

EXHIBITION STEPS UPGRADE PROJECT

EARLY 2009

The historic flight of steps between the Napier Building and Engineering South is the only remaining physical evidence of Adelaide's Exhibition Building which was a major structure on North Terrace for more than fifty years. The steps still provide a useful link between the upper and lower levels of the North Terrace Campus but they are currently showing their age and require repair and upgrade. The project to upgrade the steps will ensure that the steps are here for all to enjoy for another 100 years.



North Terrace in 1890, with Mitchell building in the background

The Exhibition Building on North Terrace was constructed in 1886 and opened in 1887 for the Adelaide Exhibition. The exhibition, commemorating fifty years of colonial settlement in South Australia, ran from June 1887 to January 1888 and was highly successful, despite being held during a period of economic depression. The rear of the building was linked to the lower levels below the escarpment by terraces and formal sets of steps. The original extent and symmetrical configuration of the layers of staircases can be seen in early photographs held in University Archives and the State Library.

After the exhibition the building served a number of uses including government offices, examination hall and premises for the School of Mines. It was demolished in 1962 to make way for expansion on the University of Adelaide campus, and was replaced by the Napier car park and plaza. Only the bottom flight of the extensive staircases escaped destruction.

In order to retain these important steps, the University has commenced a project to stabilise and conserve the structure. The project will be delivered by the University's Infrastructure Branch Project Delivery Unit.



Exhibition Steps under construction in 1886 – lowest level on right.



A view of the building and terraces from the University Oval in 1890



The top sections of the southern steps (in 1918 with nurses)