

New State Librarian to lead one of the world's great libraries

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The Library Council of New South Wales is pleased to announce today the appointment of Dr Alex Byrne as the new NSW State Librarian and Chief Executive of the State Library NSW.

George Souris, Minister for The Arts, said the role of NSW State Librarian holds an influential cultural position in the community, which includes the world-renowned Mitchell Library and the public library network.

“With his wealth of knowledge and experience, Dr Byrne will maintain and grow the State Library’s international standing as a leading research library as well as its strong connections with the NSW community. I look forward to working with Dr Byrne,” Mr Souris said.

Dr Byrne will formally take up the five year appointment on 5 September 2011.

Rob Thomas, President of the Library Council of New South Wales, said: “Dr Byrne brings tremendous senior level experience from both library and university sectors across Australia, together with in-depth experience in digital technology and a special interest in Indigenous people and knowledge.”

During the World Summit on the Information Society, Dr Byrne led the drive for universal access to knowledge by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, the global peak body for libraries and information services. He was the International Federation’s President from 2005 to 2007.

“As a researcher, writer and international speaker on vital areas like accessibility and the role of memory institutions in the digital age, Dr Byrne is well placed to lead the State Library of NSW into its next exciting chapter,” said Mr Thomas.

The State Library of NSW is renowned as one of the great research libraries of the world, with an extraordinary and unrivalled collection related to the discovery and exploration of Australia and the Pacific.

“The Library’s charter has always been about access and under Dr Byrne’s leadership, the Library will continue to embrace new technologies and look at innovative ways to connect the people of NSW and beyond with our premier cultural collection,” said Mr Thomas.

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Alex Byrne joins the State Library during a time of great change. The Library is about to embark on a major renovation project which will transform the entire Macquarie Street building to a contemporary, community-centred space, and help cement the Library's place as a leading Australian cultural destination.

Dr Byrne said that he felt honoured to be appointed the new NSW State Librarian. "The State Library holds the foremost collection of Australiana and is central to the cultural life and economy of the state. I am delighted to have the opportunity to lead the Library and its wonderful staff," he said.

"I am also looking forward to working closely with the dynamic public library network. More than half the NSW population belong to libraries, and I plan to support and help strengthen public libraries and their connections with the community.

"We will build on the achievements of my predecessor Regina Sutton and earlier great Australian librarians such as WH Ifould and John Metcalfe to make libraries a vibrant force for the future of New South Wales."

Dr Byrne has been the University Librarian at the University of Technology, Sydney since 2000. Prior to this he was Chief Librarian and subsequently Vice President and Pro Vice Chancellor (Information Resources) at Charles Darwin University, and Deputy Librarian at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

On a personal level, Dr Byrne's interests include his family, reading, walking, sketching and printmaking.

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