

Laboratory/Resources Managers

The Laboratory/Resources Managers held the senior Departmental administrative position and played a key role in the Department from its beginning in 1963 until 2010 when the position was abolished with the move to the combined School of Biomedical Sciences administration in the new STRIP building.

Over that 48-year period only five people occupied the position.

Holders of the position had a varied range of duties including the selection and supervision of technical/general staff, purchase of equipment for teaching and research, assistance in laboratory design, occupational health and safety, research administration and most importantly for control of the departmental budget.

The role of the initial appointee, Mr. Tom McAvan, who held the position from 1963 – 1977, has been alluded to in the Early Days. In 1977 Mr. McAvan retired and Mr. Brian Ruck was appointed in 1978. Mr. Ruck had been a member of the Department of Microbiology at Melbourne University.

In the latter part of 1978, the Universities Commission approved the move of the science section of the Department to a new building to be constructed on the Clayton Campus. In addition to his normal duties, Mr. Ruck became involved in the planning of the new building. The setting up of the technical requirements for the operation of the Department and the transfer to the Clayton Campus was a major task in which he was assisted by the Chief Technical Officer, Mr. Ron Morris, the manager of the Departmental workshop.

In 1985 Mr Ruck left the Department to accept an appointment with the then Dean of Medicine, Professor Schofield . Mr Ian Ray was appointed as Laboratory Manager and held the position until 1990 when he transferred to the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories.

While still retaining his position in the Departmental workshop, Mr Morris was appointed as Acting Laboratory Manager until Mrs. Margaret Dooley was appointed to the position of Resources Manager at the end of 1991. She held the position she until 2010 when the restructure to a central School of Biomedical Sciences administration caused individual Departmental Resources managers positions to be abolished.

For most of the first 30 years of the Department's existence, the Departmental budget allocation was determined by the Faculty based on the salary needed for an establishment staff (calculated on staff/student ratios), a non-salary budget and separate funds for equipment. Unspent money was recouped by the Faculty at the end of each year, so part of the Manager's role was to ensure that all funds were spent. In the early 1990's the system changed to a one-line budget, and the Departmental Resources Manager and Head of Department had the freedom to allocate the money for staff salaries, equipment or other non-salary expenditure. This coincided with a steady decline in total budget allocation (in real terms) so that the budget no longer covered the salary expenses of the 'establishment staff' and over the next 20 years there was a decrease in numbers of both academic and general staff paid from Departmental funds. During the same period there were substantial increases in Departmental research funding and the number of research staff trebled.

Throughout this time the Laboratory and Resources Managers relied heavily on support from key assistants, many of whom worked for the Department for several decades. The development of computers, the introduction of a range of University central computer systems, and the growth in use of personal computers caused changes in the ways in which administrative work was done in the Department. Lesley Gladman was appointed as Purchasing Clerk during the tenure of Tom McAvan, and retired from the position of Purchasing Officer at the end of 2009. When she started in the position she used typewriter and carbon paper, and Departmental purchasing and finance information was updated by central administrative staff with a time lag of up to three weeks. From 1999 the introduction of SAP meant that orders were generated on-line and Departmental records were updated instantly. Tony Stott worked in the Department for over 30 years in a number of roles (research technician and class preparation), before becoming the Departmental IT support person and later Deputy Resources Manager.

The move of research labs from several Departments in SOBS into the new STRIP buildings coincided with major restructuring of University administration of Purchasing, Finance and HR. Purchasing, Finance and HR administration is now done by specialists who work for all the Departments in SOBS. For many years there had been managers and administrative staff who worked across Finance, HR, Student admin and sundry other specialities. The increasing complexity of administration and legislative compliance requirements caused the

University to decide that staff needed to be specialists and needed to be qualified in their field – Finance Officers are now expected to have more than a rudimentary knowledge of accounting (a relevant degree). The Laboratory & Resources Manager (expected to know all there was to know of finances, grants administration, personnel, lab design and safety, equipment, and all the departmental history) is no more.