

**Toast to Pirjo Rayner on her retirement as Librarian of St Mark's
College**

4 August 2023¹

Welcome to this Library Sundowner at which we thank Pirjo Rayner for over a third of a century of dedicated service as the Librarian of St Mark's College, and wish her all the very best for the future.

It's a pleasure to welcome back to the College the eighth Master of St Mark's, Rose Alwyn, and Angela Bannon, and to welcome other friends of the Library, current and former students, including current and former Library Assistants, and current and former staff of the College – friends all!

I am sorry that a number of people who had been intending to come have been prevented by illness from doing so.

Pirjo's focus as Librarian was always on the needs of our students, but one of the many developments in her time as Librarian was the building up of our significant rare books collection. Today is the first time that most of you will have seen the new rare book cabinets which have recently been installed – the one here which is in memory of Honorary Fellow Richard Watson, chairman of the Library Committee when Pirjo was appointed as Librarian in early 1989, and another in the far tutorial room.

I am delighted that Mary Watson, her son Guy, and Richard Watson's brother in law and our Honorary Fellow Richard Scott Young, are here today. In

¹ Pirjo had retired on 30 June, and returned for the Sundowner.

coming weeks, we will install a tribute to Richard Watson on the rare book cabinet given in his memory.

As I mentioned, Pirjo commenced as a part-time Librarian at St Mark's in early 1989. She had previously worked for 13 years in the State Library of South Australia, including in what became the Mortlock Library of South Australia.

Over the last 34 years she has cheerfully helped innumerable students, as well as Old Collegians, colleagues, and others. With great enthusiasm, she has led successive stages of modernisation of the Library, culminating in the move in 2015 from its old location above the Grenfell Price Dining Hall to this purpose-built Academic Centre, which was opened in 2015.

As you probably know, a "Learning Commons" was developed in 2019 where the old Library had been, and Pirjo took responsibility for this as part of the Librarian's responsibility.

This East Wing and the Learning Commons have contributed to giving St Mark's some of the best facilities for students of any college in Australia, and I want to acknowledge the leadership of Rose Alwyn and of John Bannon before her in building up our student facilities so well.

I know how much Pirjo appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the design of this Academic Centre – a purpose-built modern Library – and the result is something of which we are very proud and which is much used by our students. I was in here this morning, and the Library was packed with

students already studying hard in what is only the second Friday of semester!

In the spirit of serving our students, many developments over Pirjo's years have been guided by surveys of students' library usage and needs, the most recent of which was held earlier this year. Technological change has led to many improvements, including automation of the catalogue and of the loan system, including the introduction of QR codes for borrowing books, and the development of wireless internet access in this Academic Centre and in the Learning Commons.

Pirjo's thoughtful and forward-looking expansion of the Library holdings has always been mindful of the needs of students. The expansion of Library holdings has benefited immensely from many generous donations of books, to the great benefit of our students. A large proportion of the College's holdings has been donated. As well as new or recent books, this includes almost all of the College's rare book collection, and most of the holdings in the St Mark's Collection which Pirjo has developed – a collection devoted to publications by or about the College and its students, past and present.

As well as developing valuable links with external experts, such as Anthony Zammit **who is here today**, Pirjo has encouraged interest in and support for the Library through various events, such as Library Sundowners, and the publication of Library newsletters. Ever modest, it was only when we used the word "Sundowner" that she was agreeable to our having an event in her honour!

Throughout more than a third of a century of conscientious service to St Mark's, Pirjo has brought her very special qualities to this crucial part of the life of our residential academic community. She has been a warm and inviting presence in the Library. We are deeply grateful.

When one leaves a role, it is always good to see that it is left in the hands of someone in whom one has confidence. I know that Pirjo is very pleased to have been succeeded by Amanda Ward, whom Pirjo initially helped to choose for a part-time cataloguing role here, and who has qualifications and professional experience in both libraries and archives, and who is managing the College's extensive Archives as well as the Library. You may be interested to know that the Archives are in the process of moving from Walkley Cottage to the Library stacks in the basement next to the gym below us.

To Amanda and to our Director of Learning, Dr Katrina Stats, and our Events Manager, Carol Atkinson, and to others who have helped, many thanks for organising this Sundowner.

Many thanks to everyone for coming.

And to Pirjo – very many thanks again for over 34 years of dedicated and enthusiastic service.

I would ask that everyone raise your glasses and join me in a toast to Pirjo.

And before Pirjo responds, here is another small token of our gratitude and warm wishes.