

GEM OF TIME RECIPIENT – GILLIAN O'MARA 2012

Gillian O'Mara joined the Friends of Battye Library in 1989 and three years later (exactly 20 years ago) became Vice President – a position she has held ever since. She has acted as President many times in the absence of both Geoff Bolton and Pamela Statham Drew – for a full six months on one occasion!

Gillian was part of Rica Erickson's team in producing the first set of the Dictionaries of West Australians in 1979, typing up the cards that prefaced every volume. She twice edited her own volume on convicts. She went on to help bring out the four volumes of the Bicentenary Dictionary and Rica made it known several times that she could not have brought out this widely acclaimed set without her. More recently she has been a firm supporter of the Library's project to digitise the Western Australian Biographical Dictionary cards.

Gillian's service to the Library and to the Friends has been little short of incredible. Hers is a well known face in the Family History section of the first floor where she has been a tower of strength to families researching their past, often helping with information from her own research and her own renowned data bank.

Gillian currently works as archivist at Mater Dei Catholic College and is an associate member of the Australian Society of Archivists and the School Archives Group. She is also a member of the Wanneroo & Districts Historical Society and the Police Historical Society, and has helped with publications for both societies.

Gillian joined the WA Genealogical Society in 1984 and their Convict group, of which she was convener for many years. She is also a member of the Enrolled Pensioner Guard group and currently editor of their newsletter. With regard to Western Australia's convicts Gillian is the acknowledged expert. She personally verifies all the applications for convict ancestry at the Foundation Day ceremony at Fremantle Prison. Her publication on WA convicts for the Friends in 1991 is in constant demand and it is hoped that she can produce a revised edition in her retirement to capture all the new information she has uncovered since then.