

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA



STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA SOHE 2008



State Library of Victoria and Museums Complex, 1985, showing building facade with the statue of St Joan of Arc in the foreground



1 state library of victoria & national museum complex entrance feb1998



state library of victoria & national museum complex museum entrance russell street jan1985



state library of victoria & national museum complex domed reading room feb1998



state library of victoria & national museum complex covered courtyard feb1998



state library of victoria & national museum complex queens hall interior feb1998



state library of victoria & national museum complex war statue on la trobe street corner jan1985



state library of victoria & national museum complex war statue jan1985



state library of victoria & national museum complex
statue of st george & the dragon jan 1985



STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA July 2016



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Location

304-328 SWANSTON STREET AND 179-181 LATROBE STREET MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1497

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO751

VHR Registration

August 20, 1982

Amendment to Registration

May 23, 1998

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 22, 2022

What is significant?

The trustees for Melbourne's new public library were appointed in July 1853 and on 3 July the following year the

foundation stone for the first section of building was laid. Opened in 1856, this building was the first of many constructed on the site to accommodate four institutions over a period of time. These included the Public Library, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Industrial and Technological Museum and the Natural History Museum. The Chairman of Trustees, lawyer Redmond Barry, was the prime founder of the institution and the aspiration of the trustees was to create one great centre of learning. Initially a competition was held for the design of the library and this was won by Joseph Reed. The first building constructed comprised an entrance hall and upstairs reading room. By 1865 wings had been added to the north and south of the original building, extending the Queen's Hall reading room on the first floor, and in 1870 the portico was added to the front facade.

The National Gallery of Victoria began its association with the site in 1861 when a gallery was opened to display works of art in the south wing of the library. Various buildings and wings were added to display additional artworks in 1874 and again in 1887 and 1892. Despite the continual searching for another site, the National Gallery shared the library site until 1968 when it moved to the new gallery building in St Kilda Road.

The 1866-67 Intercolonial Exhibition, held at the library site led to the opening of the Industrial and Technological Museum on this site in 1870, with many of the exhibits forming the core of the collection. In 1899 the contents of the National Museum, formerly the Natural History Museum, were transferred from the University of Melbourne to the library site. The Museum of Victoria remained at the site until its relocation c2000. At this time the library became the sole occupant of the seven acre site.

Construction of buildings on the library site was almost continuous from 1854 until the construction of the La Trobe Library in the 1960s. Joseph Reed, or his subsequent firms and their descendents, was responsible for the design of a number of building phases, including the initial building, the international exhibition spaces in 1866, the portico in 1870, the various halls constructed for the museum and gallery from 1874 to 1906 and the domed reading room in 1913. Work undertaken in the 1920s-40s was undertaken by Irwin and Stevenson and later work by the Public Works Department.

The main Swanston Street facade of the library is built of sandstone in an English Palladian manner, with central Corinthian portico and flanking wings which terminate in projecting pavilions. A giant order, supporting an entablature and balustrading, runs across the undulating, two storey facade. The classical character continues in the interior of the Queen's Hall reading room, which was designed with a central space encircled by galleried aisles, delineated by a giant Ionic order colonnade.

The need for additional library space led to the construction of a large domed reading room, completed in 1913, to designs by Bates, Smart and Peebles, descendents of Joseph Reed's architectural firm. This octagonal building was built by J. W. and D. A. Swanson, using the English Truscon company for their structural detail. This included the first major local use of the Kahn Bar system of reinforcing. It resulted in the construction of the largest reinforced concrete dome in the world at the time, spanning 35.5 metres.

Other significant additions on the site include the Baldwin Spencer Hall, Russell Street in 1906 to create additional museum space and designed by Reed, Smart and Tappin in a flat stripped classical style; Bindon Hall, Little Lonsdale Street, designed by Irwin and Stevenson in 1927, and the La Trobe Library designed by the Public Works Department in 1961 and completed in 1965, in a minimalist manner with direct reference to the original Swanston Street facade in its represented trabeated system.

The first section of the library to be built was set well back from Swanston Street, forming a forecourt at the front of the building. Despite many alterations since the 1850s, particularly in 1939 when the diagonal entrances were added to the central stairs, the formality of the forecourt has been retained. Integral to the design of the forecourt are statues which have been added over time, including *Sir Redmond Barry* by 1887 (with gasoliers placed either side in 1891), *St George and the Dragon*, *Joan of Arc* and *Driver and Wipers*, which was relocated to the Shrine of Remembrance in 1998.

Two murals by significant Australian artists were acquired by the library in the 1920s. *War*, by H. Septimus Power, was installed over the entrance to Queen's Hall in 1924 and *Peace after Victory*, by renowned artist Napier Waller, was installed over the old entrance to the domed reading room in 1929.

Redevelopment of the State Library began in 1990 with the entire site being refurbished for library use.

How is it significant?

The State Library of Victoria buildings are of historical, architectural, scientific (technical) and aesthetic importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The State Library of Victoria is of historical significance as the principal educational and cultural centre for the people of Victoria for more than 150 years. The early buildings are of significance as the first purpose built, free public library in Australia and one of the first in the world. Successive buildings are of importance as the first homes of the National Gallery of Victoria and the Museum of Victoria.

The State Library of Victoria is of historical significance for its associations with its visionary founder, Sir Redmond Barry, who established one of the great library collections of the world before his death in 1880, and its associations with Bernard Hall, the influential Director of the National Gallery of Victoria from 1891-1934, and Sir Baldwin Spencer, the first Director of the Museum of Victoria.

The State Library of Victoria is of architectural significance as the first major building by prolific Melbourne architect Joseph Reed, and as an early example of public architecture in Victoria. Queen's Hall is of particular note for its elaborate interior and as an early example in library design.

The State Library of Victoria is of scientific (technical) significance for the early and innovative use of reinforced concrete construction used in the domed building to create the largest dome in the world at the time of construction.

The State Library of Victoria is of aesthetic significance for its forecourt which provided the public setting to Melbourne's first cultural institution. Despite many alterations since its inception, it retains its formal approach to the building. The array of sculptures and plantings add to the aesthetic landscape.

The State Library of Victoria is of aesthetic significance for its murals by H. Septimus Power, official war artist with the Australian Imperial Force from 1917, and Napier Waller, a leading neo-classical mural painter of the Inter-War period. The works are two of Melbourne's major murals and key works of Australian art of the 1920s.

[Online Data Upgrade Project 2008]

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

General Exemptions Category 1 Building Exterior These exemptions apply to all areas of the building envelope (walls, roof, internal courtyard walls where open to the elements) and are directed at the maintenance and repair of the exterior. In general all works should be undertaken using materials and in a manner which is consistent with the form and presentation of the existing original fabric.

Repairs and maintenance works which replace existing with appropriate (generally to match the original) material, or which restore and reconstruct in accordance with the Conservation Management Plan.

Repair and replacement of glass and external woodwork, which replaces existing with appropriate materials consistent with the form and presentation of the existing original fabric.

Roof repairs including to slate roofs, providing these are undertaken using materials, details and techniques which match the original.

Appropriate repair and maintenance of gutters, installation of gutter guards, new roof flashings and modifications to roof drainage. Materials, profiles and details to match original or as modified to provide effective waterproofing and stormwater removal.

Emergency works, as notified to Heritage Victoria, to rectify flooding, storm damage, services failure, fire, malicious damage, or other works which if left unattended would result in ongoing deterioration of heritage fabric or inhibit the permitted use of the place.

Regular external facade inspections and removal of loose material where this poses a threat to public safety. All works to be undertaken in an appropriate manner.

Painting of previously painted surfaces in the same colour or in a colour selected in accordance with the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan.

Removal of graffiti in a manner approved by Heritage Victoria.

Installation of external roof safety access walkways, platforms, eyewashes and other elements required to comply with Occupational Health and Safety legislation providing these are not visible from ground level and do not require physical intervention to significant fabric.

Maintenance and modification works as required to all roof mounted plant and equipment other than where such works are visible from the street or affect the external appearance of the complex.

Repair/replacement of existing birdproofing including netting and spikes to the Swanston Street portico.

Maintenance and replacement of existing security cameras.

Category 2 Building Interior Other than where an exception is specified, these exemptions apply across all areas of the interior and are directed at the general operational/facilities management requirements of the Library and the ongoing repair and maintenance of interior spaces. Within this category, works that damage significant wall, floor or ceiling fabric or finishes (particularly stonework, timber or moulded surfaces) are not exempt.

Minor repairs which utilise materials and techniques which match the original, including to walls, joinery and floor finishes.

Repair, maintenance and refurbishment of existing non-significant bathrooms, toilets and or en suites including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

Installation, removal or replacement of existing kitchen benches and fixtures including sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers etc. and associated plumbing and wiring.

Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

Installation, removal or replacement of light switches and electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed. This exemption does not cover the removal or replacement of original light switches, pull cords, push buttons or power outlets in Area 5. Note: In Area 5, if wiring which is original to the place was carried in timber conduits then the conduits should remain in-situ, subject to current Australian Standards and codes.

Appropriate emergency works to address damage arising from roof leaks.

Installation of additional power points and data points as required for operational needs. Generally locations to be discreet.

Installation, removal or replacement of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.

Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails, tracks and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted artworks. All such fixings to involve minimal disturbance of original fabric.

Directional and other signage which is in accordance with the current Signage Policy approved by Heritage Victoria.

Compliance signage indicating fire escapes, hydrants, toilets and the like as is required which is in accordance with the current Signage Policy approved by Heritage Victoria.

Installation of opaque glass film to internal windows as required.

Category 3 Maintenance of Services Maintenance and other works as identified below, excluding where such works directly impact upon significant fabric as identified in the conservation management plan.

Exit and emergency lighting:

- . Regulatory testing and maintenance of equipment.
- . Installation of emergency installations.
- . Introduction of additional lights where required for compliance reasons.

Fire protection:

- . Regulatory testing and maintenance of fire detection and prevention systems.
- . Localised installation, removal or replacement of fire detection and prevention systems.
- . Installation and cabling of door closers connected to fire panels.
- . Replacement of existing fire doors and additional fire door hold opens to corridors as required.
- . Emergency repairs to fire services pipework.

Security equipment and locking systems:

- . Testing of equipment.
- . Localised variations to security installation to accommodate organisation changes including installation and removal of security cameras, sensors, card readers and CCTV.
- . Modern door hardware.

Lifts:

- . Testing and maintenance of equipment

Mechanical Services

- . Maintenance of filters and cooling towers.
- . Localised variations to register and ductwork location to accommodate organisational changes other than where such works involve new penetrations in significant fabric.
- . Works to mechanical plant and equipment within plant rooms and ceiling spaces.

Category 4 Exhibition and Display All internal works associated with the construction and installation of exhibitions and displays of a permanent or temporary nature other than where such works directly impact on significant fabric. Category 5 Shelving and Storage All works associated with the provision of fixed and temporary shelving and storage other than where such works directly impact on significant fabric. Category 6 External Signage All external signage in accordance with the current State Library of Victoria External Signage Policy as endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria. Area-based Exemptions Exempt Works - Area 1 All works to identified internal spaces, excluding works that impact upon the external fabric and external appearance of these spaces. Works that damage significant wall, floor or ceiling fabric or finishes (particularly stonework, timber or moulded surfaces) are not exempt.

These areas include all internal areas previously identified as being of no significance as well as those areas which have been so altered in the course of recent works that any significance they once had is gone. In addition they generally include new construction. General exemptions identified at Categories 2-5 also apply in these

areas.

Exempt Works - Area 2 All non-structural works to identified internal spaces, excluding works which impact upon the external fabric and external appearance of these spaces. Works that damage significant wall, floor or ceiling fabric or finishes (particularly stonework, timber or moulded surfaces) are not exempt.

These areas include a number of areas where the identified significance is considered to relate essentially to the structural system and where new fabric could be introduced without compromising this significance. General exemptions identified at Categories 2-5 also apply in these areas.

Exempt Works - Area 3 All non-structural works to identified internal spaces, including painting and decoration, replacement of floor coverings, and excluding works which directly impact upon significant fabric as identified in the conservation management plan. Works that damage significant wall, floor or ceiling fabric or finishes (particularly stonework, timber or moulded surfaces) are not exempt.

This category includes most areas of primary and contributory significance within the building. General exemptions identified at Categories 2-5 also apply in these areas.

Exempt Works - Area 4 All non-structural works to identified internal spaces, including painting and decoration (using muted colours only), replacement of floor coverings, and excluding works which directly impact upon significant fabric as identified in the conservation management plan. Works that damage significant wall, floor or ceiling fabric or finishes (particularly stonework, timber or moulded surfaces) are not exempt.

This category includes the main Swanston Street foyer and Trescowthick Information Centre, both on Level 2. General exemptions identified at Categories 2-5 also apply in these areas.

Exempt Works - Area 5 Other than for the general exemptions in Categories 2-5 (and noting the exclusions at Category 2), no additional permit exemptions are proposed for these areas.

This group of areas includes those areas identified as being of significance for their decorative schemes or original finishes.

Exempt Works - Area 6

Demolition of the corridor (F2.07-08) and office partitioning (F2.01, F2.02-3, F2.04-05, F2.06) is exempt providing a representative section of the corridor and offices is retained to the satisfaction of the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria (required to be confirmed in writing). Other exempt works in this area also include painting and decoration, replacement of floor coverings, excluding works which directly impact upon significant fabric as identified in the conservation management plan. Works that damage significant wall, floor or ceiling fabric or finishes (particularly stonework, timber or moulded surfaces) are not exempt.

Area 6 is an area of timber-framed offices accessed off a north-south corridor in the basement of Baldwin Spencer (1905-06). The recommended approach to this area in the Conservation Management Plan is to prefer retention of the offices and corridor, and if adaptation of the area is proposed, to retain a representative area intact.

Exempt Works - Area 7 Landscape Repair and maintenance of all hard and soft landscaping elements.

Repair and replacement of all hard landscaping elements such as recent bluestone steps and paving, seats, bins, lamps, and other external lighting, where such items match the existing or equivalent original item, with the exception of those elements which are individually identified in the extent of registration.

. Minor repair and maintenance works using appropriate materials to landscaping and sculptural elements individually identified in the extent of registration.

. The process of gardening and maintenance to care for the planting themes.

. Emergency and safety works.

. Repainting of trip lines to steps.

Management of plants in accordance with Australian Standard, *Pruning of amenity trees* AS 4373 General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further

inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates	1854, 1913, 1927, 1961,
Architect/Designer	Bates Peebles & Smart, Reed, Joseph,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	STATE LIBRARY AND NATIONAL MUSEUM COMPLEX,
Hermes Number	812
Property Number	

History

The trustees for Melbourne's new public library were appointed in July 1853 and on 3 July the following year the foundation stone for the first section of building was laid. Opened in 1856, this building was the first of many constructed on the site to accommodate four institutions over a period of time. These included the Public Library, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Industrial and Technological Museum and the Natural History Museum.

The Chairman of Trustees, lawyer Redmond Barry, was the prime founder of the institution and the aspiration of the trustees was to create one great centre of learning. Initially a competition was held for the design of the library and this was won by Joseph Reed. The first building constructed comprised an entrance hall and upstairs reading room. By 1865 wings had been added to the north and south of the original building, extending the Queen's Hall reading room on the first floor, and in 1870 the portico was added to the front facade.

The National Gallery of Victoria began its association with the site in 1861 when a gallery was opened to display works of art in the south wing of the library. Various buildings and wings were added to display additional artworks in 1874 and again in 1887 and 1892. Despite the continual searching for another site, the National Gallery shared the library site until 1968 when it moved to the new gallery building in St Kilda Road.

The 1866-67 Intercolonial Exhibition, held at the library site led to the opening of the Industrial and Technological Museum on this site in 1870, with many of the exhibits forming the core of the collection. In 1899 the contents of the National Museum, formerly the Natural History Museum, were transferred from the University of Melbourne to the library site. The Museum of Victoria remained at the site until its relocation c2000. At this time the library became the sole occupant of the seven acre site.

The draft statement of significance and the above history were produced as part of an Online Data Upgrade Project 2008. Sources were as follows:

Allom Lovell Sanderson Pty Ltd. *State Library and Museum of Victoria Buildings Conservation Analysis*. Melbourne 1985

National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Register, file no B427, State Library of Victoria and Murals

Plaque Citation

Designed by Joseph Reed and begun in 1854, this building also housed the National Gallery and Museum for many years. The reading room incorporated the largest reinforced concrete dome in the world when constructed in 1906-11.

Extent of Registration

Amendment of Register of Government Buildings

Melbourne City

Russell Street, City.

(vii) National Museum;

Swanston Street, City.

(i) State Library and National Museum Complex;

(iii) State Library Forecourt - Statues of Joan of Arc and St George and the Dragon;

[*Victoria Government Gazette* No. G39 12 October 1988 p.3091-2]

Transferred to the Victorian Heritage Register 23 May 1998 (2 years after the proclamation of the Heritage Act 1995 pursuant to the transitional provisions of the Act)

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This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>