

# Reason finds a new home

**Niki Koulouris**

WITH rhetoric reaching fever pitch in the debate over war in Iraq, the time is ripe for an analysis of the arguments put forward by political and religious groups.

Since the 1920s, the Rationalist Society of Australia has promoted reason as the supreme means of advancing humanity through its journal, *Australian Rationalist*, and its public activities.

Its diverse members question religious beliefs and profess to reject arbitrary assumptions. The group's most recent conference dissected the logomachy on Iraq and posed alternative policies to war.

Late last year, the society donated its entire research collection of 1300 rare and valuable books to Victoria University.

The Rationalist Collection was launched at the Footscray Park Campus Library in March by the Vice-President of the Rationalist Society of Australia, David McKenzie.

Thanking the University for agreeing to house the collection, he said, "The library will be more accessible to our members and students of the University.

"The society will continue to make funds available for the purchase of books that will fill gaps in the collection so that it may continue to grow."

He added that the Australian Rationalist Society had an

important role to play in educating the community, particularly in the light of present global conflict.

"With the situation in Iraq, three leaders all profess their countries and lives are being run by a higher being," Mr McKenzie said.

"We respect their faith. But a study of history shows how faith

proposed to sit down for half an hour, or as long as it was to take, and answer it."

Professor Falk identified the 'culprit' to be Bill Cook [William Glanville Cook]. An important member of the group's executive in the 1930s and 1940s, Cook donated most of the books to the society.



**Library of reason:** (l-r) University Librarian Doreen Parker and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Jim Falk with the Vice President of the Australian Rationalist Society, David McKenzie.

can be perverted. It is really important that we continue to play a part so that people continue to be informed."

Also speaking at the launch was VU Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Jim Falk. He said he recalled being put in his place by a rationalist when he was a Monash University student.

"I asked him an impudent question," Professor Falk said. "And I found out - even late in the evening as it was - that he

Professor Falk said the Rationalist Collection fitted very closely with scholastic values of universities.

"The rationalists believe it is important to question the alleged great political, theological and historical laws with our rational capacities," he said.

"The collection is a historical statement of the development of rationalist thought and will be highly beneficial to the University and to all those who use it." ♦