Private Lives, Public History, Anna Clark, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2016, 180 pp., AUD$27.99, ISBN 978 0 522868 95 1

Private Lives, Public History, written by historian Anna Clark – co-author, with Stuart Macintyre, of the influential and provocative *The History Wars* in 2003 – is not a book written for archivists, nor is it a book about archives. In a succinct 180 pages, Clark reflects on a research project she undertook at the University of Technology Sydney called 'Whose Australia? Popular Understandings of the Nation's Past', which looked at 'everyday' attitudes towards Australian history. Although there is little in the book about the documentary record – the basis for so much of Australian history – there is much about what history means to the ordinary people of the country – to John Howard's 'average Australian bloke', as Clark recounts in her introduction, 'Thinking About History' (Chapter 1).

The five main chapters of the book are constructed around concepts of personal historical engagement. 'Connection' (Chapter 2) looks at the disconnect Clark believes the average person feels between their personal stories and national narratives of history. 'Inheritance' (Chapter 3) considers the notion of passing family stories down through the years. Using the Stolen Generations as a central example, this chapter reflects not just on the idea of transferring history but more on the idea of loss: untold stories, intentional forgetting and the rupturing of history from generation to generation.

'Commemoration' (Chapter 4) draws on the Anzac story to discuss how one national narrative overshadows other national and personal memories. 'Contest' (Chapter 5) addresses the politics of history, which Clark suggests 'carries powerful political and cultural capital' (p. 96). What is the role of the media in the communication of historical 'truth'? How are competing perspectives addressed in historical narratives: settlement versus invasion, for instance? 'Place' (Chapter 6) looks at the notion of pilgrimages to locations, from convict settlements like Port Arthur to stations in the Kimberley. Why do people travel to historic places? To capture the feeling of being where history was made?

The book concludes with 'Presence of the Past' (Chapter 7), a meditation on the uneasy relationship between personal and public history. Clark suggests that, ultimately, the connections between individual and collective histories start to fray as history moves from the private and tangible to the more public and abstract. Clark laments this division, asking if popular history must come 'at the expense' of scholarship (p. 142).

It is interesting that Clark concludes with this concern for the divide between the personal and academic in history, yet throughout her study she almost never addresses the 'stuff' of history – the archives, the artefacts – that serves as the evidence underpinning those narratives. Archives are mentioned but a handful of times, and only then in an offhand way, suggesting that somehow they exist independently of anyone's conscious decision to make them, keep them and pass them on. While Clark writes eloquently of the 'pilgrimage' of poring over her grandmother's photograph albums – a 'historical window' onto her family (p. 129) – she does not seem to connect that personal evidence of a life lived with its value as a passageway to history for a wider public.

One would have to examine Clark's original research methodology to understand why a discussion of the tangible evidence of history was not included in the book. If the question had been asked, how do historical archives, family photographs, personal diaries and so on connect you with your sense of past?, one must assume some sort of answer would have been forthcoming.

And that answer, no doubt, would have been very interesting. Do people see a relationship between their own historical 'stuff', or their parents' or their grandparents' documentary remains, and the history they read in books or watch on television? What is their understanding of the relationship between historical materials in a museum or archives and the creation of those

photographs or letters or diaries in the first place? Does that relationship matter to them? If not, how do they imagine history comes to be?

One does not want to criticise someone's apple for not being an orange. But it is unfortunate that there is no discussion of how the average person understands not just history but the sources of history, and the institutions that protect and share those sources, from archives to libraries to museums to community centres.

If Clark did ask those questions, perhaps she will share her findings in another publication. If she did not ask those questions, then perhaps someday she will. They deserve to be asked. And the answers deserve to be heard. If archivists are to help the 'average Australian bloke' connect with both personal *and* public history, surely we need to help connect them more closely with the enduring evidence essential to constructing those histories in the first place.

Laura Millar
Archival Consultant, Canada
laura_millar@telus.net

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2016.1276846

The No-Nonsense Guide to Archives and Recordkeeping, by Margaret Crockett, London, Facet, 2016. xii + 212 pp., AUD $85.00, ISBN 978 1 856048 55 2

In her 'no-nonsense' guide, Margaret Crockett has condensed into less than 200 pages (and an 18-page index) a wealth of practical information about recordkeeping, records management, archives management, archival preservation and the archival profession. The author, an experienced archives and records consultant, identifies her intended audience as those who have had little or no formal training in the topics she covers, but who want or need a clearer understanding of them. As I opened the book, I wondered about its relevance for archival professionals, but soon realised that it has real value in helping to bridge what can be a challenging communication gap between theory and reality, between jargon and plain language.

The book's first chapter introduces the concepts and defines the terms that – in the author's view – are essential to understanding activities involving records and archives. These concepts and terms are not new – record, record series, archive, provenance and so on – but the definitions are refreshingly simplified. For example, a record is 'recorded information in any media or format, providing reliable evidence of human activity' (p. 1). This chapter demystifies records management and archival work by describing where and how it is done and who benefits when it is done well. By populating the chapter's world of archives and records with an international variety of illustrative organisations and institutions, the author expands the dimensions of this world. Illustrative examples of interest to readers of *Archives and Manuscripts* include: the Australian Society of Archivists, The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, and Records and Information Professionals Australasia.

In addressing the topics of managing current records and records management in two different chapters, the author distinguishes between personal and organisational responsibility and allows the reader to focus his or her learning experience. The current records chapter emphasises the importance of individual adoption and maintenance of systems that support the creation of purposeful, complete, usable, authentic and reliable records. The point is made, though, that responsible individual action achieves its best results when it is taken as part of a comprehensive organisation-wide records management program. The well-organised chapter describing such a