

Anthony Audrey St Clair Murray  
Murray-Oliver, MBE  
1915 – 1986

Tony Murray-Oliver who died in November after a short illness will be missed by the many institutions, committees, societies, friends, acquaintances, paintings, drawings, prints, gardens, flowers, trees, books, periodicals, manuscripts and cats that were the stuff of Tony's life.

For more than two thirds of that life he was principally identified with the Alexander Turnbull Library, and for him it was certainly a home away from home for more than the obligatory 7 hours 35 minutes. However, Tony's arrival at the Library arose from no ambition; the Library had meant little to him till then. On leaving Christchurch Boys High School he had joined Ballantyne's as a draper's assistant. To their credit they recognised his potential and encouraged him to take up a career in something other than salesmanship. In 1938, aged 22, he commenced work at the Turnbull Library.

By 1940 he was already recognised in the Library as the reference expert on art. In the same year he volunteered for the RNZAF and commenced service in June 1942. On his return home from the Solomon Islands at the end of the war Tony found his father's ill health had compelled him to give up farming and that his own help was needed with the farm at Rakaia until it could be sold. He recommenced work at the Library in June 1946, completed a B.A. degree in 1947 and a M.A. the following year. By then he had responsibilities in most areas of Library activity as well as being in charge of the Art Section.

In 1950 the opportunity arose to join the South Pacific Commission as acting Librarian for six months. In the event he did not return to the Turnbull from New Caledonia for two years, and it was some time before he put his watch forward to New Zealand time. In those two years he had experienced French colonial life, a far cry from life in egalitarian post-war New Zealand. He set about changing that. He founded Les Amis de Nouvelle-Calédonie en Nouvelle Zélande, the Wellington Wine and Food Society, and started a private dining club which paved the way for licensed restaurants.

The pattern of his life had now been established. Tony was also at various times the secretary-treasurer of the Wellington Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, the vice-