

# Victoria Regional Meeting Library

## POLICY 1

### DECISION-MAKING IN RELATION TO THE VICTORIAN REGIONAL MEETING LIBRARY COLLECTION

#### 1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide guidance to the Library Committee of Victoria Regional Meeting in relation to its important role in purchasing material for, or otherwise augmenting, the collection of the Victorian Regional Meeting Library (VRML). Ultimately these purchasing decisions involve a process of discernment and reflective judgment and such a guidance document acknowledges the admonition of the Elders of Balby in 1656 in not being an invariant rule or form but a framework or touchstone that is fulfilled in the Spirit.

#### 2. Role of the VRML

The VRML operates as a repository for a range of materials in various media. The aim of this collection is to serve the spiritual and other needs of Quakers, primarily the members and attenders of Victoria Regional Meeting. The essential and overriding feature of the VRML is that it is a specialist Quaker library rather than simply a generalist library established and maintained by Quakers. While there are similar libraries maintained by most other Regional Meetings, the VRML is, in terms of the size and depth of its collection, the largest in Australia: it is, for instance, the only collection with a complete run of the Australian Friend from 1887 to the present.

Within this framework, the VRML attempts to meet and address a number of uses, roles and functions. These include the maintenance and augmentation of:

- (a) A core reference collection

This collection is essentially available for consultation and review within the library itself. Except in exceptional circumstances its materials are not available for loan. The reference collection is largely comprised of limited edition, academically significant works that would be extremely difficult to

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replace. An example is Bill Oats' Dictionary of Australian Quaker Biography and the ongoing updates furnished by the AYM Secretary.

(b) An old and rare book collection

A collection of old and rare books, including a couple published in the seventeenth century, that are housed in a safe and protective manner and which are not available for loan.

(c) An enquirers' collection

This collection, usually of multiple copies of books suitable for newcomers – such as Geoffrey Hubbard's Quaker by Convincement and John Punshon's Portrait in Grey – and Quaker classics such as Thomas Kelly's Testament of Devotion – which provide a grounded understanding of Quaker essentials.

(d) A diverse range of Quaker works

This category, which is capable of being further divided into numerous sub-headings, an exercise unnecessary for the purposes of this paper, provides an extended survey of Quaker thought, history and literature. As well as books (including the text of major Quaker lecture series such as Swarthmore and Backhouse) there are pamphlets such as the Pendle Hill series, DVDs and CDs, and an online collection of PDFs and video and audio files.

(e) Materials for spiritual nourishment and education of children and young persons

This includes materials in a range of media suitable for children and Junior Young Friends.

(f) An archival collection

A separately housed collection of papers, photographs and other materials that primarily relate to the activities of Quaker committees and other issues of Victoria Regional Meeting and its predecessor bodies such as Melbourne Monthly Meeting.

(g) A VRM cultural collection <sup>Nov22</sup>

These items are personal copies of Quaker and other religious material owned by VRM Member Friends and Attenders. Examples are books inscribed and presented to Children on attaining a particular age; inscribed family Bibles and prayer books.

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### **3. Constraints**

There are two major constraints to the VMRL, namely space and money. Apart from the archival collection which is separately housed, the materials of the VMRL are housed in the Alfred Clarke Room on the ground floor of the Victorian Friends Centre. The present collection occupies most of the available space but there is room for some, but not significant, expansion under the present shelving configuration.

The second major constraint is that of the library budget. While this budget was habitually underspent in earlier times, there has been a significantly greater level of spending more recently and particularly since the move to the Victorian Friends Centre. While the available budget does operate as a constraint, it should not constitute an iron strait jacket. That is, if the VRML Committee discerns and determines that there are essential areas of the library collection that are necessary for sustaining a vibrant Quaker community then it should bring to Regional Meeting a proposal, backed by convincing supporting evidence, for an increase in the budget to that end.

### **4. Purchasing Issues**

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a list of definitive, iron-clad, principles that should guide, but not imperatively determine, purchasing decisions, there are some important principles that can provide some structure to this task.

#### **(a) Need**

The six categories relating to the nature of the collection set out in section 2 above represent, in terms of purchasing policy, a mixture of relative static and active components. The old and rare book collection represents primarily a preservation of historical heritage and is likely to be rarely expanded by active purchase, with its expansion likely to be overwhelmingly by way of intermittent donation. Similarly, the expansion of the archival collection results predominantly from an accretion of material generated by Regional Meeting and RM and AYM Committees and rarely, if ever, by way of purchase. Other categories, such as the children's and young persons' collection, will be more dynamic in terms of the need to purchase new or duplicate material because of the discerned need for such material.

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## (b) Significance

There is also a qualitative dimension to the decision-making process. This is recognized in the multiple copies of what have come to be regarded as 'Quaker classics' mentioned in section 2(c) above. The VRML should prioritise, in its purchasing decisions, the acquisition of newly published works that make a significant contribution to emerging Quaker thought (eg Janet Scott's writings on Quaker theology) or a reflective understanding of the Quaker past (eg Larry Ingle's biography of George Fox – First Among Friends) and its possible futures (eg some of the writings of Ben Pink Dandelion and Doug Gwyn).

## (c) Price/Usage Nexus

Within a finite budget, there is a delicate balancing act as to how purchasing decisions can best achieve the overall goals of the collection. This is particularly the case with expensive periodical subscriptions that can eat up a sizeable percentage of the annual VRML budget. One way of testing the efficacy of continuing such a lopsided allocation of resources is by considering what is the demand for such an item in terms of the number of Friends that regularly read or borrow such items. If there was a continuing level of high demand, there is a strong case for maintaining the subscription even if it draws a significant percentage of the annual budgetary resources. If not that case is inversely weakened.

## (d) Preferencing the Enduring over the Ephemeral

In terms of the allocation of resources, a final principle is that there should be a preference for material that will continue to be used and referred to over time as against that which is quickly dated and never referred to again.

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## **POLICY 2**

### **COLLECTION MANAGEMENT, ACCESSING, BORROWING, LENDING,**

#### **GENERAL STATEMENT**

The Victoria Regional Meeting Library is a collection of materials mostly by, about and for Quakers and people interested in learning more about Quaker history, biography, processes and beliefs.

The library also contains some non-Quaker materials that expand understanding of issues Quakers are corporately active in.

The library is located in the Victorian Friends Centre 484 William Street, West Melbourne. As a service for spiritual renewal and learning, it is integral to our Quaker Meeting.

The library is staffed most Wednesdays between 10.30am and 3.30pm.

The main book collection and several journals are open to all users and can be borrowed; the antiquarian collection and the VRM archives are restricted and can be accessed by request but not borrowed. The open shelf reference books (labelled Not For Loan) may be read by anyone inside the Clarke/Groom Space but may not be borrowed.

The Library is managed by a committee and run by volunteers.

#### **POLICY: ADDING TO & REMOVING FROM THE COLLECTION**

The Victoria Regional Meeting Library collection is for Victoria Regional Meeting, and local meetings should own and look after their own lending collections.<sup>dec2016</sup>

#### **Quaker Material and size of the Collection**

The library will usually hold no more than three copies of any title.

As a general rule, Quaker materials will not be pruned from the collection. Friends are welcome to suggest Quaker titles to add to the collection.<sup>oct2017</sup>

Our surplus Quaker books will be offered, in this order:

1. To Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, especially books that would be useful for promoting deep thought and spiritual reflection
2. To other Regional Meeting Libraries
3. To the VRM community for their personal collections <sup>apr2021</sup>

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## **Adding to the Collection**

The library committee welcomes suggestions for books and other materials that Friends would like to see added to our library.

Books or other material purchased on behalf of the library without the committee's knowledge and approval will be considered donations to the library.

### *Donations:*

Victoria Regional Meeting Library welcomes most donations.

When an item has been donated for the collection, it becomes and remains the property of VRML until such time as it is deaccessioned and removed from the collection.

Donated material considered not suitable for the collection will not be accessioned into the collection, and will be offered to other individuals, libraries or charity organisations.<sup>dec2016</sup>

## **Documents in Advance/Documents in Retrospect**

Two copies each of DIA and DIR will be housed in the library for two years. One copy of each will be available for borrowing from the QR (Quaker Reports) section. One copy of each will be for use only in the building and be labelled Not For Loan.

After two years one copy of each will be added to the archives in the Erskine Space and the other copy removed.

The copies in archives will remain for ten years, after which they will be removed.

(AYM keeps a full collection of all DIA/DIR)<sup>dec2017</sup>

## **Removal from the Collection (process, not policy):**

Accessioned materials considered no longer suitable for belonging in our collection will be put in a collection labelled "for removal on (date)" in Tiny Cat (TC), and a direct link to that collection put on the VRML TC home page. <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/VicRML> A list of these items will also be circulated by email through the VRM Clerk/s.

If someone objects to the removal of an item or wishes to claim an item when it is removed, they should click on the item, then click "request this book" and in their requesting email state their wishes regarding the item.

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On the nominated date, the item will be deaccessioned. If it has been claimed by someone, that person will be notified it is ready for them. If the claimer decides not to take the item, or leaves it uncollected for 28 days, it will be offered to the next person in line who claimed it.

Material not claimed by Friends will be donated to other libraries or charity organisations.

Material considered to be too damaged for continued use will be disposed of appropriately.<sup>dec2017</sup>

## **POLICY: ACCESSING**

Readers and Borrowers can view an increasing number of the library's circulating titles online at <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/VicRML>. Currently around 5,200 titles are listed. The catalogue shows if a book is checked out, and when it is due back.

The reference collection is not for loan but is available for use only in the library.

Selected rare and historically important items are accessible by arrangement with a member of the library committee. These items are not for loan.<sup>oct2015</sup>

Latest received issues of journals are to remain in the library. Earlier issues of *Friends Journal* and *The Friend Quarterly* are available for borrowing.<sup>nov2020</sup> People are welcome to ask for photocopies of articles they want.<sup>aug2015</sup>

## **COPYING**

**Photocopying** of fragile books is not allowed.<sup>dec2016</sup>

Generally, books (paperback or hardback) may NOT be photocopied, but pages may be photographed, respecting copyright regulation.

In exceptional circumstances, a person may request a member of the Library Committee for photocopies of a limited number of pages from a book for a Quaker-related purpose.<sup>dec2017</sup>

**Photographing** of non-circulating fragile books, within copyright limits, is allowed. This will be done by librarians or other people trained in the handling of fragile books, when convenient to the photographer and the attending librarian.

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## **BORROWING**

While anyone may read books and other items while inside the Victorian Quaker Centre, prospective borrowers must apply to be borrowers before signing out any materials. (See **QUALIFICATIONS FOR BORROWERS** below)

If a F/friend wants to borrow an item and cannot get to the library on a Wednesday, they can contact a member of the committee who will attempt to help the F/friend get the item.

If Victorian borrowers cannot come to the VFC, VRML will seek F/friends to carry books between the VFC and VRM borrowers. If this is not possible, Victorian borrowers will be asked to pay for all postage costs related to their borrowing.<sup>oct2019</sup> Borrowers from other Regional Meetings who request books to be posted to them will pay for all costs.

## **QUALIFICATIONS FOR BORROWERS**

While anyone may read books and other items while inside the Victorian Quaker Centre, prospective borrowers must apply to be borrowers before signing out any materials.

1. Borrowers must be members or attenders who are on the AYM members and attenders list AND
2. Borrowers must read, understand, agree to, fill in, sign and return a Borrowing Agreement before they can borrow items.

## **TERMS for BORROWING**

- A borrower may have up to 5 items total at any time.
- As borrowers return items, they can borrow new items, up to a total of 5 items.
- Items may be borrowed for four weeks.
- Friends engaged in QLA or other courses may be able to borrow more items for longer periods.
- Borrowers can renew an item two times if no other borrower is waiting for the item.
- Borrowers can renew items by contacting the library at [VicRML1@outlook.com.au](mailto:VicRML1@outlook.com.au) or by signing in to their TinyCat account and renewing their items.<sup>feb2024</sup>

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- Each local meeting and worshipping group will be asked to nominate a member who can act as a courier between VRML and borrowers if necessary.
- Library users are not to write in books, turn down corners, or use coloured sticky note or apply sticky tape to any part of items.
- Library users must not attempt to make any repairs or changes to items' condition. Librarians have special materials and methods for this and will carry out such work. Please note whatever needs attention on a piece of paper and put it inside the item's cover.
- Books are to be returned or renewed by the due date.

## **RECORDS OF BORROWER DETAILS**

- When someone borrows an item, it is checked out by a librarian or by the borrower with their TinyCat ID and PIN<sup>feb2024</sup> through TinyCat, VRML's online catalogue.
- TinyCat keeps a record of all borrowers: their name, local Meeting/worshipping group, email address and phone number.
- This information is accessible only to VRML librarians, and is securely held by TinyCat for VRML use only.
- If a prospective borrower wishes to have other arrangements, they can apply to the VRML Committee.

## **PERSISTENT NON-RETURNS AND DAMAGE TO BOOKS**

- If a borrower does not return an item after holding the item for three months and being reminded to do so, they will be invited to replace the item.
- If a borrower neglects to return or replace borrowed items, they will not be allowed to borrow further items from the library until they return or replace all items they borrowed. <sup>aug2015</sup>
- If a borrower causes or allows irreparable damage to a book in their care they must replace the book with a fresh copy or pay for the library staff to do so. <sup>feb2024</sup>
- When it is obvious that a borrower does not respect and care for the VRML Policy and books, that borrower's privileges as a borrower will be terminated. However, they will be able to read the VRML books in the library when a librarian is in attendance. <sup>feb2024</sup>

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### **Members outside VRM**

When members of other Regional Meetings request items from VRML, their requests will be considered by the committee.

- If the committee approves the loan, the person borrowing books (or “items”) will pay for the transport of the material borrowed in both directions.
- The usual period for borrowing is used: four weeks with two renewals.
- Only items from the circulating collection will leave the VRML building.<sup>dec2016</sup>

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