Australian Society of Archivists, *Archives – The Future*, Annual Conference, Canberra, 16–17 October 2013, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

The technology-themed sessions on the first day began with a prediction of the future by journalist and radio presenter Antony Funnell that he admitted was bleak, but aimed at promoting discussion. He suggested that the future would include a declining interest in quality, an abundance of digital data with little thought given to its enduring value, technology with increasingly limited lifespans due to planned obsolescence and a decrease in the influence of traditional information providers and managers. Some of these challenges will already hold some familiarity for archivists. In the use of technology, he cautioned archivists to learn from mistakes made in other areas where there has been too much focus on the pathways that technology can provide to people and not enough on what people want to receive through those pathways. On a more positive note, he gave the examples of *The Economist* and US television station HBO as businesses where providing quality content has continued to be successful with the right economic model.

In the following session on technology, Dr Marie-Louise Ayres discussed the online presence of the National Library of Australia (NLA), which is the envy of many less resourced institutions. Three-quarters of users of the NLA find library content through Google, as the Trove portal is searchable by Google. Facilitating online access to archival collections continues to be a challenge for many archives and was mentioned in other sessions on both days of the main conference program. Michael Loebenstein acknowledged that users of the National Film and Sound Archive collection expect to be able to access collection information through Google and Cassie Findlay asked how we can ensure that archives are present in the top results from Google searches. Professor Eric Ketelaar argued that we need to overcome silos and create a national archive ourselves, rather than relying on Google. David Fricker, however, cautioned that combining collections through a single portal needs to be balanced against maintaining a recognisable institution 'brand' that contributes financial value to commercial partnerships. The increasingly transient nature of technology is another issue for archives seeking to develop strategies for online access, with Dr Marie-Louise Ayres pointing out that just because a majority of users are currently accessing the NLA's collection through Google does not mean that they will continue to do so in the future.

During the second day there was a focus on the image, identity and future of archivists, with two sessions on the profession and a plenary session in which the speakers were asked to imagine archives and archivists in 2033. There was a general consensus on the importance of the skills of archivists, but concern around how to ensure that the profession maintains its relevance and profile into an increasingly digital future. Professor Eric Ketelaar proposed that in order to survive, archivists of the future will need to become 'information brokers' rather than custodians. Dr Katrina Dean saw archivists moving into other professional spheres, such as libraries and business. Rowena Loo suggested that archivists should collaborate more and learn from the work librarians have undertaken on building common platforms and standards. Antony Funnell had also discussed this issue in his presentation the previous day, claiming that the need for professional recordkeepers will be greater than ever in the future, but asking whether society will care enough about the loss of information to spend money on ensuring that records are preserved.

As one attendee commented during discussion time, there was a lot of conversation about what archivists should be doing, but not much about how they should do it. One

of the highlights of the conference was the examples of practical initiatives in the use of technology. In the session titled 'Appraisal – Shifting the Paradigm', Kate Cumming and Cassie Findlay spoke briefly about OpenGov NSW as an example of a 'business appropriate response' to recordkeeping issues. OpenGov NSW provides a storage and access service for New South Wales Government publications through one portal that is linked to the State Records New South Wales archival system using an API, and by uploading documents government agencies can meet their statutory obligations to provide access to publications. As part of the session titled 'Voice and Visibility for the Profession', Gionni Di Gravio gave a lively presentation on the success that the University of Newcastle has had in promoting both its collection and the place of Newcastle in the national story. The university provides free access to over 46,000 images from its collection through Flickr and uses a variety of tools including print, radio, TV, Twitter and Facebook to link to the collection.

The conference committee deserves thanks for compiling an interesting program that certainly did provoke and challenge, and arranging a well-organised event without the assistance of a professional conference planner.

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Susie van der Sluys
State Records of South Australia
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