of photographs, taken when part of the new Law Library collection arrived in a huge 40-foot container. The first photo shows a group of nine librarians (including Jenny) unloading cartons of books from the container, and has the caption "*The Law Library collection arrives and everyone lends a hand ...*". The second photo shows the same container with Jenny holding a hand-truck, onto which I am struggling to load a heavy carton, and has the simple caption "... *Everyone!*".

If I had to name Jenny King's three most major contributions to the University and Library, these would probably be: the development of library collections (with special mention of her passion, the New Zealand Collection); the recruitment and training of library staff; and (under great difficulties) the provision of additional library space – the first two stages of the Library building.

Jenny was a great librarian, and made substantial contributions to library services in New Zealand. She enjoyed a long and wonderful life, and was a dear friend to so many. May she now rest in peace.

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The Law Library collection arrives and everyone lends a hand...



...everyone!