## 営NEW AUSTRALIAN BOOKPLATE SOCIETY collecto

collectors, bibliophiles, artists and others dedicated to promoting bookplates

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Calligraphic design by Gemma Black for herself, 1988

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## President's report for 2020 and 2021

By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

Welcome to the combined Fourteenth and Fifteenth Annual General Meetings using online technology, and please accept our apologies for the lack of an Annual General Meeting during 2021, when we were all just too exhausted and discombobulated by a second year of COVID-19. By now, I imagine most of us have experienced at least one and possibly dozens of virtual meetings in the past two years, and I hope on this occasion that the technology works for all of us. Of course I want to thank Honorary Secretary Brownyn Vost for getting this meeting organised and for familiarising and supporting participants with the technology.

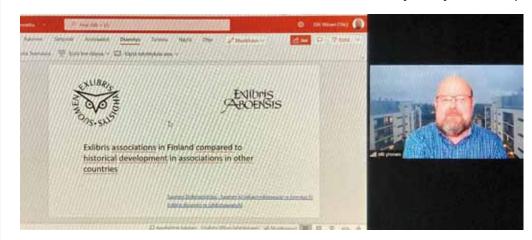
First, I'd like to list a few highlights of the last two years related to the activities of the Society as a whole or its members, just to put them on the record in one place

- The Show & Tell, 24 May 2021 (see #61) in Sydney residence of Jean Anderson and Terry Hartmann, including the first outing of the newly conserved albums of the Eirene Mort Bookplate Collection
- I edited June 2020 edition of *Biblionews* and *Australian Notes & Queries* (Journal of the Book Collectors' Soc of Australia), in which three articles included bookplates
- Andrew Peake published his Artur Mario da Mota Miranda: his contribution to ex-libris and an index to his works in mid-2020

- Artist-member Brigitta Summers conducted a linocut bookplate design workshop at the NSW Guild of Craft Bookbinders in September 2020
- Mort album conservation project, thanks for donations by members which allowed the Society to pursue this project, and for Bronwyn Vost for making it happen
- Victor Cobb exhibition at Gippsland Art Gallery, Sale, March–May 2021, including rare Cobb bookplates loaned by member Edwin Jewell
- Exhibitions of 'Mirka's exlibris' at Richmond Library, Melbourne, in March 20201 and 'Mirka Mora's Books & Polish Exlibris', May–July 2021 at St Kilda Library, Melbourne, both organised by member and passionate promoter of Mirka Mora's work, Marzena Walicka

I have developed relationships with a number of Australian societies with some shared interests, including the Print Council of Australia, Australian Heraldry Society and Mechanics Institutes Victoria. This has enabled me to publish articles on bookplates in their respective journals, thus bringing our topic to a wider audience.

In addition I had the unique experience in November 2021 of being invited to speak on the Australian bookplate experience — by



Krakow conference screen shot: Mr Olli Ylonen, Finland



Linocut bookplate by Frank Marjason for Wagner Society of NSW, 1989

Zoom — to an international graphic arts conference convened by cultural institutions based in Krakow, Poland.

Whilst most lecture programs had to be cancelled as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, I have been asked to speak at Mosman Library in March and am awaiting a new date for a long postponed talk at Lane Cove Library in 2023 and a possible engagement with the Australian Heraldry Society this year. I am very happy to do these talks, but other members may also wish to do so. And to develop further relationships with like-minded organisations, and I am thinking of printmaking groups, I would like to suggest we offer a 'duet' combining a talk with a demonstration by one of our artist-members.

At our 2019 AGM, I mentioned that to keep a good record of enquiries to the Society I had set up a separate folder in my email program. Enquiries received during

2020 and 2021 concerned identification of bookplates, what to do with inherited collections, how to find someone to design a bookplate, how best to stick bookplates into books — this single enquiry led eventually to our publication of *Bookplates of Graham Cox* (see below), how to locate bookplates of specific artists for an exhibition or publication, inclusion of our contact details in the new edition of *Books do furnish a room*, and whether we know of Australian catalogues of Lithuanian bookplates.

As at 31 December 2021, paid membership of the Society had risen to 79 (from 71 in December 2019), of which 63 were for the hard copy *Newsletter* and 16 for the digital membership. We sadly lost four members who died during the period, Bronwyn Parker (1943–2020), David Levine AO (1944–2020), Rie Fletcher (1926–2020) and Trevor Kennedy AM (1942–2021).

Our Newsletter was appreciated by readers; in addition to the standard four numbers for each year, in 2021 we published two supplements, an Index to Newsletters 41-60 (Supp. 3) and Bookplates of Graham Cox (Supp. 4). The latter was a significant and, to my mind, very satisfying departure for our publication program. It was triggered by an enquiry from Peter Horne, recent owner of a bookplate by Graham Cox, as to how to paste bookplates into his books, and led to the booklet bringing together the artist's unique and largely unknown designs. I hope that this is the first of a series of booklets on significant but less known bookplate designers. I wish to thank Mary Keep for her always excellent design of our publications, and to express my gratitude to the many Newsletter contributors on both sides of the Tasman, the United Kingdom, Poland and United States.

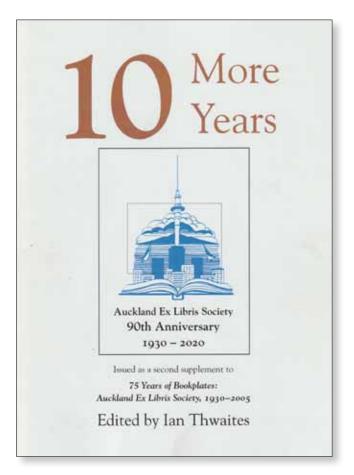
Thanks again to Bronwyn for organising our 2022 virtual Annual General Meeting and to those of you who have joined us, and to members of the Executive and Committee for supporting the Society's work.

Finally, whilst I have the 'floor' as it were, I would like to raise with members some future possibilities: use of our current surplus for further *Newsletter* supplements on bookplate designers or other things, and fund raising by sale of copies of *Bookplates of Graham Cox* and of original, signed, linocut bookplates by Frank Marjason, generously donated by member Richard King, or other ideas for raising funds.

## Auckland Ex Libris Society report, 2021

By Ian Thwaites, Auckland

Despite the lockdowns caused by the COVID pandemic, Auckland Ex Libris Society (AELS) enjoyed an eventful, if interrupted timetable of events during 2021. On 28 February we met at John Kinder House for the usual informal gathering with which we start each year. President John Webster presented a folder of information and photographs relating to the Auckland Branch foundation members of 1930. In March another informal meeting was held



Cover of 10 More Years, by Ian Thwaites

at John Kinder House for which Bob Langholm provided a magnificent 90th Birthday Cake. I was awarded an Honorary Life Membership and appropriately, Bob and I cut the cake together — a reminder that Bob has been an Honorary Life Member since 2003.

10 More Years: Auckland Ex Libris Society 90th Anniversary, 1930-2020 was launched at John Kinder House on 20 June. It is a second supplement to 75 Years of Bookplates, which was published in 2005. Edited by myself, the 68 pages include three essays on our Society's history plus minutes of all meetings held during the past decade — thanks to our wonderful minutes secretary Marion Wood. Illustrations include photographs of founding members, bookplates of current members, armorial plates from the University of Auckland Library and a group photograph of members who attended our 90th anniversary gettogether on 27 November 2020. Visitors at the launch included several Auckland Central Library staff, including Georgia Prince and Keith Giles, both speakers at past meetings.

Because of COVID restrictions, the meeting at John Kinder House on 15 August proved to be the final gathering for 2021. John Webster led off with 'The life of our first President, Dr Edward Burton Gunson', a fascinating insight into his achievements. We were then privileged to hear Dr Arthur Coverdale, who spoke about his father, Dr Howard V Coverdale, our second president. Apparently, neither president owned his own bookplate.

A notable contribution to our ex libris history has been John Webster's multipart series 'History of New Zealand bookplates' covering events prior to the formation of the New Zealand Ex Libris Society in 1930. Using Papers Past, the NZ National Library's interface to digitised newspapers, and other sources, John has unearthed intriguing information about those involved in the genesis of the NZELS. Each part of the series was included in our monthly newsletters. On a personal note I have almost completed another publication, Their Personal Ex Libris: Bookplates of Auckland Ex Libris Society members from 1930 to the present day. It will contain

illustrations and text relating to over 150 members' plates and include designs by well-known ex libris artists Hilda Wiseman and Ronald Holloway and current members Mike Ferris and Tara McLeod.

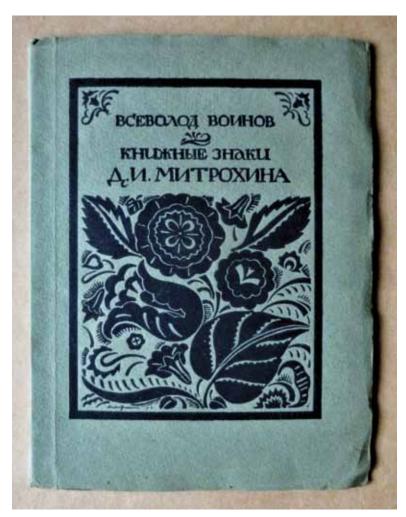
## The bookplate art of Д.И. Митрохин (D I Mitrokhin), 1921

By Jürgen Wegner, Librarian, Sydney

Russia birthed from a feudal society to a hoped-for utopian egalitarian Communist society in one gigantic leap of faith: 1917. It was involved in the First World War as a result of its historic alliance with the Allies against their common enemy, Germany, with disastrous consequences. Ill prepared for war against the might of the German military state, Russia then fought as it did in the Great Patriotic War — wave after wave of humanity against superior odds — and with the same results. The slaughter tipped the balance to revolution, the glorious people's revolution of 1917.

A certain Vladimir Il'ich Ul'ianov (aka Lenin) had been transported back to Russia from Switzerland by sealed train. With his party, the revolutionary Marxist Bolsheviks (the majority faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party), he seized power. Russia capitulated to Germany under the severest of terms under the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (3 March 1918), but it bought them time — to consolidate and to implement their plans to establish the first Communist state in modern times. Reform was indeed needed but the party for change soon became the party of Stalin. But 1921, three years before the death of Lenin, was still a time in which people could dream of the better world to come.

Russia — as with all highly civilized and cultured countries — was a society that valued literature, the arts, culture. The elite of Russia were progressive and some of the first to collect that shocking new modern art originating in France. There were book collectors, and where there are book collectors, there are bookplates. And bookplate artists. It is strange to think that almost a hundred years ago, after the





Bookplate by D I Mitrokhin for F I Sedenko-Vitiazev, 1921

deprivations of the war to end all wars, after revolution and in the midst of civil war, there was a group of Russian collectors with a passion for bookplates. Living, collecting, enjoying the culture of books but on the cusp of the storms to come. A time when book collecting was not yet a bourgeois vice and bookplates not the fevered aberration of a Capitalist mind.

The niche publisher Petropolis [1] in this year produced a small limited, numbered and initialled, edition of the work of the local graphic designer and bookplate artist Dmitriĭ Isidorovich Mitrokhin: Vsevolod Voinov's Книжые знаки Д.И. Митрохина (Кпігhnye znaki D.I. Mitrokhina or The book signs [i.e. plates] of D.I. Mitrokhin) (Peterburg: Petropolis, 1921).

The work is far from utilitarian. It is beautifully designed and presented with a stylish engraved cover of remarkable quality. The text is finely letterpress printed on what looks to be a quality roughly textured, cream rag paper. Laid with deckled edges retained and, on one leaf, displaying a Russian paper mill's watermark M.Y. (Rus., M.Ch.).

The book illustrates thirteen full-page examples of the bookplate art of Mitrokhin of which four are original tipped-in plates, all in colour. The bookplates cover a wide range of subjects as well as styles. Books feature prominently, with one, the bookplate of L.I. Zheverzheeva, featuring a row of books wrapped in chains and with a lock. There is one which shows a beautifully sketched stylized creeping vine (ivy). Designs include the purely typographic (but no less ornate) as well as examples in the style of Russian peasant or folk art. The latter is perhaps indicative of the changing times for there are also two





in a starkly realistic style depicting work motifs: one, the almost abstract desktop of a designer, the other, a sheaf of wheat. The two symbolise the workers and peasants that were the foundations of the new country. At the rear, a complete inventory of the bookplates produced by him so far, thirty from 1907 till 1921.

Mitrokhin had 'a fortunate life' in that he lived through unbelievably terrible times to reach the age of ninety: from Tsarist 1883 to Soviet 1973 [2]. He had spent time in his early years in Paris (1905–1908), and became well-respected as a Russian artist, book illustrator and historian of art. He was acquainted with the famous Russian *avant-garde* artists Goncharova and Larionov. He was active as a book illustrator and for a decade also taught graphic design as professor at the Printing Department of the Higher Art

and Technical Institute in St Petersburg. A few years after his death, in 1977, the major publishing house Aurora Art Publishers produced a large retrospective volume of his work.

But what interests me most are the minor details more than the book and the text itself. First — and as is the case with so many works — the original owner had attached their own bookplate only to have it roughly removed by a subsequent owner (and collector of bookplates), thus destroying its chain of provenance. I guess I should be thankful that they did not think of also thus removing the tipped-in plates!

Russian books are a delight to me because, due to the nature of the State, they record the minutest of production details. Not only the edition size, whether large or small or huge, but also even down to the paper which was used for the book. Here we learn that the book was printed at the 15th State Printing House (Rus., Отпечатано в 15-й Государственной типографии). Under Communism, private enterprises were progressively taken over by the State to be given generic names such as this. For example, an edition in my collection of the Selected works of Lenin in twelve volumes published in Moscow between 1934 and 1938 by the Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR/FLPH is printed by a variety of printers including the Revolutionary Spark Printshop No. 7 and the Seventh Typographia, ie the Seventh Printing House in Moscow.

The beauty of this obsessive detail with production is that here there is also given the name of the book's printers before State ownership: бывш. Голике и Вильборг (Rus., ex. Golike and Vil'borg). G's in Russian are usually h's and so this is a German-sounding name, possibly Holike and Wilburg, hinting at the influence of Germany in Russian printing history. They also styled themselves Tovarishchestvo R. Golike i A. Vil'borg as in [printed by the now] Comrades R. Golike and A. Vil'borg, private enterprise being frowned upon. They were active in St. Petersburg in the early decades of the last century from about 1904. This looks to have been their last work, a rare work even within Russia.

The only copy in the UK is held by the British Library.

But bookplates are more than just fascinating miniature works of graphic art, detached from real life. Bookplates are of and by themselves. But they are also about the lives of people. Their books, their collections and, in the end, the stories of the people who for a time shared their lives with them. This made me think of the fate of the commissioners and owners of the bookplates in this book. The twentieth century was a brutally turbulent one for the Russian people. So, what happened to this special group of Russians?

One of the bookplates which so appealed to me from this book was the one for F.I. Sedenko-Vitiazev — the one with the politically correct sheaf of wheat. Who was Sedenko-Vitiazev and what was his life? No luck online, of course. Not the place for sourcing information on obscure Russians. Or so I thought. I had the idea of trying to search in Cyrillic, for likely material would be in Russian, and discovered a brief biography of him based on information from the database 'Victims of Political Terror in the USSR'. It seems Sedenko-Vitiazev was quite a well-known person. He was one of the founders of the Society for the Study of the History of the Liberation and Revolutionary Movement in Russia, Chairman of the Board of the Union of Petrograd Cooperative Publishing Houses, a member of the commission under the Council of People's Commissars for the publication of works of Russian classics, socialists and thinkers and lastly, till 1930, he worked in the offices of the famous publishing house Mir.

But as Stalinism took control, Sedenko-Vitiazev's life took a turn for the worse. As it did for tens of millions of Russians during this time. He was arrested in 1930, one of the accused in the 'Academic Case', served time and was released in 1933. His cards were marked and Sedenko-Vitiazev was again arrested by the secret police in 1938 and charged with 'participation in an anti-Soviet terrorist organization'. Tried by a military court, he was executed shortly after his arrest, one of countless victims of Stalin's purges.

References

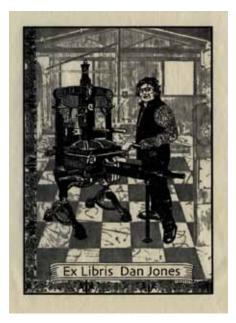
- 1. The publisher's name Petropolis means the City of Peter, ie St. Petersburg. At that time (1921) it was still Petrograd, having been renamed in 1914 because the old name sounded too German. In 1924, the year of Lenin's death, it was renamed Leningrad in his honour.
- 2. https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Митрохин,\_Дмитрий\_Исидорович

# The Australian Bookplate Design Award, 2021: Dianne Longley — \$10,000 and a medallion

By Dr Dianne Longley, Trentham, Vic.

The Melbourne-based Keith Wingrove Memorial Trust conducts The Australian Bookplate Design Award. Australian artists and graphic designers are invited to produce hand-printed Ex Libris bookplates. The award is conducted every two years and it's the richest bookplate design award in the world.

My award winning print 'Ex Libris Dan Jones' (15 x 10.5cm) features my friend Dan in his workshop in Victoria Street, a few blocks away from my house and studio in the hamlet of Trentham, in the central



Photopolymer letterpress printed design by Dianne Longley for Dan Jones, 2020



Dianne Longley with her Improved Albion Press Australian Bookplate Design Award Medallion 2021 awarded to Dianne Longley

highlands of Victoria. Dan has many metal working skills and in a huge shed with lots of machinery he restores Albion printing presses, as well as machining parts for vintage cars. Dan collected my 1860s Albion Press from Monash University in Melbourne and began restoring it once it was settled at my Agave Print Studio. He recreated missing parts and gradually got the press working like a dream. His brother Tim Jones did the finishing touches of gold lettering on the Albion press and the restored press was launched in December 2018. Dan working in his grungy, metal machining workshop was a perfect subject for a bookplate.

'Ex Libris Dan Jones', was printed on my Albion press using a relief (letterpress) photopolymer plate. To create the image I used photographs combined in Adobe Photoshop positioning Dan in his workshop with an Albion printing press. The border around the edge of the print was adapted from gypsy wagon decorations found in a book that Dan has featuring wagons decorated by his parents in Wales.

To make the print, I placed double matte drafting film over the photographs and drew them with pen and ink and liquid graphite. I then scanned the drawings and recreated the image with the graphic quality of drawings rather than photographs. I then made two separate files; one comprised 'Dan, the Albion press and the Ex Libris banner' and the 'background workshop drawing' in another file.

Some technical information for those familiar with printing film to create photopolymer plates: the 'Dan, Albion press and Ex Libris banner' file was converted into a bitmap using 50% threshold, and the 'background workshop drawing' file was converted into a halftone bitmap. The two files were then recombined as two layers in Photoshop. The file was then flattened, inverted, and printed onto Agfa Copyjet film using an Epson Artisan 1430 printer. The film was exposed onto a waterwashable Printight KF95 photoplymer plate, dried, hardened and then printed in black ink onto Japanese gampi paper using the Albion press restored by Dan Jones.

The print combines contemporary and historical printing processes. Creating the file using photography, drawing and Adobe Photoshop incorporated contemporary

processes, but inking and hand-printing the plate on the Albion press references traditional, slow-printing techniques. I feel very privileged that my rural studio has both modern and historical equipment. And how lucky am I to have Dan living and working a couple of blocks away!

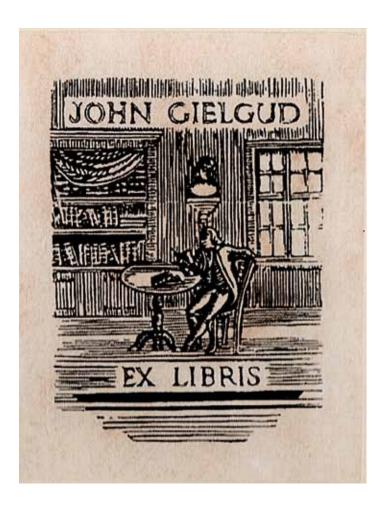
We featured a 'Designer profile' on Dianne in the December 2020 edition (no. 59) of the Newsletter, see http://www.bookplatesociety.org.au/images/stories/Bookplate\_Content/Newsletters/TNABS\_No\_59\_WEB.pdf — Ed.

## Four great actors: Sir John Gielgud, Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and Sir Ralph Richardson

By Bryan Welch, London

I only saw Sir John Gielgud (1904–2000) on stage once, with Ralph Richardson in Harold Pinter's No Man's Land. I was not sure what the play was about, but I knew that I had been privileged to see two of the greatest actors of the age. He received many awards, but in spite of appearing in 70 films, his only Oscar was for the portrayal of the butler in Arthur. This he kept in the lavatory. When Sotheby's, in London's Bond Street, sold The John Gielgud Collection in 2001, I hastened along to catch a glimpse of his possessions before they were dispersed. They were selling the contents of South Pavilion, the house Gielgud had shared with his companion, Martin Hensler. Furniture, pictures, silver, china, books and even some of Gielgud's hats and gloves were up for sale. Everything was beautiful, elegant and tasteful. There were books with the bookplates of Sir Henry Irving, of Gielgud's aunt Ellen Terry and of Gielgud himself. These three bookplates, of which the Gielgud was new to me, were illustrated in the catalogue. The books were, as usual, either in large lots of cheaper books or in small lots of expensive books.

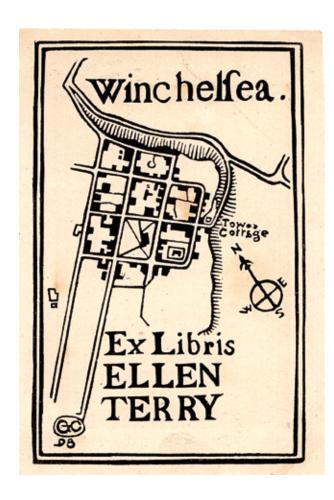
Finally, last year I was able to buy a single book from the sale with Gielgud's bookplate. It is a biography of Michael Redgrave and, in addition to the bookplate, is inscribed 'John Gielgud, South Pavilion, Wotton Underwood'. The book was published in 1956 and as Gielgud moved



Pen and ink design for John Gielgud Wood-engraved bookplate by Gordon Craig for Ellen Terry, 1898



Bookplate by Bernard Partridge for Henry Irving Woodcut bookplate for Ralph Richardson





to South Pavilion in 1976 I feel sure that the bookplate preceded the inscription. One is tempted to see the figure on the bookplate in 18th century dress seated reading as being inspired by Gielgud himself. There is no information in the catalogue about the artist of the bookplate, whose identity remains a mystery.

There is no mystery about the other two plates. The actor Ellen Terry (1847-1928) was Gielgud's maternal aunt. At the age of 16 she had married the artist George Frederic Watts (then 46). The marriage failed and she eloped with the architect Henry Godwin by whom she had two children. One of these was the artist and theatre designer Edward Gordon Craig. He made over 200 bookplate designs including seven for his mother. The one with a map of Winchelsea in Kent shows her home, Tower Cottage, where she lived from 1899 till her death. It is a wonderful idea for a bookplate, leaving no room to doubt where to return the book. There are two versions of the plate and Craig produced a coloured version as the frontispiece for a book about his mother. Ellen Terry was for 24 years the stage partner of Sir Henry Irving (1838-1905), the most famous actor manager of the age. Irving ran the Lyceum Theatre in London's West End, where he offered the public serious drama with great success. His bookplate, by Bernard Partridge, is printed in red and black; the scroll and frame are in red, and the lettering and eagle are in black. Irving's explanation given in Egerton Castle's English book-plates (1892) is that he supposes the eagle to be a sandwich man with the Lyceum Theatre playbill! The bookplate is reproduced in English book-plates with the colours reversed. I do not know if this was an accident or done deliberately to avoid the plate being cut from the book (it is printed on a separate leaf, facing page 188, and blank on the back) and passed off as the genuine article.

Soon after the Gielgud sale, Sotheby's sold the collection of furniture, art and personal effects of Sir Ralph Richardson (1902–1983). There were no books in the sale, but recently I was able to acquire a fine two-volume set of Bram Stoker's *Personal reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906) with Richardson's bookplate in each volume. This is a vigorous but rather crude woodcut. Richardson had attended art college before becoming an actor and continued to paint for pleasure. Some of his paintings and his artist's materials and equipment were included in the sale of his effects. It seems very likely therefore that he made the bookplate himself.

## Notes & happenings

FISAE XXXIX Congress, San Francisco Bay, September 2022

'Bookplates by the Bay' will be held at Jack London Square, San Francisco Bay, Oakland over 11–18 September 2022 and will incorporate both the FISAE XXXIX Congress and the Centennial Celebration of the American Society of Bookplate Collectors & Designers. There will be both in-person and online lectures, exhibitions, workshops, studio tours, City and museum tours, American Jazz and Blues from Jack London Square, and Exchange Hall and much more. Details at https://bookplate2022.org or email James Keenan at info@bookplate2022.org

The 5th International Ex-libris Competition — Istanbul 2022

İstanbul Ex-libris Society, İstinye University, and Selçuk Ecza Deposu are organizing an international ex-libris competition open to artists and designers from all countries in order to bring together and evaluate authentic ex-libris prints of highest aesthetic, artistic and technical quality, created as marks of ownership for books, to encourage artists and to introduce the art of ex-libris to the general public and create interest

in the subject. Entries must be posted by 30 August 2022. Entry forms with further details are available from the Editor.



#### **Editorial**

March has brought us a diminished threat of COVID-19 — at least for the moment — but, on the other hand, much depressing news of war in Europe and of widespread, destructive floods in New South Wales and Queensland. So at least we have beautiful and fascinating bookplates to learn about and admire, and no less the people associated with them as designers, owners and promoters. I am grateful as always for the contributions to the Newsletter by members from Australasia and the other side of the world. Jürgen Wegner, who is passionate about everything and anything to do with printing, has had a long interest in European work in this field, and whilst Russia is featured negatively in current world news — Jürgen's article harks back to the early Soviet era one century ago, where despite the incredible turmoil of the time, it was nevertheless possible to publish a small and enchanting work on bookplates. My gratitude also goes to Bryan Welch for his description of the bookplates, and how he acquired them, of four wonderful British actors of earlier generations, and to Ian Thwaites for his report on bookplate activities in Auckland last year. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Victorian artist-member Dianne Longley for winning the Australian Bookplate Design Award for 2021 conducted by Melbourne-based Keith Wingrove Memorial Trust. A note on this achievement is printed in the Newsletter; CONGRATULATIONS, Dianne!

www.bookplatesociety.org.au/