

- (iii) subject classification - the classing of files according to their most appropriate subject relationships.

Our second conclusion might reasonably be that the study of the principles of classification as defined above, and of the techniques used to effect efficient classification at all levels, is the foundation of the study of modern records administration, at all stages of treatment - 'current', 'intermediate' and 'archival'.

Finally, if the second conclusion is acceptable, the third follows inevitably. There is urgent need for a number of definite studies on all aspects of what we have discussed, ranging from historical accounts of the origins of modern methods, through analysis of current methods, to proposals for future development. For example, we need studies on the methods of controlling correspondence in the 19th century; the development of subject indexing and subject classification in particular departments; an analysis of the composition of existing classification outlines (both registration and indexing types); and so on. Similar studies should be made in the various branches of non-public archives, and of course, for State Governments as well as for the Commonwealth Government. Only when these are forthcoming will it be possible to provide really adequate training for newcomers to any branch of work with modern records.

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PRIVATE RECORDS IN VICTORIA

As a university teacher of Australian history and a resident of a State whose Public Library is comparatively weak in its holdings of private records, I am naturally very conscious of the urgent need to locate and preserve historical source-material. Our losses have been dreadful. Even twenty years ago a thorough campaign to save records would have produced a great collection in Victoria; I have been told of scores of collections of family papers which were contributed to wartime salvage - paper appeals or were destroyed in very recent years. It is doubly urgent now in all States to save what remains, or many of the present gaps in our knowledge of Australian history may never be filled.

The major task is to persuade people to donate or

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bequeath their family records or manuscript possessions to one of the major Libraries. But the great majority of owners naturally wish to retain them. Building on earlier work by colleagues and in collaboration with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Public Library of Victoria, in 1953 I established a Register of all historical records held in Victoria outside those two institutions. A form has been used which lists the following information: the location of the records, the name of the person describing the records and the date of description the bulk and condition of the records, conditions of access, relevant information about the person or institution owning the papers and about the history of the papers, and a brief description of the papers themselves and the subjects to which they are relevant. It has been very difficult to maintain consistency of procedure in use of the forms for many reasons - incomplete information from voluntary helpers or owners, lack of time or unwillingness of owners to allow examination of large collections in detail, etc. However, the basic information is there.

The Register now contains nearly 200 entries, about half of them concerning institutional records and half family records or individual items such as diaries or collections of photographs. The Register is strong in pastoral records (largely due to the work of Miss Margaret Kiddle) and in the institutional and private records of certain country towns. So far, however, only the surface has been scratched, although already the Register has provided ideas for post-graduate research and has been very useful to a few research workers. Progress is slow: the return for many hours spent following up "leads" is often small and I myself can now afford little more time to the work than that spent in an annual trip to a rural area with a party of students. In fact, not much advance can be expected until such time as someone is employed on the work exclusively or for a great part of his time.

Nevertheless one or two years full-time work by one person in each state would yield impressive results. The plan which I originally drew up still holds good. Firstly, many kinds of institutional records can easily be located and registered - the records of political parties, trades unions, the churches and societies such as the Australian Natives Association the Anti-Sweating League, the Royal Society, the British Medical Association, the R.S.L., etc. Secondly, the private collectors of Australiana can easily be run to earth. Thirdly, the descendants of famous men should be traced and if no papers are discovered, or if it is known that their papers were destroyed, the steps

taken should be described in order to save future research workers wasting their time. Next, the bibliographies of books and theses should be surveyed to find any manuscript material mentioned. Finally, there is the general approach to the public. My experience has been that general publicity through newspapers and radio does not lead to very much. On the other hand, working through organisations such as Rotary, the Pastoralists Association, the Country Women's Association and the A.N.A., whose officers are likely to lend every assistance, such as publicity in their journals and personal introductions, is highly profitable. Most people who own family diaries, etc., need to be introduced to the investigator by someone well-known to them before they will reveal their treasures.

As yet I have not mentioned business records. Here it is to be hoped that the Business Archives Council will soon spread to the other states from N.S.W. where such good work is being done. It does appear desirable that a separate organisation should handle such records, for the division from other records usually is clear-cut and the interests both of economic historians and businessmen should soon bring about an Australia-wide organisation.

In conjunction with the Register of private records, we have been listing two other groups of material. The first are holdings of newspapers outside the Public Library of Victoria; eventually it will be possible to list, and attempt to close the gaps in that Library's newspaper collection. The second group is local government records - city, borough and shire records, courthouse, land office & mines office records. I am convinced, with Mr. Penny (Historical Studies, May 1956, Archives and Manuscripts, November, 1955) that these must be gathered - and gathered quickly - into a central state repository. Here again the rate of destruction is alarming and very few areas show the slightest interest in preservation. However, exceptions might be made in isolated cases where there is reasonable assurance that there is sufficient local pride and interest to safeguard them.

The Archives Section of the Library Association is the obvious body at the moment to take the lead in organising the location and registration of private records on an Australia-wide basis. But full-time occupation on this work is what is needed. It can only be hoped that all the major Libraries and Universities will soon recognise the urgency of the problem and employ officers to make a start on this work. For while there has been a great increase in interest in our national history, and consequently some growing awareness of the need to preserve records, the bonfires still blaze merrily.

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