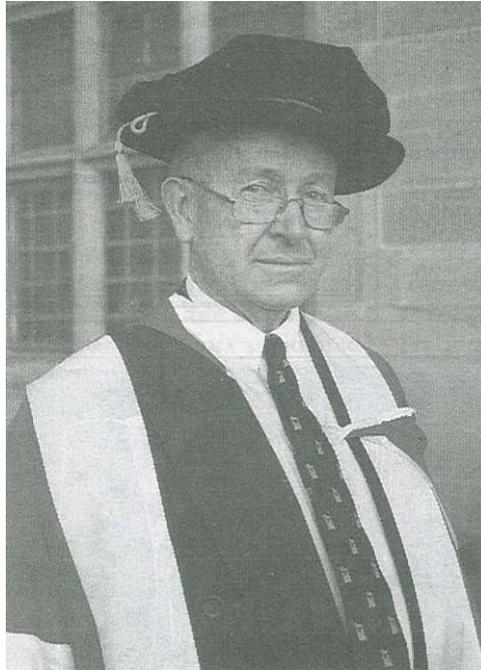


## Professor Wallace Kirsop

The degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Professor Wallace Kirsop at an Arts ceremony held on 26 March 1999.



Professor Wallace Kirsop, *photo, Tracey Schramm, 'The University of Sydney News' 15 April 1999, University of Sydney Archives.*

### Citation

Chancellor

I have the honour to present Wallace Kirsop, Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).

After studies at North Sydney Boys' High School in the late nineteen-forties, Wallace Kirsop took out the degree of Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours in French and German at the University of Sydney and then proceeded to further studies in France. In 1960 he successfully defended a doctoral thesis on early seventeenth century alchemical literature at the Sorbonne. During his postgraduate years in Paris he enjoyed the privilege of membership of the Ecole Normale Superieure in the Rue d'Ulm, the first Australian to have been granted that honour by one of the most academically exclusive French tertiary colleges.

On his return to Australia, after first holding a Lectureship in French at this University for two years, Wallace Kirsop moved to Monash University in Melbourne in 1962. The breadth of his interests and scholarship having taken him beyond the confines of traditional French language and literature studies. Monash University offered him the opportunity to develop these interests and serve the intellectual causes dear to him. He spent the rest of his career at Monash and on his recent retirement he was made an Honorary Professorial Fellow of that University.

For over three decades he has been Editor of the distinguished scholarly publication the Australian Journal of French Studies, with which he had been associated since its inception in 1964; in 1980 he was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. In the last quarter of a century he has delivered an impressive number of invited lectures in some of the world's most distinguished universities, including Paris, Oxford, Rome and Harvard, and in 1980-81 he held the prestigious appointment of Sandars Reader in Bibliography at the University of Cambridge.

Wallace Kirsop was responsible for the early extension of the French Studies curriculum in Australia to such areas as cultural and social history, many years before such courses became popular in our universities. His advocacy in Australia of the approaches associated with the French "Annales" school of historiography (at a

time when such methods were little known in local academic circles) went well beyond the boundaries of our French departments.

Possibly Wallace Kirsop's major scholarly achievement on the international scene was the introduction into French studies of the methods of the Anglo-American school of physical bibliography. This comparatively new discipline focuses on the interface of technology (the printing of books) and the transmission of texts. The emergence of physical bibliography in the English-speaking world was primarily due to the complex textual problems created by the recent invention and use of the printing press, problems which had profound repercussions on the editing of post-Gutenberg authors such as those of the Elizabethan age. The exacting new standards in editorial practice for the publication of early printed texts would not have prevailed in France without Wallace Kirsop's influence.

Wallace Kirsop has also made a pioneering contribution to national library policy in Australia and to the development of research library collections and services, a contribution which was generated by his passionate love for books and libraries. Amongst other accomplishments, he was one of the founders of the Friends of the Fisher Library. His seminal contribution to Australian cultural and booktrade history will be remembered thanks to the major team project of the History of the Book in Australia, which he currently chairs and which will no doubt fill the first years of what is expected to be a very active period of retirement.

If Wallace Kirsop's rich and diverse contribution to scholarship had to be summarised in just one single statement, it would be, in the words of D. (Don) F. McKenzie, Emeritus Professor of Bibliography and Textual Criticism at the University of Oxford, through his role as a highly successful "two-way communicator of one society to another", the two societies being that of France, on the one hand, and Australia and more broadly the English-speaking world, on the other.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting Wallace Kirsop FAHA for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.