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VICTORIA**
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MEDIA RELEASE

State Library Victoria receives extraordinary rare book donation

State Library Victoria receives the “most significant donation of rare books in its 160 year history”

More than 5000 rare books estimated at over \$5 million with an endowment of over \$1.3 million

State Library Victoria is honoured to receive one of the world's great rare book collections from the late John Emmerson QC.

An Oxford physicist and later a Melbourne barrister, John Emmerson dedicated over 40 years to amassing one of the most significant collections of early modern printed books and pamphlets in the world.

The extraordinary collection encompasses more than 5000 rare printed books spanning over 400 years from the 15th to the 18th century, including political, religious, philosophical and literary works.

Among the treasures are King Charles I's own personal copy of his father King James' writings, a 15th century Nuremburg bible belonging to Archbishop of Canterbury William Juxon (who offered last rites to King Charles I), some of the world's earliest newspapers, and editions of many literary greats.

This is considered to be one of the largest and most valuable collections of rare English books and printed materials surrounding the King Charles I era and the English Civil War of the 1640s, with the only comparable collections belonging to the British Library and Oxford's Bodleian Library.

State Library Victoria's History of the Book Manager Des Cowley says: “The rare book collection donated by John Emmerson is quite simply the most significant ever received by the State Library in its 160 year history.”

“From treasures that belonged to King Charles himself to pamphlets documenting his trial and execution, to illustrated early editions of works by John Milton and other literary greats, the collection is significant not just for the sheer quantity but the quality of the works – who they belonged to and how beautifully they've been maintained,” he says.

Along with the entire collection, State Library Victoria has also received a bequest of \$1.3 million from the Emmerson family to help preserve, catalogue and expand the collection, and fund scholarships.

The \$1.3 million endowment will support the creation of the Emmerson Fellowship for research using the collection, as well as future acquisitions, exhibitions and public programming.

“Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the Emmerson family in making this bequest, the State Library will be able to ensure the collection is preserved, explored and continues to grow,” says State Library Victoria's Acting CEO and State Librarian Justine Hyde.

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Born in Melbourne in 1938 into a legal family, John Emmerson was a brilliant student at Geelong Grammar and the University of Melbourne before spending the 1960s at Oxford University as a nuclear physicist. He returned to Melbourne and studied law at the University of Melbourne where he won the Supreme Court Prize in 1974. He went on to become a renowned barrister in Melbourne, specialising in intellectual property law.

John was first introduced to book collecting in 1968 at Oxford, and book collecting would become one of the enduring passions of his life. A modest man with an extraordinary intellect and great sense of fun, John kept the collection in his home in South Yarra. Following his death last year at age of 76, John's family donated his collection to State Library Victoria in accordance with his wishes.

His brother David Emmerson says: "John wanted his collection to remain in Melbourne for the interest and enjoyment of future generations."

"We are delighted for the collection to find its new home in such a vibrant institution, which is at the heart of Melbourne life. John would have loved the thought that anyone could have a chance encounter with the works through the two cases, which will be on permanent display. The John Emmerson fellowship will offer scholars and artists nationally and internationally an opportunity for study and inspiration through more intimate involvement with the collection."

Professor Paul Salzman, an expert in early modern literature from La Trobe University, said the donation of the Emmerson collection would put the State Library "on the map" for historians and literary scholars.

"With this bequest, the State Library will see historians and literary scholars of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries from all over the world travelling to Melbourne to work on this collection."

-ENDS-

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

Interviews are available with the State Library's Des Cowley, the Emmerson family and rare book historians to speak about the John Emmerson Collection.

Filming and photographic opportunities with the John Emmerson Collection are also available by arrangement.

MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Anna Whitelaw (Mon-Wed), 03 8664 7533, awhitelaw@slv.vic.gov.au or **Matthew van Hasselt (Wed-Fri)**, 03 8664 7263, mvanhasselt@slv.vic.gov.au

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE JOHN EMMERSON COLLECTION

The John Emmerson Collection highlights include:

- The writings of King James I printed in 1616 by the King's printer Robert Barker, who also printed the first edition of the King James Bible in 1611, and belonging to his son King Charles I. The copy in the Emmerson collection is cased in a special binding for his son, then Prince Charles and features the initials C P (for "Charles Prince"). Charles would succeed James to the throne in 1625 as King Charles I, and in 1649 he was the first English King to be tried for treason and executed.
- A 1485 Bible printed in Nuremburg. The copy in the Emmerson collection belonged to William Juxon (1582–1663), the Bishop of London and later Archbishop of Canterbury and is signed by him. King Charles I selected Juxon to be with him on the scaffold and Juxon performed Charles I's last rites before his execution in 1649.
- A bound volume of the *Londons Intelligencer* covering 1643 to 1646 during the English Civil War. The *Intelligencer* was published weekly from 1643 to 1646, and is considered the first big city newspaper and the first illustrated one.
- The Emmerson collection contains significant early editions of a number of literary greats including Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* and editions of John Milton, Samuel Johnson, Daniel Defoe and John Dryden.
- A beautiful 17th century embroidered satin book binding similar to one held in the British Library belonging to Henrietta Maria, wife of King Charles I.
- A beautifully illustrated edition of John Milton's famous poem *Paradise Lost* printed in 1688.
- The Emmerson collection holds a magnificent illustrated copy of Edward Hyde's *The History of Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, published in three volumes in 1702-04 and containing a detailed history of the English Civil War.
- The Emmerson collection also holds an enormous number of pamphlets and tracts printed and circulated during the English Civil War of the 1640s. This period saw an explosion in print and propaganda – these pamphlets came off printing presses daily and not only reported on events but also shaped the course of history. John Emmerson's collection of this material is the most significant outside of the British Library and the Bodleian Library in Oxford.
- The Emmerson collection contains several printings of King Charles I's speech from the scaffold which would have been printed in the days following his execution. One of these copies is bound with daily reports of the King's trial and later engravings of the execution, one of the most dramatic events in British history which helped to establish the Westminster system of government.
- The Emmerson collection also contains several editions of the rare *Eikon Basilike*, the purported spiritual meditations of King Charles prior to his execution which were printed within ten days of his execution. The writings – which present Charles I as a Christian martyr – were printed in tiny volumes, no doubt because owners wanted to keep them secret as they indicated support for the royalist cause. Attempts were made to ban *Eikon Basilike* by authorities, but the book flourished in England and abroad.

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