

# International News Notes

Edited by David Roberts

## **National Library/Archives of Vanuatu**

*Correspondents: Anne Naupa and June Bela Norman*

The National Archives of Vanuatu are administered under the terms of the Republic of Vanuatu's *Archives Act, No 13 of 1992*. In 1997, as a result of the Government of Vanuatu's Comprehensive Reform Programme coming into effect, the National Archives staff of seven was reduced to one. Historic archives remained in a derelict and very small building, previously used as a mental asylum. Government departments were asked to retain their public archives from 1992 until such time as the planned two-storey National Library/Archives building was constructed.

In December 2006, the sole staff member of the National Archives passed away. As a result, the Minister for Internal Affairs returned responsibility for the National Archives to the Vanuatu National Cultural Council as per the *Archives Act*, and specifically to the National Library of Vanuatu. Since 19 September 2007 therefore, staff members of the National Library (now known as the National Library/Archives) have been responsible for retrieving, preserving, sorting and inventorying the historic archives that had been left unattended in the former archives building. No government funding for the management and administration of the National Archives has been received in the last two years.

Since 2000, the safe keeping of film, photo and sound archives has been the responsibility of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre's (VCC) National Film, Sound and Photo Archives Unit, while a nationwide team of voluntary

fieldworkers has focussed on the recording of oral traditions, also for the centre.

During 2008 all historic publications, documents, papers and some very rare items were retrieved item by item from the old archives building by National Library staff and VCC volunteers. On 8 December 2008, Dr Howard van Trease and his team of young volunteers from the Ohlen area of Port Vila completed the difficult task of emptying the building of all remaining loose papers and other scattered documentary items, and delivered them to the VCC building for safer storage, prior to sorting.

In June 2008, National Library/Archives staff assisted archivists from New Caledonia to retrieve Supreme Court archives remaining after the Supreme Court building burnt down. These were brought to the VCC for safe keeping.

A first (trial) 40ft shipping container was purchased in September 2008, largely through the generosity of overseas donors, and some of the retrieved items were housed within it through the wet season (December 2008 to March 2009). On inspection in April, staff were relieved to discover that the container was indeed secure, dry and pest-free. A second 40ft shipping container was then obtained in August 2009.

All retrieved files and documents have had rusty metal fasteners removed and have been generally cleaned up.

Preliminary sorting and boxing into two main collections (New Hebrides and Vanuatu) has almost been completed. Some 600 archive boxes have been filled with retrieved files, government records and miscellaneous loose documents. Another 500 archive boxes are still needed for the items stored in the first container.

A National Archives mission statement, goals and objectives and action plan for 2009 were drawn up in February 2009 and presented to relevant government officers, including the Minister for Internal Affairs (under whose ministry the National Archives is administered).

In 2009, the Vanuatu Public Service Commission (PSC) has drawn up a public service records management policy to be followed by all government ministries and departments once it has been approved. It is expected that the PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance

Toolkit will be used as a model for good recordkeeping in the Vanuatu Public Service; in the meantime, the PSC is taking steps towards enabling recordkeeping officers to share their knowledge and assist in improving current recordkeeping systems.

This is an edited extract of a report prepared by Anne Naupa and June Bela Norman of the National Library/Archives, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Port Vila, for the 13th Conference of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA), 12-17 October 2009, Brisbane, Australia.

### **Archives of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Kiribati**

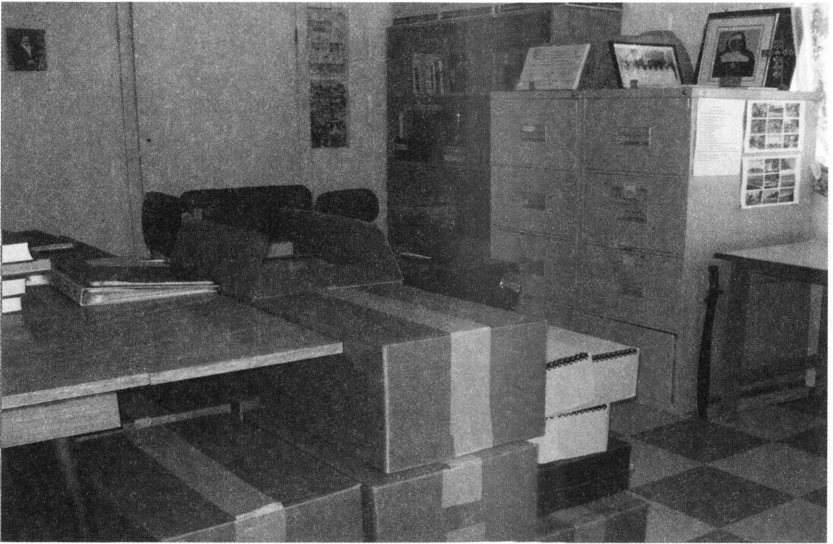
*Correspondent: Sr Margaret Sullivan*

Since March this year I have been corresponding with Captain Wilbur James, US Navy Reserve (Ret.) who visited Tarawa in November 2008 for the 65th Anniversary of the Battle of Tarawa. During his visit to the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) Archives he noticed the scarcity of material on World War II.

On returning to California he received funding from Rotary International Foundation for a project to collect and ship to Tarawa historical books and related media (CD, DVD, VHS) pertaining to World War II, especially the Pacific War and Kiribati. In addition archival stationery and a laptop computer were included in the project.

In August, 21 boxes of these materials arrived on the USNS *Richard E. Byrd*. This ship brought personnel and materials for the humanitarian and civic assistance mission known as Pacific Partnership 2009 in Kiribati.

On 2 September 2009 a presentation ceremony of the donated archival materials was made at the convent by the Commander of the Mission. Marines and civic personnel from the ship delivered all the boxes to the archives room.



Donated archival materials in OLSH Archives, Tarawa

We now have about 200 books, and 30 videos and DVDs unpacked, and they are all ready to catalogue. A special documentary DVD included in the gift was a copy of *Return to Tarawa* by World War II navy veteran (Leon Cooper) who visited our archives in 2008.

While the marines were on Tarawa several groups visited the OLSH Archives to view a display of World War II memorabilia and historical photos, as well as records of the OLSH sisters who arrived in Kiribati in 1895.

Work is progressing well on the translation of early letters of OLSH pioneer sisters in Kiribati, with 135 out of 145 completed.

### **The Archive of the Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth in Fiji**

*Correspondent: Sr Kasileta Leiato*

The Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth (SOLN) is now established due to the courageous efforts of the first Catholic missionaries in Fiji. In 1844 the French Marist Fathers began their missionary work of evangelisation in the scattered islands of Fiji. The

increasing needs of the mission at the time put pressure on the Marist Fathers to turn to the Third Order Regular of Mary (TORM) in France for help.

In 1882, the first three sisters of TORM, which today is known as the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, arrived in Fiji. They began assisting in the establishment of Catholic schools for Fijian girls, opening the first at Wairiki, Taveuni. Some of the girls who were pupils of the school were very attracted by the kind of life lived by the sisters, expressed their desires to be like the French sisters and to live with them. This was the start of what developed into the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth.

Some of those young girls eventually lived with the French sisters and helped them in manual work and with the language, and accompanied them to the villages for home visits. They also assisted the sisters in catechising and looking after the children in boarding schools. Because of the remarkable dedication of these young Fijian girls to their work with the sisters, the people called them *vukevuke* meaning *helpers* in Fijian.

In 1891, a novitiate for the *vukevuke* was opened at Solevu, Fiji, and in 1952 it was reorganised into an autonomous diocesan congregation under the title of Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth. In 1957, the SOLN became an inter-diocesan congregation of the Archdiocese of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. The first candidate from Tonga joined that year and a year later those from Samoa, all sent by their respective bishops. At present, the SOLN are 99 in number, the members including sisters from the islands of Tokelau, Kiribati and Rotuma.

The main charism of the SOLN in the Pacific is to be *vukevuke* or helpers of the church in her missionary work of evangelisation. Today, the SOLN work and reside in 22 mission stations in Fiji, Tonga, Niue, Samoa, Rotuma and Hanford, California.

As the SOLN general administration house moved from place to place in Fiji, so did the unsorted papers, boxes of files and photographs of SOLN history. Since the beginning of the SOLN in Fiji, our general house had been moved from Solevu to Ovalau, to Mal Street, to Crompton Place, then in 1994 to Namadi Heights, Suva.

In 1994 I was asked to do something with those boxes that had been stored for years, almost inaccessible. Because of my lack of experience, I sought help from Margaret Patel who was an archivist in Suva at the time. Margaret brought in Dr Andrew Thornley, a Methodist archivist, to help me. I worked with Andrew for almost a year sorting out the whole collection. I believe that some of the valuable materials were destroyed by hurricanes, rain and insects. Some must have gone missing when the general house was moved from place to place. In spite of all that, the very small collection of the SOLN archive still contains a rich compilation of information of its local members, especially the lives of our pioneering *vukevuke*, their mission activities, and their joys and struggles of the past. These include handwritten and typescript letters, reports, notes, dairies, papers of different Superior Generals, printed books, pamphlets, building plans and photographs. The whole collection contains 167 boxes, plus other items that are not in boxes. Currently, our records are housed at our general administration house, Namadi Heights, Suva. They are stored on wooden shelves at the corridor of the second floor.

The archive of the SOLN is very small compared to other archives in the Pacific. My main concern is the preservation of the records we have already, and acquiring a proper room for the archive and storage of the collection.

**Workshop: National Accountability, Freedom of Information and Anti-corruption Consultation for Palau Stakeholders, Ngerulmud, Palau, 18–19 August 2009**

*Correspondent: Naomi Ngirakamerang, Executive Director,  
Palau National Archives*

The Government of Palau thanks the following development partners for organising this workshop: the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Centre (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance.

It was indeed a great opportunity to shed some light on recordkeeping for good governance to Palau stakeholders: senators, ministers, governors, directors and chiefs. During the workshop many issues were raised to reaffirm the commitment made by the opening statement of the President of the Republic of Palau, to 'fight corruption and to pursue open and transparent government.' How can recordkeeping for good governance become an efficient tool to promote freedom of information, and how can it be used to reduce corruption and allow transparent government? Participants, especially governors from the 16 states, asked endless questions after my presentation on how recordkeeping can be introduced and utilised in their offices.

Based on my observations, I believe that it is important for senior staff to attend all the phases of Recordkeeping for Good Governance workshops to understand the value and the importance of good recordkeeping, and recordkeeping systems. I sensed that most of the stakeholders present at the conference did not know that such systems existed.

My presentation illuminated the value of storing and retrieving information and applying a recordkeeping system for good governance based on resolutions approved during Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) 11 in 2005 at Nadi, Fiji:

- resolution 1.1 - to recognise the extreme importance of a well-managed recordkeeping system as a fundamental pillar for good governance; and
- resolution 1.2 - to recall that the creation and management of records as evidence of decisions and actions are essential to accountability, transparency and efficiency.

The presentation was well-received because most of the participants were decision makers and also heads of their bureaus. The previous workshops held in Palau on Recordkeeping for Good Governance had stirred up awareness, but did not make a strong impact on the decision makers as compared to this particular workshop. Realistically, these stakeholders should have been involved in the Recordkeeping for Good Governance workshops phases 1, 2, and 3 in the first place.

Five key factors were emphasised to the participants that will address the issues of accountability, transparency and good governance cited

from the Pacific Plan Action Committee meeting; minutes. Despite the current challenges that we are facing in our government:

1. we ought to achieve better recordkeeping in the region because there is a growing recognition of its importance with members across the Pacific working through PARBICA to build capacity and improve systems;
2. the region would significantly benefit if this initiative was expanded by involving other areas of government and possibly the private sector;
3. across the region, there is a growing recognition of the importance of ensuring better access to information for those within and outside government;
4. in order to better implement freedom of information measures, good recordkeeping systems need to be in place; and
5. the pursuit of better freedom of information without first addressing recordkeeping capacity in a sustainable way will make it an expensive, inefficient and ultimately frustrating exercise with no tangible output.

This is an edited version of an article prepared for *Panorama*, the newsletter of PARBICA. The permission of PARBICA to publish it here is gratefully acknowledged.

**Workshop: PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit – Train the Trainers, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 14–15 September 2009**

*Correspondent: Vicky Puiipui, Acting Senior Archivist, National Archives of Papua New Guinea*

The PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit – Train the Trainers workshop conducted in Port Moresby in September 2009 was treated as a pilot project in training the trainers in using the toolkit.

Adrian Cunningham and Mark Semmler from the National Archives of Australia were the workshop facilitators. They were assisted by Jacob Hevelawa, Acting Director General, Office of Libraries, Archives and



Literacy, and Tukul Kaiku, Lecturer in Information and Communication Studies with the University of Papua New Guinea.

The workshop was attended by 47 participants from 23 government agencies. The attendees were mainly training officers, human resources managers, information technology specialists, and records officers and managers, in addition to staff from the Office of Libraries, Archives and Literacy.

Chairman of the PNG Public Service Commission Mr Rigo Lua opened the workshop. He noted that when independence was declared in 1975, Papua New Guinea (PNG) adopted a very large bureaucracy from the former Australian colonial administration. It did not have in place specific policies and procedures or a coordinated mechanism for the management of records and archives. Consequently, there was no proper coordination, consistency and uniformity in relation to creation, maintenance, storage and disposal of records across government and throughout PNG's public services. The workshop was an ideal opportunity for PNG, not only for us to assist with fine-tuning the guideline, but also to be exposed to this professional area of our work, and to expand our horizon and the scope of our work. Mr Lua told the participants that there is much work to be done in this country in the area of records management, which is a fundamental aspect of government and administration.

The workshop was organised into two days of sessions based on the PARBICA Toolkit guidelines. After introductions and warm-up sessions on the first day, the program covered the following topics:

1. about the recordkeeping training in PNG,
2. understanding the toolkit,
3. reporting back,
4. about the train the trainers guideline,
5. introduce the train the trainers (1),
6. planning a course - group discussion,
7. report back,
8. introduce the train the trainers (2),
9. where to from here?, and
10. feedback forms and evaluation.

The workshop is the first of its kind in PNG, especially on recordkeeping. It was an eye opener for the participants to come together and share their experiences with one another, and establish mutual learning and understanding on recordkeeping for good governance. Especially interesting were the group discussions and presentation feedback during which participants expressed the needs they faced back in their organisations. Even though the workshop only ran for two days, the participants learnt a great deal and with the knowledge they acquired they will be enabled as trainers to deliver the PARBICA Toolkit in their respective agencies, and improve recordkeeping in the PNG Public Service.

Mr Jacob Hevelawa closed the workshop on behalf of the PNG Acting Chief Secretary for Government Mr Manasupe Zurenouc. He thanked the facilitators and participants and reminded them that the records of all government instrumentalities amount to the records of Papua New Guinea as a nation state - a reflection of its beginnings and affairs of state. The workshop was not the end of the task, but rather the beginning of what should become a national program in PNG, where recordkeeping and records management will be integrated into the workings and framework of government and the public services.