

#### CONSERVING THE COLLECTIONS

'The library of Congress and the entire library world must pay more attention to the essential task of preserving the deteriorating materials in their collections.' (Report of the Librarian of Congress's Task Force on Goals, Organization and Planning, 1976.)

The over-use of some collections, in particular the pictorial collections, combined with the inability to carry out a minimum programme of conservation and the increasingly inadequate accommodation, are placing the long-term preservation of the collections in jeopardy. Further delays in the construction of the National Library building will necessitate several major shifts of the stock within existing buildings and to further temporary accommodation. Each shift will, despite the strictest controls, result in further damage to fragile books, maps, pictures and glass photographic negatives. The growth of the collections has placed an increasing strain on the accommodation at 44 The Terrace. Overcrowding in the Art Room is affecting the proper care of unique paintings, drawings and sketches and the proper development of the map collection has been severely hindered by lack of space.

The courses of action open to the Library to safeguard the national collections of last resort are limited. An adequate conservation programme will require extra staffing and it may be necessary to reduce some public services in order to free existing staff for conservation work or to look to outside sources for help. The Newberry Library in Chicago attracted large sums from donors to launch its conservation programme.

The Conservation Laboratory, staffed by one technician, has continued to produce good work. Two seminars on the conservation of works on paper were conducted during the year. One was led by Mr Roy Graf, Restorer of the Queen's Drawings, Windsor, and the second was held in conjunction with the Archives and Records Association and the National Archives. The Conservation Officer attended the conference of the Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials, Sydney, and studied library conservation units in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.

#### BUILDING THE RESEARCH COLLECTIONS

The Library has been much more selective in the last year and the rate of growth of the collection has fallen. Donations fell from 484 to 317, less than half the number in 1976/77. Manuscript accessions are being curtailed to bring the collection into a better balance with the accommodation and staff available; and institutional donors are