

The Rare Books Room

The Rare Books Room was opened in February 2000, and forms part of the initiative of the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC, Chief Justice of Queensland, to 'open up' the courts and the judicial process.

The room was designed by Mr Leigh Shutter, of the architectural group Planet Design, and features a curved ribbed exterior that gives the sense of a treasure chest. The interior includes cabinets of Jarrah and Hoop Pine, completed with bronze door plates and handles. Construction work was undertaken by E Chapman & Son Pty Ltd, Queensland's oldest building firm established in 1869.



The establishment of the rare books collection can largely be attributed to the Honourable George Harding (Chairman of the Supreme Court Library Committee 1887–1889 and 1891–1895 and Acting Chief Justice 1883–1884), whose extensive private collection of 4,500 volumes was acquired after his death by the State Government, to form the nucleus of the State Library.

The current collection totals over 950 volumes and contains famous works from some of the most distinguished authors of the common law tradition, a number of which date back to the early 16th century. The Library has also attracted donations of legal materials such as unpublished memoirs, manuscripts and conference papers by judges and other members of the legal profession.

These precious legal heritage items are well protected by environmental controls within the room, ensuring that the temperature and humidity are suitable for the preservation of books and documents.

The Rare Books Room brings these items into the public domain, where they serve to foster community awareness and appreciation of Queensland legal heritage.