This is a selection of developments and usages of the three rooms used for lectures in the Institute Building, mainly taken from the annual reports of the Libraries Board of South Australia and its forerunners, and is not a complete list.

**Reading Room/Lecture Room on the ground floor**

When the Institute Building was opened in 1861 for the South Australian Institute, the main room on the western side of the entrance was the Reading Room and was used for lectures in the evenings, when the room was closed early and rearranged to seat an audience. In an era when the press was the only mass medium, attending lectures was a popular pastime, standing part way between education and entertainment.

A lecture series on technical and scientific subjects made it both an adult education centre and the only institution providing technical or further education beyond primary level, other than private secondary colleges. In fact the South Australian Institute was the nascent university of the city.

Other activities included regular soirees, 'conversaziones', recitations, concerts, often featuring Herr Carl Linger, and the occasional craze such as 'Hullah', a form of singing instruction. There were commercial uses as well: rooms were hired out for dances (quadrilles) and other recreational pursuits, but never gambling.

**Institute Building Lecture Room on level 1**

Due to increasing use of the facilities and need for extra space, in 1907 the Institute Building was extended and provided a dedicated Lecture Room on the first floor on the western side. From 1907 to 1967 the space was known as the Lecture Room and was used as such by the State Library (under its various names), the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia, the Royal South Australian Society of Arts and other organisations for lectures, meetings and exhibitions. It was also hired out to other organisations.

There was an electric lantern slide lectures winter series.

With the opening of a Children’s Library in 1915, an experimental series of five lectures to children was given in the Lecture Room on Friday evenings in July and August 1915. The lectures were given by senior staff of the library and members of the Board. Entrance was free by tickets distributed through schools or from the library. Although the room held about 300 the library was overwhelmed by applications with between 800 and 1000 for each session, and it was decided to continue them. Topics were *A cruise in the home of the British Navy, Feathered friends of the bush, Japan: the land of the kimono, Fishes that make nests* and *Wanderings in Paris*.

In 1918 the Peace Society tried to rent the Lecture Room for an address on the proposed League of Nations but the Board refused on political grounds, despite the fact that several pro-Empire War gatherings had been held there and although virtually every leader in Europe approved of the idea.

Owing to the restrictions placed on the use of the electric light during industrial disturbances in 1919, the course of lectures arranged for that year was partly abandoned. In that year staff held a
Welcome Home Social in the lecture room for the last remaining members of the staff who served with the Australian Imperial Forces.

The 1926-27 annual report noted that the Ellis Rowan flower paintings which were removed from the Lecture Room three years ago to allow the exhibition of a collection of war photographs, were replaced on the walls. The room continued to be in demand for lectures and meetings, on 58 occasions, particularly in the winter months.

For several weeks in 1926-27 the room was used for sittings of a Royal Commission on allegations of bribery against police officers.

Also in that year the Australasian Performing Rights Association, as the agent of various owners of copyright in musical productions, exempted the Board from payment of fees for performances in the Lecture Room of music, the copyright of which is owned by its principals.

In 1927-28 an exhibition of books illustrating the art of printing from the 15th century was held in the lecture room, and a lecture was given.

In 1930-31 the Board decided to allow small safety projectors and non-inflammable film to be used in the room. It already housed a lantern and episcope for the purposes of illustrating lectures.

In 1931-32 an exhibition of books on the fine arts during the week beginning 16 May had to be extended by four days and attracted 2,097 people. An evening lecture was given.

In 1932-33 the Friends of the [Public] Library was established and mounted an exhibition of books on the applied arts, and of bookplates and rare books in the Lecture Room.

The Royal South Australian Society of Arts used the rooms for its sketch club.

In October 1941 the Friends of the Public Library organised an exhibition of books, documents and pictures illustrating England through the ages which proved widely attractive. A small charge for admission was made in aid of the Red Cross. A similar exhibition a year later on Scotland through the ages saw the donation made in aid of the Fighting Forces Comforts Fund.

In 1945 the federal labor government created the National Film Board to import foreign documentary films and also make Australian ones for distribution around Australia. This information service was seen as apart of the ‘quality of life’ improvements for post war Australia. It fitted the aims of libraries and the State Library’s Research Service which had the photographic and information giving expertise. The first documentary film Valley of the Tennessee about President Roosevelt’s public works program during the Depression was shown in the lecture theatre on Thursday evening 12 August 1947, introduced by a brief lecture and followed by questions and discussion. The documentaries proved extremely popular and although the room seated 300, people were often turned away. Films were shown fortnightly in the winter and spring months. A big projector was purchased and the walls soundproofed. Others included Atomic energy, Britain today and The science of life.
The Board resolved at its meeting of 5 September 1946 that any ‘lectures of meetings be not used for the dissemination of party political or sectarian propaganda.’

In 1945-46 the Research Service organised a series of lectures on Home Planning from 11 October to 6 December. A final talk was given in the fortnightly broadcasts, identified with the Library’s service, over radio 5CL during the year, which dealt specifically with the work of the Research Service.

The Friends arranged an exhibition of books and pictures relating to gardens, flowers and trees through the ages from 14 September to 6 October, drawn largely from the Library and loan sources and demonstrated the wealth of available material on these charming subjects. Added features to the exhibition were talks given during the session by Mr Walter Bagot and Mrs Lance Lewis on beautiful historic gardens and the raptures of gardening. The exhibitions made a fine display and attracted many interested visitors. The success of the exhibition was credit to the untiring efforts and unerring good taste of the organiser and Hon Secretary Miss L K Symon.

In 1947-48 Mr H C Brideson was appointed Librarian-in-charge of the Research service. The Research Service organised a trial series of documentary film evenings which drew large attendances. A short introductory talk on the main film was given by an authority on the subject, and keen discussion took place at the end of each screening. Suggested reading lists were prepared for each evening and a display of books and periodicals on the subject, available from the Public Library was featured. Because of the outstanding success of these shows, and as the film has become recognised as the logical extension of the printed book, it has been decided to make it a regular feature in library work. A Bell and Howell’ 15mm projector has been acquired already, and it is hoped to build up a collection of the more significant films for loan and exhibition.

In 1948-49 the series got underway with 11 documentary film evenings, including Mr Noel Lothian on Plants and gardens, Mr H M Hale on Marine life, Mr N B Tindale on The people at Australia’s front door and Professor John Bishop on The symphony and the orchestra. Arranged by the Board, the room was used by 18 educational bodies.

By 1949-50 the Lecture Room was in frequent use for conferences, lectures, exhibitions, annual meetings, socials, musical recitals and film evenings. The uncomfortable crowded wooden chairs were replaced by more generously spaced tubular steel chairs of comfortable design. The acoustics of the room were improved by further installations of cellotex on the southern wall and by an alteration in the angle of the ceiling above the speaker’s dais. A microphone was installed and the addition of an amplifier, loud speaker and turntable has adapted the room for evenings of recorded music.

In 1950-51 the room was in demand for exhibitions, cinema evenings, puppet shows, sessions of recorded music and meetings of cultural bodies. Talks included John Horner on Two centuries of Bach, Warren Bonython spoke about the Northern Flinders Ranges, and Charles Mountford spoke about Arnhem Land and its Aborigines.

Talks by the Library’s Research Services in the 1950s to early 1960s were very well attended. From 1951-52 Miss Ada A Lucy was in charge of the Lecture Room and it was used on 133
occasions for film evenings, lectures, meetings and exhibitions. An Aldis blower unit was installed for improving the projection of coloured slides.

There were the occasional female speakers. In 1952-53 Lady Bonython spoke on Flower decoration, in 1957-58, Miss Ruth Gibson on Work and play in New York.

In 1953-54 the room was used on 129 occasions. Mr D van Amstel spoke about Television, Mr J R Dridan spoke on The River Murray system and Mr R E Banks spoke on Building research: its contribution to better housing. With the consent of the seven learned societies which contributed towards the cost of an epidiascope for the Lecture Room, the old machine was replaced by the latest Leitz model, purchased from the epidoscope fund. The ventilation of the room was improved by the installation of seven exhaust fans.

In 1954 during the visit of Her Majesty the Queen, the room was used by about 60 newspaper correspondents as post office and press bureau.

In 1954-55 Mrs Ada A Womersley was in charge. The Lecture Room was used on 122 occasions. The new fire escape is used as an additional exit and enables the room to be cleared promptly and expeditiously. The program of educational film evenings and lectures were well attended; on several occasions the 300 seats in the Lecture Room were insufficient to accommodate all who wished to attend. The lecture by Mr F Claridge on his experiences in the Redex Trial Around Australia with the Redex Trial attracted so much notice that it was decided to repeat it. On both evenings many people had to be turned away.

In 1955 the Board arranged the world premiere on 18 November of Charles P Mountford’s film The Island of Yoi which was a record of the National Geographic Society’s expedition to Melville Island in 1954 and Mr Mountford gave a lecture. It was attended by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Robert George, and many other distinguished guests.

In October 1955 the Board arranged an exhibition to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the United Nations which was officially opened by the Minister for Education, Hon Baden Pattinson. During November two young Persian students, Issa and Abdullah Omidvar, who were touring the world on motor cycles, visited Adelaide. They brought with them some examples of Persian handicrafts and art, which the Board placed on display in the Lecture Room together with a selection of books on Persia. These exhibitions were both well attended, including by many school children.

From 21-25 January 1957 a display of books on cricket was mounted in the Lecture Room. Mr Geoffrey Noblett opened the exhibition which attracted nearly 3,000 people. Films on cricket were shown and the SACA and international cricketers lent cricketing souvenirs. On 11 March Mr K C Sen Gupta of the Indian High Commissioner’s Office in Sydney opened an exhibition of books on India which drew 1,146 visitors during the five days it was on display. Lady George opened an exhibition of books on flowers on 10 April, Flower Day, and during the three days it was on view it was attended by 1,358 people.

In 1956-57 talks included The outlook for oil search in South Australia by John Bonython and Reg Sprigg, The brave new world of atomic radiation—a cautionary tale by Dr G M E Mayo and The coming of responsible government in South Australia by Dr Douglas Pike.
On 14 October 1958 Sir Donald Bradman spoke on *Cricket* and later Lt-Cmder J W Homewood on *The life of a frogman*.

In 1958-59 the lightwell between the RSASA gallery and the Lecture Room was filled in to make a storage room on the landing for lecture room chairs.

From 1958 to 1967 Library Association exams were held in the Lecture Theatre.

In 1959-60 lectures included Mr W A Bradfield on *The rocket exploration of space*, Mr Paul McGuire CBE, GCSS on *Italy today*, and Professor A M Horsnell on *Modern dentistry*.

Talks in 1960 included Warren Bonython on *Crossing the country north of Lake Eyre* and K Peake-Jones on *A schoolmaster in Antarctica*.

In 1960-61 the lecture room was used on 322 occasions. Fees for hire of the room doubled, but bookings increased.

When the Bastyan Wing was built in 1967 a dedicated new lecture theatre was created on the ground floor of the Institute Building and the role of the room on the first floor as a lecture theatre was superseded.

From 1968 to 1970 the Lecture Room was hired by the Department of Adult Education, University of Adelaide and the Workers’ Educational Association for a fortnightly Open Forum at which various socio-political questions were discussed by experts and the audience. Topics included conservation, organ transplants and the Vietnam War and the role of the USA in peace-keeping.

On 1 March 1971 the Premier of South Australia, Hon. Don Dunstan, opened the Ian Clunies Ross Memorial Foundation Science Centre in the Lecture Room and annexe. The Foundation hired out the use of the lecture room to a range of scientific organisations. The Library used the payment from the Foundation to purchase books on science and technology for the Library. In 1975 the Clunies Ross Foundation moved to accommodation elsewhere.

In 1975 rates for hiring this room was $16 for all day, compared with $30 charged by venues such as the Freemasons Hall or $45 for the State Administration Centre Theatre.

At its meeting of 16 February 1976 the Libraries Board resolved that in the light of changes in society’s views about religion since 1946 that its policy on use of its lecture facilities be changed to read ‘that the Board will not accept bookings which are likely in the view of the State Librarian to result in meetings or other functions which will be disorderly or which will cause damage to the premises, furniture or fittings of the Board, or which will lead people to the commission of a crime or which might lead in the public mind to the association of the Board with the dissemination of partisan propaganda.’

From 1979 to 1984 the room housed the Women’s Studies Resource Centre, then the History Trust of South Australia’s Social history Museums Division, then in the early 1990s by Community Information Services South Australia. During the 2001-03 Library redevelopment,
the room was divided to create toilets on the first floor, and a lift was installed so the room was usable for community and staff activities. When the Institute Building re-opened in 2004 the room was let to the Collections Council of Australia, then in 2010 to the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Capital City Project Team.

The room was named the Des Ross Room in December 2008 for the late Mr Des Ross AM, a former Chairman of the Libraries Board of South Australia, who was a strong supporter of community engagement for libraries.

**Lecture Theatre on the ground floor of the Institute Building extension**

The Lecture Theatre is located on the ground floor of the 1907 extension of the Institute Building.

When the Bastyan Wing was built in 1967 the Royal Geographical Society moved out of this room into the new Bastyan Wing. Some time later, the room was redeveloped as a Lecture Theatre with a ‘raked’ floor and fixed seating and screening/sound facilities.

The raked floor was removed during the redevelopment of the Institute Building in 1993 to create a more usable level floor.

During the 2001-03 Library redevelopment (when the Bastyan Wing was emptied) the space was used by the City of Adelaide Lending Library as a shopfront lending service.

Since the Institute Building re-opened in 2004, the Lecture Theatre has been well used by a wide range of people and organisations under the Library’s Venue Hire program.

There is no complete listing of the people who have given talks in the Lecture Theatre and their topics since the room became a Lecture Theatre in 1967. There is good documentation for the Royal Geographical Society speakers and the Friends speakers in recent times.

The RGS mostly held its lectures in the Lecture Theatre between 1968 and to the late 1990s. A selection of speakers and topics are:

- Warren Bonython on Walking the Flinders Ranges (1969)
- Harry Butler delivered the 5th annual Brock Memorial Lecture on the Canning Stock Route and the ecological balances along the route (1978)
- Dr Graeme Hugo on South Australia’s population in the 1980s (1981)
- Len Beadell delivered the 8th annual Brock Memorial Lecture on Surveying and road making in central Australia (1981) with the Governor in attendance
- Simon Fisher on Fun and nature study by hot-air balloon in Africa (1981)
- Nick Harvey on The Great Barrier Reef: one hundred years since Darwin (1982)
- Peter Copley on The re-enactment of Madigan’s crossing of the Simpson Desert (1982)
- Robyn Williams (ABC Science Show) on Silly science. How dangerous is it? (1985)
- John Glover on The social health atlas of South Australia (1993)
The Friends of the State Library’s series of *Books in my life* and *Wednesdays at one* have brought many well known and some lesser known South Australian identities to the notice of the community.

Some of the other events and activities held in the Lecture Theatre since 1967 identified from annual reports, and from staff recollections are:

- Speakers for various Adelaide Festivals of Arts, including international outdoor sculptor and photographer Andy Goldsworthy
- Friends of the Paul McGuire Maritime Library talks, including Mrs Margaret McGuire
- A Friends of the State Library Anniversary Dinner in 1993 when Her Excellency the Hon. Dame Roma Mitchell AC, DBE, Governor of South Australia accepted the role as the first Friends patron
- Launch of the Library’s *Women and politics in South Australia* website in 1998 by the Minister for Arts and the Minister for the Status of Women Hon Diana Laidlaw
- Opening of the Sir Donald Bradman Collection exhibition in 1998 by the Prime Minister, Hon John Howard
- Forums on the Australian Constitution in conjunction with the Constitutional Centenary Foundation
- Series of themed lectures on the life and contribution to South Australia of Catherine Helen Spence in August 2004. Speakers and topics were: Life overview - Associate Professor Susan Magarey; Political activist - Hon. John Bannon, Dr Deane Crabb, Dr Helen Jones; Writer - Professor Susan Sheridan, Dr Madge Mitton and Associate Professor Susan Magarey; Unitarian - Dr David Hilliard and Peter Whitham.
- Film screenings, including *They’re a weird mob* in association with the South Australian Centre for Australian Studies
- A screening of the 1918 silent movie *The woman suffers, while the man goes free* the first ‘star’ photoplay filmed in South Australia, with Kelvin Brown on the baby grand piano
- Lecture and film based on Sir Douglas Mawson’s *The home of the blizzard*
- Government and private sector seminars and training courses
- *Allwrite!* Children’s literature festival in 2005
- Performances of Mem Fox’s *The green sheep* by Windmill Theatre Company in 2005, 2006
- Bastille Day celebrations with Alliance Francaise in 2005
- Various literary days with numerous speakers: Bloomsday, Max Fatchen Day, Colin Thiele Day, Robert Burns Day, Bloke Day celebrating the life and work of C J Dennis Day
- Indian poetry evening
- Antiquarian book fair and Military medals roadshow
- Cartooning seminars
- State Library staff meetings, training, Christmas party, quiz night and volunteer events
- Media interviews
- Launch by the United States of its Virtual Consulate
- Piano recital for the United States Consul General and his guests
- Cambridge Exams
- Presentation of Literacy and Numeracy awards
- Wedding Ceremony in June 2006
- Lectures by Healthy Development Adelaide, a research cluster of the University of Adelaide.
In 2008 as part of the State Library Redevelopment the room was named the Anne and Basil Hetzel Lecture Theatre.