

# ***Celebrating South Australia's Christian Heritage***

An account of setting up the exhibition '*South Australia's Christian Heritage*' to be housed in the Mortlock Wing of the State Library of South Australia for a ten year period.

*by Pauline Redman*

In 2003 the State Library of South Australia (SLSA) underwent a complete refurbishment. The Spence Wing is now much more spacious and modern and the number of computer terminals has been increased from around 23 to 80. The Mortlock Wing, which houses much of the South Australian Collection, now also houses sixteen exhibition bays, each one individually expressing a different aspect of South Australia's history.

The Pray South Australia Committee received a donation of the amount required to sponsor the bay, and accepted the task of presenting the history of Christianity and religion in South Australia. The research team at House of Prayer For All Nations was made responsible for gathering the information. Pray South Australia stressed the idea that we should honour the men and women who had given themselves unstintingly to see this colony founded, where freedom of religion could be enjoyed by everyone.

The task was to find items in the library that would fit the story we wanted to tell. We finished up also using a few introduced items, for example a bonnet and cornet, on loan for the ten years from the Salvation Army, and an embroidered book mark from the Lutheran Archives. The Uniting Church in Australia's Historical Society donated the microfiche of Serena Thorne's diary. Serena was an enthusiastic young preacher and a vibrant young woman who in 1890 preached to a crowd of 2,000 in the Adelaide Town Hall. An excerpt from her diary is a featured text.

We felt that apart from the other obvious choices, George Angas, the early Lutheran settlers, and also the first Christian Aboriginal pastors should feature, for example David Unaipon, the man on our \$50 note. Drawings of some of Unaipon's inventions feature as background graphics. We also made mention of notable Christian women and the early work of the Salvation Army. We thought it best to focus on individuals that were 'high achievers' and not necessarily denominations as such. The Parliamentary Library supplied us with a high quality digital image of the Petition for Women's Suffrage, which was used for background graphics. The Women's Christian Temperance Union in this state collected more than 75% of the vote for the petition just before the turn of the century.

Getting agreement on all that we wanted for the display was not straightforward, and deadlines were extended many times. Looking back it was rewarding work and I felt privileged to be asked to assist in the project. The richness of the experience can't be measured. Certainly without the team effort that went into the whole process, none of this would have happened.

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