

**Perceptions of France:
French Books in the Early Libraries of South Australia, 1848-1884**

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Introduction

Many societies have their “foundation story,” and South Australia has its own. This is the story of the “trunk full of books,” shipped from London by the South Australian Literary Association, which arrived in the infant colony aboard the *Tam O’Shanter* in December 1836.¹ The donors included men such as Robert Gouger, James Hurtle Fisher and John Morphett, men whose names were to become famous in South Australia. Their ambition was that South Australia should become a literate society with a library of its own of which their books would form a part. That ambition was

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¹ See Carl Bridge, *A Trunk Full of Books: History of the State Library of South Australia and its Forerunners* (Netley, South Australia, 1986).

finally realized in 1848 with the creation of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute, the first stable library after ten years of faltering efforts to found such an institution.² In 1856, the collection of books, now numbering approximately 2,000 titles, passed into the library of the newly founded South Australian Institute. By 1884 the number of titles had grown tenfold, at which date the collection was split, some volumes being transferred to the new Public Library (which was to provide reference works only), some volumes being retained for the Circulating Library (which were then available for borrowing). The South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and the South Australian Institute became the forerunners of the present State Library of South Australia, and their story has already been written, but the story of the French books acquired during the period 1848-1884 has yet to be told.

The growth of the library holdings during those years, and the place of French books among them, can be gauged by reference to the Catalogues and Supplements issued by the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and by the South Australian Institute.³ For the period 1864 onwards, this information can also be supplemented by reference to the Stock Books of the South Australian Institute, used annually to record the presence and condition of all books in the library.⁴ This gives a total of thirteen catalogues or supplements, plus three stock books. In consulting these sources a broad definition of "French books" was originally adopted. This included: (a) books by French authors in whatever language and wherever published; and (b) books in French by authors of any nationality. The final total is approximately 522 titles that were on the library shelves in 1884 or had been at some point before that date.⁵ Inevitably, any figures cannot be perfectly precise, due to a number of factors, including the imprecision in the original catalogues,⁶ but the numbers are sufficiently accurate to permit useful analysis. Of the 522 titles recorded, 224 are in French, 1 in

² See Carl Bridge, "South Australia's early public libraries, 1834-56," *South Australiana* 21:1 (March 1982), 80-86.

³ South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute, *Catalogue of books belonging to the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute* (Adelaide, 1848); South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute, *Catalogue of books belonging to the ... library* (Adelaide: G. Dehane [and] T. Strode, 1848-1851); South Australian Institute, *Catalogue of the Books in the Library of the South Australian Institute* (Adelaide, 1861); *First Supplement of the Books in the Library of the South Australian Institute* (Adelaide, 1863); South Australian Institute, *The Catalogue of the Library of the South Australian Institute* (Adelaide, 1869); South Australian Institute, *Supplement to the Library Catalogue published in 1869* (Adelaide, 1876); South Australian Institute, "Appendix D to Annual Report for 1876-7 [1882-83]. List of Books added to the Library between the publication of the supplementary catalogue (in March, 1876,) and September 1st, 1877 [between September 1st 1882, and September 1st, 1883]".

⁴ State Records of South Australia: GRG 19/112 – Shelf list of the South Australian Institute 1864-84. 3 vols. 9 ins.

⁵ The total of 522 titles includes a small number of works which appeared in one catalogue but disappeared subsequently, for example a book known only by its title, *Description de Versailles* and classified under Topography which appeared in the first catalogue of 1848.

⁶ For example, the catalogues of 1848 and 1851 refer to one work by its title, *Belles Lettres*, but it is impossible to be certain whether this work is by Rollin and whether it is the same work as Rollin's *Belles Lettres - Method of Teaching and Studying*, which appears in the 1861 catalogue.

Latin (Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, Paris, 1840-50), and the remainder in English. The total number includes six works by authors of joint English/French nationality and eight works in French (either written in French or translated into French) by non-French authors (including *Description d'espèces nouvelles de Mollusques Nudibranches* by George French Angas (Paris, 1884).⁷ It also includes eight dictionaries and one miscellaneous item in French from a non-French source (the statutes of the Société Khédiviale de Géographie). In short, approximately 500 of the selected books are by French authors. A closer examination of the available sources allows us to study the rate of growth of French acquisitions, the subject range of material acquired and the relative importance of French-language titles within the libraries' overall holdings. These issues in turn illustrate the tastes of library readers, the position of the French language and perceptions of French culture in the early years of South Australia's history.

Growth of the holdings

Table 1 sets out the figures relating to the growth of book stock and shows the relative importance of French books within the overall holdings of the early libraries. From this we can see that the principal pattern in the rate of growth is one of consistency, in spite of ups and downs. The first catalogue of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute (1848) is modest in size, containing just over 1000 titles of which 25 (2.4%) are French. However, by the time the second catalogue is published, in 1851, a noticeable transformation has occurred: French books now constitute 5.3% of the total bookstock and over 61% of all French books are in French. There are other years when French books constitute a relatively high percentage of recent acquisitions (e.g. 1879-80, 10.8%), but the figures given for 1851 in respect of books in French are the highest that will be reached during the period. This surge in growth is easily explained by the introduction of a new category into the library catalogue, "French Works," which consists exclusively of works in French. This was a unique category—"German Literature (Class Q)" was not introduced until 1861. However, there are periods of slower growth that also deserve comment. In 1851-61 and 1863-69 the number of French books purchased declines (from a peak of 25 and an average of 14) to less than ten new titles per annum. But the total number of books purchased also declined, with the result that the percentage of French books remains constant at 2.9%. These decreases are no doubt attributable, respectively, to the period of financial hardship experienced by the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute prior to the foundation of the South Australian Institute, and, in the second case, to the stringency experienced in public finances throughout the Colony during the 1860s as the result of drought and other difficulties in the important agricultural sector of the economy.⁸ But there were other occasions when the percentage of French books among recent acquisitions dropped well below the average, for example 1% in 1876 and 1.2% in 1881-2. But, interestingly, these low levels of purchasing were immediately compensated by correspondingly higher acquisition rates in the subsequent period. By 1883, both the total library holdings and

⁷ Du Cange's *Glossarium* and Angas's *Description* are currently in the State Library of South Australia, at Storage 473 b and S. Australiana Books 594.360994 A581 respectively.

⁸ See Carl Bridge, *A Trunk Full of Books*, 20 & 54; and R.M. Gibbs, *A History of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1969), 70.

the number of French books have grown considerably, but they have grown in parallel: the number of French books has risen by a factor of almost 21, while the total number of books has risen by a factor of almost 19. Overall, the percentage of French books within the total bookstock is almost identical at the beginning and end of the period (2.4% and 2.7%), though the percentage of French books in French has risen from 28% to almost 43%.

Table 1: Relative number of French books (i.e. titles) within overall collection:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--|--|-----------------------|--|---|
| Year/Source | Total books in library | French books added | Total French books | French books added as % of books added | Total French books as % of total books | Total books in French | Total books in French as % of total French books | Total books in French as % of total books |
| 1848 cat | 1035 | | 25 | | 2.4 | 7 | 28.0 | 0.7 |
| 1851 cat | 1975 | 79 | 104 | 8.4 | 5.3 | 64 | 61.5 | 3.3 |
| 1861 cat | 4054 | 65 | 169 | 2.9 | 4.2 | 64 | 37.9 | 1.6 |
| 1863 sup | 5137 | 43 | 212 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 78 | 36.8 | 1.5 |
| 1869 cat | 7076 | 57 | 269 | 2.9 | 3.8 | 104 | 38.7 | 1.5 |
| 1876 sup | 15901 | 91 | 360 | 1.0 | 2.3 | 142 | 39.4 | 0.9 |
| 1876-7 sup | 16542 | 27 | 387 | 4.2 | 2.3 | 142 | 36.6 | 0.9 |
| 1877-8 sup | 16981 | 13 | 400 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 143 | 35.8 | 0.8 |
| 1878-9 sup | 17388 | 44 | 444 | 10.8 | 2.6 | 182 | 41.0 | 1.0 |
| 1879-80 sup | 17814 | 14 | 458 | 3.3 | 2.6 | 185 | 40.4 | 1.0 |
| 1880-81 sup | 18608 | 21 | 479 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 189 | 39.5 | 1.0 |
| 1881-82 sup | 19179 | 7 | 486 | 1.2 | 2.5 | 192 | 39.5 | 1.0 |
| 1882-83 sup | 19619 | 27 | 513 | 6.1 | 2.6 | 215 | 41.9 | 1.1 |
| Stock Book | | 9 | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 19628 | | 522 | | 2.70 | 224 | 42.9 | 1.1 |

It is worth noting that the rate of growth of the French book-stock held by the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and the South Australian Institute (an average of 14.2 volumes per annum for the period 1848-1883) compares favorably with the rate of growth after the creation of the Public Library, though a like-for-like comparison is difficult given the difference in function and funding arrangements. The Public Library's accession books reveal that approximately 235 French titles were acquired between 1884 and 1893, though 76 arrived in 1884-85 and were probably ordered by the South Australian Institute. Setting aside the figures for 1884-85, the average growth rate for the remaining nine years of the decade is 17.7 volumes per annum.⁹ Similarly, the number of French acquisitions during 1894 to 1898 was only 13 volumes, and 166 (16.6 p.a.) for the whole decade 1894-1903. The number of French books purchased after 1903 does show an increase (29 in 1903, 5 in 1904, and 72 in 1905), but these were purchased almost entirely through the special agency of the Morgan Thomas Bequest.

The surviving Minutes of the Library Book Selection Sub-Committee (28 July 1875 – 4 January 1884) provide a glimpse of how books in the early libraries, including French books, were acquired.¹⁰ For example, the minutes of the 28 July

⁹ State Records of South Australia: GRG 19/373 – Accession Book 1875-1914. 4v.

¹⁰ State Records of South Australia: GRG 19/366.

1875 read: “Sec[retary] & Librarian to prepare a book order of new books - & send the list around for the members of the Committee, before the next meeting.” At the next recorded meeting (8 October 1875), we read that, “The Secretary laid before the Committee book lists recently issued by Mr Mullen of Melbourne, with certain books marked by himself & the Librarian—suggested to be ordered—Referred by the Board to the Committee. Committee went through lists &, with some alteration, approved same, and authorised the Secretary to order same.” Suggestions for purchase also came from outside the Sub-Committee, as the minutes of 21 December 1876 reveal: “Secretary to ask Mr Todd about Horological Journal and 3 books suggested by Capt Biggs. [...] The Committee then examined the suggestion book & disposed thereof subject to queries as above.” Once selected, the books were then ordered. The minutes of 28 July 1875 read: “List of books in Class M & other classes [...] to be ordered from London, estimated cost £85.6.6 Ditto to be got in Adelaide estimated cost £8.6.0.” The Register of Books Ordered 1875-1901¹¹ shows that most books were ordered from Trübner and Co. in London,¹² as would continue to be the case after the creation of the Public Library.¹³ There we read, “Bourrienne, *Memoirs*. Ordered from “T & Co” on 2/7/85”; “Francœur [Louis Benjamin], *Traité de Géodosie* [sic]. Ordered from “T & Co” on 17/6/75; received on 3/2/80”; and “Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de*. Ordered from “T & Co” on 18/2/79; received on 27/12/79.” Overall, the book purchasing practices of the South Australian Institute were typical for, as Wallace Kirsop has shown, individuals, learned societies and reference libraries in the nineteenth century, unable to satisfy their needs through Australian wholesalers, maintained accounts with booksellers in Europe.¹⁴ Furthermore it was via London, in the nineteenth century, that most French books were exported to both the United States and the British Empire.¹⁵

In addition to purchases, books (including French books) were also donated to the library. For the period after 1884 donations to the Public Library are recorded in the annual *Report of the Board of governors of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery of South Australia*;¹⁶ for the period 1897-1903 further details can be found in

¹¹ State Records of South Australia: GRG 19/378 – Register of books ordered. 1875-1901. 1v.

¹² On Trübner, see Barry Taylor, ed., *Foreign-Language Printing in London 1500-1900* (Boston Spa and London, 2002).

¹³ Each entry in the Accession Books gives the following information: Accession date and number; price; number of volumes; author’s name; title of book; name of publisher; place of publication; date of publication; size; binding; and, “source from whence derived.”

¹⁴ Wallace Kirsop, “Bookselling and publishing in the nineteenth century,” in D.H. Bochardt and W. Kirsop, eds., *The Book in Australia: Essays towards a Cultural and Social History*, Historical Bibliography Monograph, 16 (Melbourne, 1988), 16-42 (38).

¹⁵ See, Frédéric Barbier, “Les marchés étrangers de la librairie française,” in Henri-Jean Martin, Roger Chartier and Jean-Pierre Vivet, eds., *Histoire de l’édition française, III: Le temps des éditeurs. Du Romantisme à la Belle Epoque* (s.l., 1985), 268-281 (280).

¹⁶ Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia. Board of Governors, *Report of the Board of Governors of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery of South Australia* (Adelaide, 1884-87; 1888-89; 1890-1908; 1910-16).

the Register of Donations.¹⁷ Some insight into the preceding period can be gained from the opening pages of the Acquisition Book, 1875-1902. These list a number of donations, including several early imprints: for example, Montjoie (entry 12), *Histoire de la conjuration de Louis-Philippe d'Orléans* (Paris, 1796); Gilibert (entry 1474), *Abrégé du système de Linne* (Lyon, 1802); and Chesterfield (entry 6611), *Advice to his son, on men and manners... to which are now added, the Marchioness de Lambert's Advice to her son, and Moral reflections by the Duc de la Rochefoucault* (London: printed for Richardson and Urquhart, [1780?]). We know that the South Australian Institute did purchase early imprints, since the edition of Voltaire's *Œuvres complètes* (71 vols.) ordered in February 1879 and received in December of the same year was published in Gotha by Charles-Guillaume Ettinger between 1785 and 1790, but this was almost certainly exceptional. In 1853 the Executive Council granted £300 "for the purchase of books of the current literature of the day,"¹⁸ and the majority of books purchased, including French books, were always of relatively recent publication. It might therefore be reasonable to speculate that some of the early imprints in the first catalogues of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute, such as Besdel's *Abrégé de Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes* (London, 1777) and St Lambert's *Les Saisons* (Paris, 1785), were also donations.

At this point (1883) the specificity and uniqueness of the South Australian Institute's holdings can be measured by a most interesting parallel. In the following year (1884) the Port Adelaide Institute, which had the largest institute library in the colony after the South Australian Institute, published a catalogue of its holdings. That catalogue lists 5,457 titles, of which only 70 (1.3%) are by French authors, and none are in French; in the South Australian Institute, at the same date, 2.7% of all books are by French authors, and 1.1% of all books are in French. Overall, therefore, from figures relating to the pattern of growth, we can conclude that, throughout the period, French titles retained an important place in the collections of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and the South Australian Library and that readers remained able to read texts in French.

Subject analysis: types of book

The range of subjects covered by French books can be studied in more detail by comparing the last catalogue published by the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute in 1851 with the accumulated holdings of the South Australian Institute in 1883, just prior to their dispersal. Certain patterns become discernible across the period, indicating not just that readers were reading French, but also what they were reading.

Table 2 Developmental trends in subject matter

| | History | Literature | Other | Empty categories |
|-------------|---------|------------|-------|------------------|
| 1851 | 62.5% | 19.2% | 18.3% | 13/25 |
| 1883 | 26.3% | 47.1% | 26.6% | 1/25 |

¹⁷ State Records of South Australia: GRG 19/377 – Register of donations. 1897-1903. 1v. The entry for 19/7/99 reads, "A. Adamson, Grenfell St: *Second Voyage dans l'Intérieur de l'Afrique...Paris, 1790*".

¹⁸ Bridge, *A Trunk Full of Books*, 26.

In the 1851 catalogue, as in 1848, history dominates, both among books in French and books not in French. In addition to the eleven titles classified under "History," all 7 titles in the "Biography and Correspondence" section (for example, Labédoyère's *Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*) as well as Madame Junot's *Memoirs of Napoleon* from the Miscellaneous section, also have history-related topics. Furthermore, historical subjects account for 44 out of the 61 titles listed under "French Works." History is, therefore, the dominant subject matter within the 1851 catalogue: it constitutes 62.5% of all French books, a figure which could be raised still further by the inclusion of volumes from other categories, such as "Topography, Travel and Voyages," which have some historical content. It should also be noted that most history books are being read in French. The second largest group of books in the 1851 catalogue belongs to the general area of literature, though these run a distant second at only just over 19% of all French books. These are drawn principally from "Novels" and "Belles Lettres" and are therefore in English, while titles of a literary nature account for just 6.6% of "French Works." Thus, not only is the general area of literature smaller than history in numerical terms, but most French literature is being read in English. Apart from these two subject areas, book numbers in the remaining categories of the catalogue are numerically small, amounting to just 18.3% of all 104 French titles. They are also spread across a relatively small range of topics: 13 out of 25 categories contain no French books at all.

The period 1861-63, under the aegis of the South Australian Institute, sees an increased diversity of subject matter among French books. Apart from additions in French to the category of "French Works," French titles in English acquired during these years are spread out across "Political Economy," "Moral Philosophy," "Botany," "Poetry and Drama," and "Novels and Works of Fiction." Furthermore, by 1883 the subject spread is radically different from what it had been in 1848-51. The largest single cluster of French books, among both titles in French and titles not in French, is now literature (47.1%): these are found in Class M ("Novels and Other Works of Fiction"), Class N ("Poetry and the Drama"), Class O ("General Literature") and Class R ("French and Other Modern Literature, excepting English and German"), 61% of this latter category being literary in nature.¹⁹ These books are predominantly read in French. At the same date only a quarter (26%) of all French books are historical in nature. Of these, approximately one-third are in French and are found in Class R; the greater number, in English, are found principally, but not exclusively, in Classes B ("History, Chronology and Antiquities") and Class C ("Biography"). Consequently, by this date, not only is history numerically less significant than literature, but more history is being read in English than French. Also noticeable at this date is the fact that although the percentage of French books not belonging to the general groupings of literature or history remains similar to the earlier period (20%), these titles are now spread across every category except Class Q ("German literature"). That is to say, by 1883 there has been a shift of subject from history to literature and a broadening of the subject base represented by French books.

¹⁹ A new library classification scheme was introduced in 1861. The description of Class R ("French and Other Modern Literature, excepting English and German") is, however, deceptive since the category contains only works in French and includes titles that are not literary in nature (e.g., Massillon, *Le Petit-Carême*). Works in French also continue to be found in categories other than Class R (e.g. Cuvier's *Règne animal* in Class T, "Encyclopaedias, Dictionaries, Grammars, and other works of Reference").

We can now look at these general groupings of French books in more detail under the headings of history, literature and other categories.

History

The catalogues of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and the South Australian Institute list some 214 works that are broadly historical in nature, 70 in 1848-51 and 143 in 1861-83 (Table 3). From a consideration of these titles, three issues emerge which deserve attention: authorship, coverage and specificity.

With regard to authorship, the range and quality of the historians present in the catalogues is impressive. Most authors are French, exceptions to this being generally in the case of works dealing with other national histories that are translated into French, for example Kohlrausch's *Histoire de l'Allemagne* (translated from German) and Geyer's *Histoire de Suède* (translated from Swedish). The large majority of works are by prominent near-contemporary authors, the best-represented being Capefigue (26 titles), Lamartine (13), Thiers (10), Guizot (9) and Thierry (5). Some of these figures, such as Taine, Thierry and de Tocqueville, are primarily historians developing new trends in historical writing; others are politicians and intellectuals representing a range of political and economic views (Capefigue, Guizot, Lamartine and Michaud defending the monarchist cause, Michelet, Mignet, Sismondi and Thiers espousing more liberal positions). In addition, a number of works by important pre-nineteenth-century historians are also present: for the eighteenth century there are Saint-Simon's *Memoirs*, Voltaire's *Histoire du parlement* and the *History of Charles XII of Sweden*, Montesquieu's *Grandeur et décadence des Romains*, and Rollin's *Ancient History of the Egyptians*; for the seventeenth century we find d'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation*, Sully's *Memoirs* and Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*; for the medieval period Froissart's *Chronicles* and Joinville's *History of Saint Louis*. That is to say, the collection is built on writers of quality and there are no significant omissions among the French historians who, with hindsight, one would expect to find.

Table 3: Range of Historical Coverage

| | <u>1848-51</u> | <u>1861-83</u> |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Europe | 58 | 104 |
| <i>England</i> | 4 | 10 |
| <i>France</i> | 41 | 68 |
| <i>Germany</i> | 1 | 4 |
| <i>Iceland</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Ireland</i> | 1 | 2 |
| <i>Italy</i> | 3 | 4 |
| <i>Portugal</i> | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Spain</i> | 2 | 3 |
| <i>Sweden</i> | 2 | 4 |
| <i>Switzerland</i> | 0 | 1 |
| <i>General</i> | 2 | 6 |
| America (North, South & Central) | 2 | 8 |
| Middle East/Levant/Holy Land | 1 | 5 |
| Far East | 2 | 4 |
| Ancient History | 2 | 5 |
| Church/Jewish History | 5 | 11 |
| World History | 0 | 6 |

Total**70****143**

Both the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute and the South Australian Institute achieve a relatively broad coverage in the chronological and geographical spread of their historical material. This takes in world history, including ten European countries, the American continent, the Middle East, the Far East, the ancient world and church history. Only Africa is absent. Nevertheless, Europe remains the dominant focus, and, within Europe, France naturally claims the greatest attention, 57% of all history books in 1848-51 and 47% in 1861-83. Within French history, the centers of greatest interest, as represented by numbers of titles, are the same in both 1848-51 and 1861-83. They are, in ascending order: Renaissance and Reformation, Medieval, contemporary, Ancien Régime, and, at the top of the tree, the Revolution until the death of Napoleon (26% of history books in 1848-51 and 32% in 1861-83). Furthermore, works in this latter category are supplemented by titles from the pens of Taine, Thibaudeau, Thierry and de Tocqueville dealing with the Ancien Régime, but which seek the causes of the Revolution in the preceding era.

These observations lead to questions regarding the specificity of the historical holdings, even though such considerations must remain partly speculative. The predominance of history books dealing with the Revolutionary era is explicable partly by a concern for recent events (Napoleon had died only in 1821 and his remains had been removed to the Panthéon as recently as 1840), but it may also have a deeper significance. Already in 1851 the library possessed the *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte* by Bourrienne, who had been Napoléon's secretary from 1795 until 1802, as well as the *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St Helena*, by Montholon, Napoleon's aide-de-camp who shared that exile with him. These historical works were later complemented in the library's collections by literary titles such as Béranger's *Chansons* and Hugo's *Les Orientales*, which together fostered the *légende napoléonienne*, the legend of Napoleon as hero and liberator rather than tyrant and oppressor. However, this emphasis, found in the works of French writers, is not unique: a similar preoccupation with the Revolutionary era and sympathy for Napoleon is noticeable among the English writers on French history whose works were found in the early libraries. The catalogues of 1848 and 1851 contain eight such titles, of which four focus on the Revolution and its aftermath; of these only Burke is hostile, while Carlyle and Hazlitt are openly sympathetic. Napoleon was viewed with some degree of admiration by British political radicals during the first half of the nineteenth century,²⁰ and the Literary Association, which put together the initial "trunk full of books," was itself marked by "dissenting religion and republican politics."²¹ It is therefore tempting to speculate that the French history books in the early libraries of South Australia reflect the ideals of an emigrant community sympathetic to the political radicalism of a Europe it had left behind.

Literature

After history (214 titles), the next largest general grouping of books is literature, with 190 titles in 1883. The topics, which deserve special consideration here, are the nature of the holdings in the early and later periods, the total coverage in 1884, and the specificity of the collection.

²⁰ See Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven, 2004).

²¹ Bridge, *A Trunk full of Books*, 3.

The first catalogue, issued in 1848, contains an extremely small number of literary works, only three texts and three studies, but they are distinctive in tone. The three texts all have a broadly didactic intent, seeking to convey or re-enforce an orthodox morality. They are *Conseils à ma fille*, a collection of twenty children's stories, first published in 1811 by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly (1763-1842) who was involved in the organization of primary education in Paris and worked in the "bureau de morale et d'esprit public"; the *Recueil choisi de traits historiques et de contes moraux* (1799) by Nicolas Wanostrucht (1745-1812), a selection of historical anecdotes and moral tales, the subtitle of which (not recorded in the catalogue) tells us that it is intended "à l'usage des jeunes gens de l'un et l'autre sexe qui veulent apprendre le français" ("for young people of both sexes who wish to learn French"); and *Les Saisons* (1769) by Saint-Lambert (1716-183), a pastoral idyll (based on Thomson's *Seasons*) which paints a conventional picture of bucolic happiness. The most substantial of the three literary studies maintains the same didactic tone. It appears in the catalogue only under the title of *Belles Lettres*, but is probably Rollin's *Belles Lettres: with reflections on taste, instructions with regard to eloquence, etc* (1726-28). By 1851 eleven new authors have been added to the catalogue, plus one work of literary criticism (La Harpe's *Lycée, ou cours de littérature ancienne et moderne*). These texts broaden the chronological coverage of the literature holdings with the result that, overall, there is now one sixteenth-century author (Rabelais), one seventeenth-century (Pascal), seven eighteenth-century (Lesage, Montesquieu, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Gresset, Ducis, Chénier and Wanostrucht), and four nineteenth-century (Bouilly, Mme de Stael, Dumas père and Victor Hugo). The newly acquired works are predominantly by "canonical" authors, and only the last two are contemporary (though they are represented by five texts and the *Hunchback, or the Bellringer of Notre Dame* respectively). That is to say, despite the emergence of the novel (destined later to become the dominant genre), the literary holdings of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute cater primarily to the taste of the cultivated reader or the reader seeking self-improvement.

However, this situation changes in the later period, both with regard to the size and the nature of the literary holdings. By 1883, of the 190 literary texts in the library catalogue 160 are contemporary novels. Twenty-three contemporary novelists figure among the books acquired between 1861 and 1883, the best represented being Jules Verne (31 titles), Dumas père (25 titles), Erckmann-Chatrian (19 titles), Paul Féval (18 titles), Lucien Biart (10 titles), and Henri Gréville, alias Madame Alice Durand (9 titles). A number of these novels are in French, but the more successful the novelist, the easier it becomes to acquire a translation in English. In the case of the novelists listed above, there is an almost exactly inverse relationship between the number of their works held by the library and the number of titles in French: thus, none of the novels by Verne is in French, as compared with 12% of those by Dumas, 53% of those by Erckmann-Chatrian, and 94% of those by Féval. The works of almost all novelists represented by a single work (for example Madame Craven, Ernest Daudet and Mlle Z. Fleuriot) are in French, the notable exception to this generalization being Balzac, represented only by *Cousin Pons* in English. Furthermore, novels represent an increasing percentage of new French acquisitions as the period progresses. Between 1861 and 1863 23% of all French acquisitions are novels; between 1876 and 1877 this rises to 44%, and between 1878 and 1879 the figure reaches 82% of all French acquisitions. In consequence, by 1883 novels represent about 30% of total French holdings. However, these figures are in line with the wider picture: fiction represented one-third of the total holdings of the South Australian Library and Mechanics'

Institute in 1854²² and, by 1900, averaged 71% of bookstock in the Institutes of South Australia overall.²³ The situation was to remain broadly similar in Mechanics' Institute Libraries across Australia.²⁴

It is possible to speak only in general terms about the reasons which guided the selection of these novels or of the other works acquired. Current popularity may have played some part: sixteen of the French books in the early libraries, including twelve novels, feature in the lists of French "Best Sellers" drawn up by Martyn Lyons for the period 1826-1850.²⁵ Similarly, the absence of works by Zola and the presence of only one novel by Balzac are features that are perhaps explained by the disapproval to which both authors were subject in Victorian Britain and other colonies, including Australia:²⁶ the first mention of Zola is Ernest Vizetelly's *Emile Zola* (1904), accessioned by the Public Library in December 1905 (accession number 56966). Conversely, many of the novels acquired, for example Biart's *Le Bizco*, Erckmann-Chatrian's *Madame Thérèse*, Gréville's *Suzanne Normis* and Malot's *Les Besoigneux*, are morally edifying tales of filial duty, virtuous womanhood or domestic bliss, and were published in series aimed specifically at a young or female readership.

But it is possible to get some sense of the reader response to these works through the Shelf List, or Stock Book, of the South Australian Institute. The purpose of these volumes was to record the presence and condition of each book in the library's catalogue for the period 1864-84. Various signs are used to describe each volume: "m" is used "If missing and no record;" "+" is used "If missing, condemned, denied or otherwise disposed of at former Examination;" and "R" is used if "Book has been replaced." These indications reveal that, among nineteenth-century novelists, sixteen titles by Dumas were replaced; three of them (*Count de Monte Christo*, *Twenty Years After* and *The Forty-Five Guardsmen*) were replaced three times. Duplicates were also purchased for seven of Dumas's novels and for Sand's *Consuelo*. The average survival time for popular novels, before destruction or disappearance, was approximately two to three years; in contrast, no books in Class R ("Works in French") were ever permanently lost or replaced. The Stock Books also reveal that two novels marked "NE," *The Chevalier d'Harmental* and *Chico the*

²² Bridge, *ibid.*, pp. 28-29; and Bridge, "South Australia's Early Public Libraries, 1834-56," 84, n.20.

²³ M.R. Talbot, *A Chance to Read* (Adelaide, 1992), 49.

²⁴ See Annette Bremer and Martyn Lyons, "Mechanics' Institute Libraries—The Readers Demand Fiction," in *A History of the Book in Australia 1891-1945. A National Culture in a Colonised Market*, ed. Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (St Lucia, Queensland, 2001), 209-225.

²⁵ Martyn Lyons, "Les bestsellers du 19e siècle," in Martin, Chartier and Vivet, eds., *Histoire de l'édition française, III: Le temps des éditeurs*, 368-397.

²⁶ For Zola's reception in Australia, see Deana Heath, "Literary Censorship, Imperialism and the White Australia Policy," in Lyons and Arnold, eds., *A History of the Book in Australia*; and M. Askew and B. Hubber, "The colonial reader observed: reading and its cultural context," in D.H. Bochardt and W. Kirsop, *The Book in Australia*, 110-137. On Canadian reticence with regard to Dumas, Maupassant, Sand, Sue and Zola among nineteenth-century novelists, as well as Prévost and Rousseau among their eighteenth-century predecessors, see Carole Gerson, *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto, 1989).

Jester, were given to the Great Northern Exploring Expedition (1861) under John McDouall Stuart and were never returned.

With regard to the specificity of the collection, we may observe that, by 1883, the chronological coverage of the French literature holdings has grown considerably, as has the number of “standard” authors: the sixteenth century is represented by Rabelais and Montaigne; seventeenth-century coverage now includes Boileau, Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Molière, Pascal and Racine (plus Bossuet, Nicole and Fénelon whose works belong more properly to the category “Theology and Ethics,” discussed below); eighteenth-century authors are Lesage, Montesquieu, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Gresset, Ducis, Chénier and Voltaire (*Théâtre choisi*); while the nineteenth century has broadened beyond the purely popular, and includes poetry by Hugo, Lamartine and Musset, as well as novels and prose works by Madame de Stael, Chateaubriand, Mérimée, Musset, and Vigny. However, certain emphases are apparent. Particularly noticeable is the dominance of texts dating from the Classical period of the seventeenth century, a period characterized by political and religious orthodoxy. Conversely, the eighteenth century (widely associated during the nineteenth century with immorality, religious unorthodoxy and political subversion) is seen through the works of authors whose importance (for the most part) has now declined or who are now regarded as least characteristic of the period. Lesage (represented here by *Asmodeus* and *Gil Blas*) was rated by the eminent nineteenth-century critic Emile Faguet (in his *Histoire de la littérature française*) more highly than any other eighteenth-century novelist;²⁷ like Bernardin (*Paul and Virginia*) and even Montesquieu (*Lettres persanes*), he was also regarded primarily as a moralist, not as a thinker.

Subversive eighteenth-century figures, notably the *philosophes*, are either absent from the library’s collection or begin to appear only in the transition period from the South Australian Institute to the Public Library: thus there are none of Voltaire’s *contes* or polemical writings in the early libraries, though his *Œuvres complètes* were received by Public Library on 27 December 1879; there is no Diderot, though John Morley’s *Diderot* (London, 1878) was accessioned by the Public Library on 28 August 1882; and there was no Rousseau until his *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1883) was accessioned on 28 November 1887.²⁸ It is a curious footnote that, according to the Stock Book, the library acquired (prior to the annual stock check of 1874) two eighteenth-century novels which, in the nineteenth century, were regarded as highly immoral, Laclos’s *Liaisons dangereuses* and the *Vie du chevalier de Faublas* by Louvet de Couvray: neither book found its way into the catalogue supplement published in 1876, though both were transferred to the Public Library.²⁹ With this exception, it is possible to see in the literature holdings of 1883 not just a broadening of coverage but a reticence with regard to eighteenth-century texts and authors which challenged religious or moral norms. This reticence parallels a similar

²⁷ Faguet’s *Histoire de la littérature française*, 2 vols (Paris, 1900-01) was acquired by the Public Library on 27 August 1902.

²⁸ The works by Morley and Rousseau are now in the State Library of South Australia, Storage 920 D555 and Storage 848.5 R864 respectively.

²⁹ In 2006 an edition of Laclos’s *Liaisons dangereuses*, 2 vols. (London, 1796), Special Collection 843 C, was reported as missing since 2004; however, without examination it is impossible to say if these are the volumes acquired by the South Australian Institute. Louvet de Couvray, *Vie de Chev. de Faublas* (Paris, 1796 (v.s.) an IV^e. de la Rép. fr. 8 tom in 4, 12mo), Rare Books Room 843.6 L894.

ambivalence with regard to the Anglo-Saxon Enlightenment, already observed by John Gascoigne in his study of the intellectual origins of nineteenth-century Australia.³⁰

Other categories

Of the 88 titles not classified as literature or history, approximately 18 are miscellaneous works such as language dictionaries, while the remaining 70 fall into three categories. The largest of these groups is science, particularly physics, natural history and astronomy; it brings together 40 titles by 23 authors, including nine works on viticulture, all acquired in 1869, at a time when strenuous efforts were being made to improve the quality of the wine produced in South Australia. The next, somewhat smaller group, relates to philosophy and religion, and includes 17 titles by 12 authors. The final area relates to the governance of society, particularly focusing on political economy, law and political institutions; on this topic there are 13 titles by 11 authors. All but eight of these 70 titles were acquired in the second half of the period between 1861-83. Two-thirds of the titles are in English, and two-thirds of the authors are contemporary, though this tendency towards English-language contemporary texts is particularly pronounced with regard to science books; the theological and political texts reach more comprehensively back in time to incorporate authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Some of the volumes, seen from today's perspective, have little originality or permanent interest. A number of the science titles are essentially textbooks, such as a series by Louis Figuier including *The Insect World*, *The Ocean World*, *The Vegetable World* and others. Some of the theology, for example *The Christian's Defence against the Fears of Death* by Charles Drelincourt, is essentially conventional spirituality. But, overall, there is a surprisingly rich coverage, including many of the most important and original writers in these fields. The scientific works include Buffon's *Natural History*, Cuvier's *Règne animal*, Arago's *Popular Lectures on Astronomy* and Louis Pasteur's *Etudes sur le vin*. In the field of philosophy and theology we find Nicole's *Pensées*, Calmet's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* and Joseph de Maistre's *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, as well as works by Pascal, Bossuet, Fénelon and Massillon. Society, law and political economy are represented by Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*, Bastiat's *Essays on Political Economy*, Say's *Treatise on Political Economy*, Sismondi's *Political Economy and the Philosophy of Government* and Volney's *Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires*. Furthermore, the library's holdings are balanced in coverage since these writers represent a diversity of approaches to the fields with which they deal. In science, Buffon's theory of the history of the earth was regarded as dangerously radical by theologians who saw it as contrary to the Biblical narrative, while Cuvier rejected the evolutionary theories propounded by Lamarck. In philosophy and theology, Comte attempted to turn his philosophy into a religion which substituted humanity for God, while de Maistre's works embody the Catholic reaction against the doctrines of the *philosophes*. Similarly, in political economy, Say espoused the *laissez-faire* economics of the *idéologues*, while Sismondi was critical of the effects on the poor of rising capitalism. In short, in the realm of science, social economy and

³⁰ John Gascoigne, with the assistance of Patricia Curthoys, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge, 2002).

moral philosophy, these volumes provide good coverage and bear witness both to wide intellectual curiosity and to a tolerance of diversity.

Conclusion

Fortunately, the story of the French books in the early libraries of South Australia is not all in the past, but continues into the present. In 1881 a “Committee on the transfer of books from the Institute Library to the Public Library” was set up. Its report, presented in 1883, draws attention to the way in which books in different classes of the South Australian Institute library catalogue had been treated, and says that Class M (“Novels”) “has been left in the Institute Library almost untouched, only 1 book having been marked for transfer.”³¹ Of the French books on the Library’s shelves at that date, 193 of the titles were transferred to the Public Library. The remaining 324 titles, including all the novels, retained their existing catalogue number and became part of the Adelaide Circulating Library.³² The current catalogue of the State Library of South Australia lists 154 titles with publication details that correspond to those of the books on the shelves of the South Australian Institute in 1883. Nine of these could not be located in 2004, and the remaining 145 were examined by hand to check for signs of provenance. Of these titles, 140 were marked in various ways that showed their link to the early libraries: some are marked with an ink stamp reading either “SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LIBRARY AND MECHANICS INSTITUTE” or “S.A. LIBRARY AND MECHANICS INSTITUTE ADELAIDE,” some carry an embossed stamp reading “South Australian Institute,” some still carry remnants of the bookplate of the South Australian Institute, some are marked with an ink-stamped or handwritten acquisition number (indicated by “an” or “AN” followed by the number), and some are marked with a hand-written acquisition or accession date – in the latter cases, accession numbers and accession dates can be cross-checked with the Acquisition Books. From among these 140 titles, 92 were transferred directly into the Public Library, and 48 became part of the Circulating Library.

The surviving volumes have different forms of interest in the twenty-first century, historical, local, bibliographical and scholarly. The historical interest centres on a small number of volumes which survive from the first catalogue (1848) of the South Australian Library and Mechanics’ Institute. In the case of two titles, Blaze de Bury’s *Racine and the French Classical Drama* (London, 1845) and Calmet’s *Dictionary of the Bible, Historical, Critical, Geographical and Etymological*, new edition, revised and corrected (London, 1800-1801), the provenance is highly probable: both carry the stamps of the South Australian Library and Mechanics’ Institute, both appear in every catalogue between 1848 and 1869, and both bear the acquisition number dating from their transfer to the Public Library. There is also a strong presumption in favor of the provenance of two eighteenth-century editions, Besdel’s *Abrégé de Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes* (London, 1777) and Saint-

³¹ GRG 19/179 Minutes and reports by the committee on the transfer of books from the Institute Library to the Public Library. 2 May 1881 - 15 Aug. 1883. 1 folder. (Paragraph VI). Examination of Stock Book Vol 1, A-M 1600, shows that the one volume transferred was: T[homas] Roscoe, *Italian Novelists*, [London, 1825] 4 vols, catalogue number 1087 (current call number in the State Library of South Australia: Storage 853).

³² See: Adelaide Circulating Library, *Catalogue of the Adelaide Circulating Library* (Adelaide, 1886).

Lambert's *Les Saisons, Poëme; et Pièces Fugitives* (Paris, 1785): neither of these volumes carries the stamps of the early libraries, but they bear the acquisition numbers which denote their transfer to the Public Library, and both titles were present in all the catalogues.³³

Local interest centers on books associated with well-known figures in the early history of South Australia. These are Angas, *Description d'espèces nouvelles de Mollusques Nudibranche* (Paris, 1864 [*Journal de Conchyliologie*, 12: 43-70]), which bears the handwritten inscription: "The Library South Austr. Institute from the Author;" Victor Rendu's *Ampélographie Française* (Paris, 1857) bearing an inscription on the fly-leaf which reads, "This work is presented to the South Australian Library and Institute and has been purchased by subscriptions from the following gentlemen: George Anstey, W.J. Browne, J.H. Browne P.B. Burgoyne, Fredk. H. Dutton, Alexr L. Elder, George Green, Joseph Oppenheimer, Wm Paxton, R. Barr Smith, Lawrence Clark ----- [illegible]"; and Achille Murat, *A Moral and Political Sketch of the United States of North America* (London: Wilson, 1833), now in the Gouger Collection, which bears the autograph signature of Robert Gouger. This volume has a further importance in that it appears to have been among the books donated by Gouger and shipped to Adelaide in the original trunk of books by the South Australian Literary and Scientific Association.³⁴

There are also titles which are of bibliographical interest, the most remarkable of which is perhaps the edition of Louvet de Couvrey's *Vie du Chevalier de Faublas* (8 tom. in 4, 12mo) mentioned above. The title pages of all volumes read:

VIE | DU CHEVALIER | DE FAUBLAS, | PAR| Le Citoyen J.B. LOUVET. | Nouvelle Edition, corrigée et augmenté. A Paris, Chez L'auteur, Libraire, maison Egalité, galeries de Pierre, du côté de la rue des Bons-Enfants, n^{os} 138 et 139. Favre, Libraire, rue de Savoie, n^o. 19, près le quai de la Vallée, et maison Egalité, galeries de Bois, n^o. 220. 1796 (v.s.) an IV^e. de la Rép. Fr.

On the half title pages of all volumes the manuscript name "John Fullerton" appears, scored through, plus the manuscript indication "Edition tolérée." The title pages of all volumes carry the inscription "AN 5389," the manuscript date "19/3/74," plus the stamps of the "South Australian Institute" and the "Public Library of Adelaide." The title page of volume 1 only also carries the manuscript signature, "J.B. Louvet," and, on the verso, an "Avis de l'auteur" which reads:

Quand à cette édition, le public est prévenu qu'elle n'est pas l'édition originale. J'en ai seulement toléré la vente ... Tout exemplaire de cette édition, qui ne porteroit pas cet avis au verso du frontispiece du premier volume, et ma signature sur le frontispice même, seroit *contrefaçon*.

This edition is not listed in Michel Delon's Folio edition of 1996, which notes a 1798 edition in four volumes, and is not found in the holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.³⁵

³³ The library's edition of Saint-Lambert's *Saisons* is recorded, in the 1861 catalogue, as having been published in 1775; all the other catalogues give 1785.

³⁴ For a list of the books donated by Robert Gouger, see W.H. Langham, *In the beginning* (Adelaide, 1989. Facsimile of Adelaide, 1936).

³⁵ I am grateful to Professor Simon Davies for this information.

The final group of books with special interest from among the survivals is those that might interest today's community of French scholars. The 140 surviving titles come from thirteen different categories of the original library catalogue. The largest group (40 titles) originally belonged to Class R (French Works), all of which were transferred to the Public Library. More surprising is the presence of 48 titles returned to the Public Library from the Circulating Library. A number of these works carry the inscription "Don. Adel. Circ. Liby" or "Don. A.C.L.," indicating that they were donated by the Adelaide Circulating Library. Several still bear the Circulating Library Bookplate stamped "Cancelled." Four of the books also carry the cancellation dates, spread across the 1920s and 30s. These 48 titles include works from a range of Classes by well-known writers such as Guizot, Montesquieu, Pascal and Tocqueville, but, most notably, they also include 32 works of fiction, all originally from Class R (French Works), viz.: Cherbuliez (2 titles), Alphonse Daudet (1), Ernest Daudet (1), Alexandre Dumas (1), Erckmann-Chatrion (3), Feuillet (1), Féval (10), Gréville (9), Malot (1), and Theuriet (3). It is noticeable that the highest number of surviving works are by minor authors, and the percentage survival rate by these authors is also often high: all of the titles by Cherbuliez, Ernest Daudet, and Gréville purchased by the early libraries are now found in the State Library; for Féval the figure is 10 out of 18 acquisitions (of which 17 were in French); for Malot 1 out of 2 original purchases survive, and for Theuriet 3 out of 4. Conversely, the lowest survival rates are for novels by major authors: the Mechanics' Institute and the South Australian Institute originally purchased 29 novels by Dumas (3 in French), 19 by Erckmann-Chatrion (10 in French) and 15 by Hugo (6 in French) of which none have survived. From these figures it would seem that the fate of the novels in the period since 1884 has been the same as it was before that date: the most popular titles disappear. However, for whatever reason, the vagueries of fate have left the State Library with a bijou collection of works by minor nineteenth-century novelists in contemporary editions.

Finally, the study of the French books in Adelaide's early libraries leads to a number of specific conclusions about the history of reading and about perceptions of French culture in South Australia between 1848 and 1884. First, with regard to readership, the dominance of history among the French books in the holdings of the South Australian Library and Mechanics' Institute confirms the view that, in the early period, the library catered essentially to a social elite.³⁶ History, in the western tradition, had always enjoyed a privileged position within a "gentleman's" library.³⁷ In the middle period, from about 1861 onwards, the growing diversity of subject matter (notably science, theology and political economy) and the increased depth of coverage within these fields are indicative of the Library's growing perception of itself as a public reference library. This trend also indicates a "top down" approach to book acquisition, as the library purchased material which it perceived as having educational merit. In the later period, the emergence (within literature) of the novel as the dominant genre bears witness to the growing importance of popular taste. Nevertheless, despite these changes of emphasis, the holdings of the libraries demonstrate readers' continuing ability to read books in French. The French language remains a part of intellectual culture for readers at these libraries in a way that it does not for their non-metropolitan neighbours. But the political and moral views of this readership are perhaps reflected in an ambivalent attitude towards certain aspects of

³⁶ Carl Bridge, *A Trunk Full of Books*, chapters 2 & 3.

³⁷ Jean-Marc Chatelain, *La Bibliothèque de l'honnête homme: livres, lecture et collections en France à l'âge classique* (Paris, 2003), 59.

French culture: in history the fascination with Napoleon may be indicative of the search for political freedom which drove many of the early settlers from the shores of Europe, while in literature the reticence with regard to the *philosophes* hints at the conservative social mores of the new society. Finally, therefore, our examination of French holdings in the early libraries of South Australia becomes not just a study of books but of cultural identity, reflecting the tastes of nineteenth-century readers and their perception of French cultural and literary history.