Jean Hagger (11 October 1917 – 16 July 2008)

Jean Hagger, who died on 16 July, was one of the foundation members of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Indexers (then the Australian Society of Indexers) and was a life member of the Society. She was a remarkable woman who pursued four careers with vigour and total professionalism. Jean was born on 11 October 1917. She was educated at West Preston Primary School and Coburg High School before winning a scholarship to Melbourne Girls High School (later MacRobertson High). She attended Melbourne Teachers College and was awarded the Trained Primary Teachers Certificate in 1937. Her first position was in the country but by 1943 she was teaching third grade at East Coburg Primary School. The headmaster at that time was interested in starting a school library and sought volunteers. Jean expressed interest and her offer was accepted. So began Jean's second career as a librarian.

Typically she approached her new career professionally. She discovered that the Australian Institute of Librarians (now ALIA) offered examinations and certification, though no courses. She therefore began to study for these examinations and received encouragement from a number of people, most notably Colin McCallum (the State Librarian) and Ellinor Archer (Chief Librarian at CSIRO). In 1946 she decided that she would pursue a career in Librarianship and resigned from the Education Department in order to attend the University of Melbourne where she gained her BA while also working in the university library and completing her basic professional qualification.

In 1952 Jean worked in the library of the United States Information Service. Thelma Posso was the librarian and became both a mentor, imbuing Jean with the notion of librarianship as service, and a friend. This experience inspired Jean to seek experience in the United States. She was fortunate to go to the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh which was not only an exemplar of public library service but was also adjacent to the University of Pittsburgh which had one of the leading schools of librarianship in the US. Whilst in Pittsburgh Jean was able to attend some of the classes at the library school.

Following that experience Jean returned to the University of Melbourne. Very soon, she was doing part-time teaching at the library training school attached to the State Library of Victoria. In 1960–61 Jean was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to attend the School of Librarianship at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Returning to Melbourne she found that the State Library of Victoria was reducing its classes, especially those conducted in the evening. There were loud protests from students, and the Victorian Branch of the Library Association of Australia formed a committee, of which Jean was a member, to assess the demand for professional education. Meanwhile the branch conducted classes, with RMIT providing accommodation, Jean being one of the lecturers. The response was overwhelming and the Branch approached RMIT and the Victorian Education Department, to see if there would be interest in establishing a course. This led to the establishment of a Department of Librarianship at RMIT, and Jean was appointed as the foundation Head. She was the

first female Head of Department at RMIT and was the only one in the Institute's first century. So began a third career.

The first courses were offered in 1963 and were for the Registration Examinations of the Library Association of Australia. The courses were, from the first, in great demand; 189 part-time students were enrolled in the first year. At the end of that first year Jean was awarded a British Council grant to study librarianship education in the United Kingdom. This proved to be a valuable experience because education for librarianship in Australia was developing along British rather than American lines, with undergraduate and postgraduate courses rather than purely postgraduate as in the US. She visited all the library schools in England and Scotland (at that time there was no school in Wales or Northern Ireland) and the experience was put to good use when it came to the design of courses at RMIT.

In 1965 the Department offered a two year course leading to an Associateship Diploma of RMIT – the first undergraduate course in librarianship in an Australian institution. However, with the establishment of the Victoria Institute of Colleges, and the decision by RMIT to join the Institute, it became possible to design a course leading to a first degree, and in 1970 approval was gained for a four year program leading to a Bachelor of Social Science in Librarianship: the first undergraduate degree in Librarianship in Australia. With courses beginning in 1970 the first full-time students completed the program at the end of 1973 and graduated in a VIC ceremony in May 1974. There was also a one year program leading to a Graduate Diploma. Both courses were available part-time.

Jean was interested in research in librarianship and, on her retirement, endowed the Jean Hagger Librarianship Research Support Fund. Part of this concern was an ambition before she retired to see a graduate from the Department with a higher degree in Librarianship. That ambition was realised when the first student submitted his thesis in 1977 and graduated in May 1978. Jean retired from RMIT in December 1977. She had by then become one of the foundation members of the Australian Society of Indexers (as it was then), and she now embarked on a fourth career as an indexer. She undertook several commissions for Hyland House but perhaps her best memorial is the index to six of the eight volumes (counting Parts 1 and 2 of Volume 2 as two volumes) of Historical Records of Victoria. In 1998 her contribution to the Society and to the profession of indexing was recognised by the award of life membership.

As well as her professional concerns Jean was an active member of Zonta. When this women's service club was reintroduced into Australia in 1965 Jean was one of the founding members and remained active until her final illness. She was one of two life members of her branch.

Jean was a totally thorough person; she would not otherwise have achieved all that she did. She set high standards for herself and expected others to aim high also. She was a loyal friend and colleague, always helpful and a great mentor. She was widely respected and left a large footprint as a librarian, as an academic leader and as an indexer. She will be greatly missed.

Michael Ramsden

The photograph of Jean Hagger, taken in around 1979, is from the RMIT archives