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UNDERCOVER SUSAN WYNDHAM

DAUGHTER DEAREST

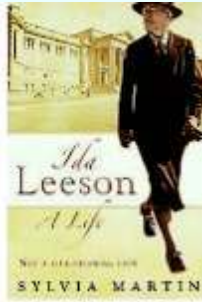
Her first novel, *Air Kisses*, is unlikely to win major literary awards but it has launched **Zoe Foster** (pictured), daughter of Miles Franklin-winning **David Foster**, as a stylish, witty author of chick-lit. Beauty journalist Foster based her fiction on her real-world life of champagne and lip gloss, a long way from the philosophical and mythological themes that run through Foster snr's literary satires. With 12,000 copies in print and a three-book deal with Penguin, she may well outsell her father, to whom *Air Kisses* is dedicated as "a biodynamic hothouse tomato to my tinned and peeled".



"Going through the magazines, you learn how to write commercially for the reader," she says. "But I hold Dad in such high regard that I feel like a fraud. He researches and thinks and is so much more accomplished. He says, 'You're a much better writer than me; you write so easily,' and I guffaw. We have an 'Aw, shucks' relationship. He has given me some amazingly helpful tips on how to fictionalise so you don't lose friends."

A VALIANT WOMAN

No one thinks twice about the NSW State Librarian, **Regina Sutton** – and **Dagmar Schmidmaier** before her – being women. But when **Ida Leeson** was made Mitchell Librarian at the State Library of NSW in 1932, she was the first woman in the country appointed to a senior Australian library position and the decision was controversial. **Sylvia Martin's** biography, *Ida Leeson: A Life. Not A Blue-Stocking Lady* (Allen & Unwin), has won the biennial Magarey Medal for women biographers and a \$10,000 prize.



Leeson, Martin argues, was an underappreciated intellectual whose

work included finding **Matthew Flinders's** missing log in the London Shipping Lists and lobbying for the Angus & Robertson archives to be secured. In praising the book as "compelling and intellectually fascinating", the judges say: "Testimony to Martin's extraordinary rendering of Leeson is a lasting impression of a woman who is gruff and scary, efficient and driven, affable and talkative, loyal and valiant."

Martin, whose book was also shortlisted in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the Kibble Award, is working on a biography of poet and political activist **Aileen Palmer**, daughter of **Vance** and **Nettie Palmer**.

THE PROBLEM WITH WEALTH

Christopher Kremmer (pictured) will talk about greed in the first of the 2008 Sydney PEN Voices: 3 Writers Project. Rather than address wealth and poverty in countries such as India and Afghanistan that he has written about in his books – *The Carpet Wars*, *Bamboo Palace* and *Inhaling The Mahatma* – he points the finger at Australia. As the globalised economy cools, he says, "We are facing the prospect of a lot of middle-class Australians who had a taste of a very good life having it taken away from them." The problem of massive inherited wealth and corporate salaries leads him to examine a possible return of death duties and other radical solutions. The talk is part of a 10,000-word essay that will be published by Allen & Unwin with later essay-talks by **Melissa Lucashenko** on survival and **Anna Funder** on courage. Wednesday, 6.30pm, Sydney Grammar School, bookings 1300 306 776 or www.mca-tix.com; Thursday, 6pm, National Library of Australia, Canberra, bookings director@manningclark.org.au. See www.pen.org.au.



DO THE SPLITS

Chambers, the dictionary people, have brought out a little paperback called *Address To Impress: 200 Words You Should Use*. I'm not sure about the "should" but the entries helpfully define and illustrate use of words such as averse (not to be confused with adverse), incontrovertible, profligate and Zeitgeist. What I like most is the examples taken from international newspapers including the *Herald*. But the *Herald* and Chambers have accepted the split infinitive, as in: "Should one man have the right to arbitrarily decide what information is in the public interest?" Call me old-fashioned, but what's wrong with "... the right to decide arbitrarily ..."?