

Fisher Library

Address Eastern Avenue, The University of Sydney

Practice NSW Government Architects Branch

Designed 1958 Completed 1962 & 1971

History & Description The Fisher Library was designed as the university's main resource centre. Prominently located at the eastern edge of the university campus it overlooks Victoria Park & is adjacent to the main university entry off Parramatta Road as well as the sandstone Victorian Gothic style Main Quadrangle Building & Great Hall, designed by Edmund Blacket, 1859. The library was planned to be constructed in two stages: Stage 1, the Undergraduate Wing & main entry, with administration & special services, & Stage 2, the Bookstack with facilities for staff & senior scholars. Both stages were designed by the NSW Government Architects Branch, project architect Ken Woolley, (the Government Architect during this period was Edward Herbert Farmer), in association with T. E. O'Mahony. The five-storey concrete framed Undergraduate Wing with seating for approximately 2,000, open access book stacks & individual carrels, & the link entry vestibule with the lift shaft for the future Bookstack, was opened in 1962. The horizontal form of the Undergraduate Wing was enhanced by the use of continuous glazing combined with cantilevered floor & roof slabs, including an open roof terrace. The façade was part clad in stone at ground level & at the underside of each upper level's glazing. The extensive glazing combined with the white painted soffits & perimeter sloping ceiling enhanced the indirect natural light entering into the perimeter study areas. The air conditioning plant was the largest of its type then in Australia. Stage 1 received The Sulman Award & the RIBA Bronze Medal in 1962.

The Stage 2 nine-storey Bookstack building was copper clad & in contrast to the extensive horizontal glazing of the Undergraduate Wing had narrow vertical windows. It was completed in 1967 but not fully functioning until 1971. Although originally designed as the research library for senior scholars & staff, the stack wing became an open access area for all readers. The two basement levels were used as University offices including the offices of the Chancellor.

The library, along with the Chemistry Building, also designed by the NSW Government Architecture Branch, 1957, were the first buildings to introduce modern architecture into the traditional Gothic and Wilkinsong's Mediterranean style building stock of the university. The choice of pre-oxidized extruded bronze for the wall cladding & window framing for the library was influenced by Woolley's knowledge of metal cladding on buildings designed by Alvar Aalto, such as the National Pensions Building, Helsinki (1952). The Fisher Library & the now demolished State Government Office Block, 1967, are considered to have a strong association with Ken Woolley as important major buildings in his early career. He was 25 years old at the time of his appointed to design the library. Woolley was awarded the RAIA Gold Medal in 1993.

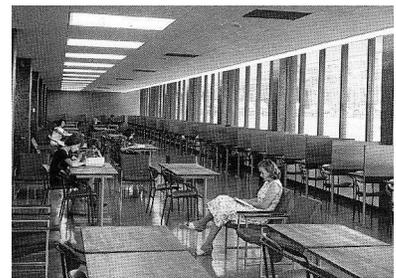
(Part sourced from the Fisher Library Heritage Study 2007 . Part 1 Report Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners Pty. Ltd.)

Statement of Significance Fisher Library is a significant work of the NSW Government Architects Branch during the period of the 1958-1971, all in association with T E O'Mahony. The modern architecture of the Undergraduate Wing, with its structure expressed, cantilever, contrasting materials & large areas of glazing was a major change in aesthetic from the previous architectural styles adopted for the university. The contrasting form & use of materials of the Bookstack completed the balanced architectural composition. Ken Woolley is a notable Australian architect & this is an important work in his early career.

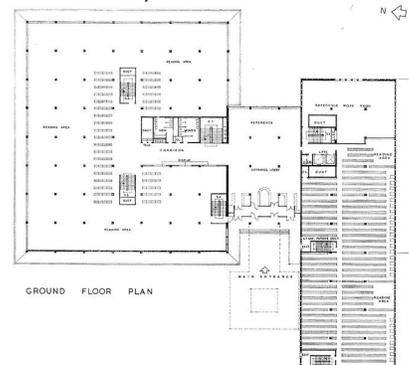
Criteria Applicable **N2.** Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
N5. Having a special association with the life or works of an architect of significant importance in our history



Horizontal open form façade of the Reading Rooms. Source: Max Dupain.



Reading Rooms. Source: DPWS from Metcalf, A, *Architecture in Transition: The Sulman Award 1932-1996*



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Floor Plan. Source: Fisher Library Heritage Study 2007 . Part 1 Report



Fisher Library. Source: www.sydneyarchitecture.com