

Domed Building, State Library of Victoria

Address 328 Swanston Street, Melbourne 3000

Practice Bates, Pebbles & Smart

Designed 1908

Completed 1912

History & Description The State Library reading room and associated storage areas were designed in 1908 by N G Peebles, of the firm of Reed, Smart & Tappin, and executed under the reconstituted firm of Bates Peebles & Smart. The structure had been designed for the Monier system of reinforced concrete, which held a virtual monopoly in Melbourne, but this was challenged, and the contract was won by J W & D A Swanson using the Kahn system as marketed by its agents, the Trussed Steel Company of Westminster. The forms and dimensions of the members remained essentially unchanged, including octagonal columns with octagonal cone heads. Construction was completed in 1912, at which time the roof of 34.75 metres in diameter was briefly the largest reinforced concrete dome in the world. But the span was almost immediately eclipsed by Max Berg's Jahrhunderthalle or Centennial Hall at Breslau in Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland) of 1912-13, with a dome of 64.55m.

The basic form, inspired by the Library of Congress in Washington, originated with the Chief Librarian, E La T Armstrong, and was designed to accompany the introduction of the Dewey system.

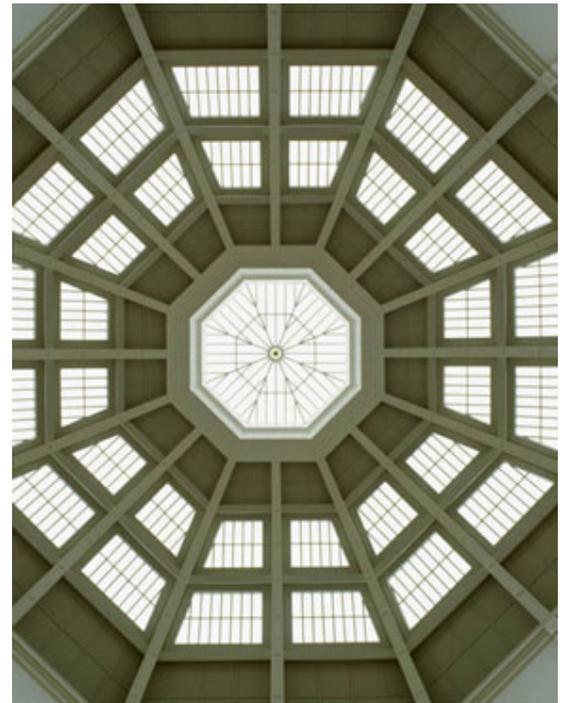


Restored Interior 2004 [SLV]

Statement of Significance The domed building of the Melbourne Public Library (now State Library) is significant for its pioneering work in the use of reinforced concrete and its ability to span large areas.

It is also important as an early example of a concrete aesthetic with the structure being freely expressed in an unadorned manner in many of its internal spaces.

Designed in the style of the Berlin Library and Library of Congress reading rooms, the domed reading room is the largest and most imposing library reading space in Australia (Criteria N4).



Restored Dome glazing 2004 [SLV]

Criteria Applicable N2 - Significant heritage value in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
N4 - Significant monumental and symbolic heritage value to the development of architecture and its history.
N6 - Significant heritage value in demonstrating a high degree of technical achievement of a particular period.



View to the East c1925 [SLV]



Information Room c1913 [SLV]