

Books pave new road for Melbourne



After 27 years working in disability services around south-west Victoria, Dennis Melbourne has taken a new path and opened a secondhand bookshop in Koroit.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] M
[/dropcap]any public servants, at some point in their lives, have sat at their desk and dreamt of opening a coffee shop, or a bookshop, or maybe both and **Dennis Melbourne** was no exception.

Dreaming and doing, however, are two very different things, and Dennis has only had the opportunity to pursue his life-long interest in books since retiring from the Department of Human Services last year.

Dennis, who lives in Koroit, has spent the early part of the summer setting up his second-hand bookstore, **The Bookworm**

Gallery, in what was an empty shopfront at 133A Commercial Rd, Koroit, and has since had a “soft” opening while adding the finishing touches.

“I have always been a reader and loved books. Whenever I have moved, there has always been three or four bookshelves of books that have had to come with me,” he laughs.

After 27 years in disability services, including his most recent position as manager of disability accommodation across the south and western parts of Victoria, Dennis is ready to put his heart into a venture that may not make a lot of money, but which he does for the joy of it.

“I am opening gentleman’s hours – 10am to 4pm – and if I have a quiet day, I have a quiet day. I am just enjoying it,” he says.

The first few weeks, however, have been surprisingly busy, particularly during the recent [Lake School of Celtic Song and Dance Festival](#) at Koroit when “the shop filled up with Irish people looking for books”.

“Another woman wandered in and looked around and said she hadn’t seen an ‘old-fashioned’ book shop like this for ages,” Dennis adds.



Fresh start: Dennis has retained much the building's character that it had when it was a newsagency.

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[/dropcap]n setting up the bookshop, Dennis made a conscious decision to not change too much of the building's character, so the Axminster floral carpet will stay, as will the original signwriting on the window advertising *The Argus* newspaper. The mood music is also just as likely to come from his vinyl LP collection as it is from a cd-player.

"But I have bought a coffee machine and a barista friend is going to teach me how to make coffees," Dennis says.

While bookshops have no doubt suffered from the arrival of e-books, Dennis is among those who believe quaint, personalised bookshops still have a place and people still enjoy browsing and reading "the real thing".

"Children also love to read. I have a spot set aside for them and they come in and they love reading the kid's books," he says.

A new bookshop in the main street of Koroit also brings a spark to a small town that is still yet to take off in the way that Port Fairy has, despite being cute, historic and only 10 minutes from the beach.

“Quite a few people living here now have done the seachange thing. I had a couple in here the other day who had sold up in Melbourne and were on their way to South Australia when they passed through here and thought, ‘this’ll do us,” Dennis says.

[box type="bio"] The Bookworm Gallery is at 133A Commercial Rd, Koroit (next door to the newsagency) and is open Tue-Fri 10am to 4pm and Saturday 9am-4pm. [/box]



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