



Opening of the J.K. Murray Library Refurbishment and Extension

Tuesday 24 April 2018, 9.50am for 10–11am

Courtyard of the JK Murray Library, Building 8102, UQ Gatton

Emeritus Professor Alan Rix

I too, would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and meet, and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Professor Peter Høj, Vice-Chancellor and President, UQ, Professor Joanne Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Melissa Brown, Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Ms Janelle Zahmel, Director, Gatton Campus, Ms Annette McNicol, Acting University Librarian, Ms Khamla Mott, Research Scholar, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, Ms Kim Jorgensen, President of the Gatton Past Students' Association, Friends and donors of the University Library, UQ colleagues and alumni, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for your kind introduction.

I hold to the view about retirement so eloquently expressed by the former British Prime Minister, Harold McMillan, in his autobiography written after he retired:

It has always seemed to me more artistic, when the curtain falls on the final performance, to accept the inevitable. The play is over. It is tempting, perhaps, but unrewarding, to hang about the Green Room after final retirement from the stage.

However, we can make exceptions, like today -- McMillan certainly did, as he became Chancellor of Oxford University!

So it is indeed a great and unexpected pleasure and an honour to be invited back to Gatton to open this fantastic new facility.

This project has been a long time coming.

The Library Building was first commissioned in 1973 and upgraded in 1999. It was named after J.K. Murray in 1976 – he was a former director of Gatton College, the foundation professor of Agriculture at UQ and, importantly, the Administrator of Papua New Guinea in the critical period from 1945 until 1952 – a very distinguished alumnus indeed.

Before I say a few words about the Library, today is of course the 24th April, and tomorrow is Anzac Day, when we remember in particular the landings at Gallipoli, as a first step towards the commemoration of the centenary of the end of World War 1 in November this year.

45 staff and students from Gatton College lost their lives in World War 1, including 11 at Gallipoli, one of whom was the captain of the College football team, Graeme Lang Wilson, killed in action at Quinn's Post in May 1915, aged 25.

Lest we forget.

J.K. Murray himself enlisted in 1916 and eventually went to France. He was a private and then a warrant officer in the 1st Australian Veterinary Evacuation Station in northern France and Belgium (looking after the animals, mainly horses and mules, in the rear of the battlefield, and demobilising these animals once hostilities ceased). He himself returned to civilian life in March 1920.

Murray's entry in the Embarkation Roll for 17 July 1918 for HMAT A30 "Borda" in Sydney is certainly interesting and different: alongside the list of occupations of his fellow Veterinary Corps privates – horse attendant, grazier, horse-breaker, drover, wool classer, farrier, stockman etc – was his occupation, listed as "Master, Agricultural College".

Let's come back now to the present.

So we have a game-changer of a building for student learning at Gatton.

This is a science campus as it has always been – agricultural, animal and now also veterinary. Indeed, it will soon be ten years since Vet Sci came to Gatton.

In this last 5-10 years Gatton has changed radically – not just a little – and of course is a vastly different place, in terms of facilities, attitudes and gender,

from that overseen by Murray – although the horses still have to be looked after!

Its student cohort is very attuned to the needs and demands of their disciplines and I think appreciate the practical focus of the campus in providing all the animals and the agricultural facilities they need for their study.

This Library building is about providing the best learning conditions (and optimal staff facilities) for the students living both on and off Campus.

A comment from staff that I have heard is that this is now an “uplifting place” to study and work – it is now the place to be on campus.

Of course, now we can accommodate those large numbers of students who want to study here 24/7 – including those with a need for disability access. In the past we had to create temporary overflow study space for students when we could not fit them in the old Library.

Now there is an extra 1000 sq. m. of space. Seating area upstairs has increased from 80 to 300, that downstairs has increased by 30, and the new outdoor learning space has seating area for 40.

I particularly like some of the creative touches ---

- the adaptive re-use of the old building, particularly in the soft contemporary design sitting underneath the 1970s brutalist roof trusses and ducting;
- the cosy meeting spaces, and the expanse of the main floor, using the wide spaces available;
- the variety of learning areas, seating and the calming palette of colours;
- the big windows and the light that it allows into the building;
- and there are some very comfortable armchairs for a sunny afternoon’s reading.

So congratulations and thanks to all those involved with this project. This will make a genuine difference to the students at Gatton and their studies.

Can I particularly mention:

- Scott Chapple, Genevieve Hoeben and others from DWP Suters Architects;
- The great team at Tompkins, led by the Project Manager, Ashley White;
- The UQ P&F folks: Darlene Lush and Kim Armstrong the project managers;
- Lex Carnie and Craig Carlton from P&F at Gatton, and all the other P&F staff from St Lucia and Gatton who I know have been involved;
- And of course the Library staff: especially Bob Gerrity, Karen Seymour, Maria Chalmers and Glen Dalgleish who were at the forefront of this project.

We can now enjoy, and benefit from, this wonderful new Library, and it therefore gives me enormous pleasure to declare officially open the J.K. Murray Library Refurbishment and Extension.

Thank you.