

In any event, so far as this writer knows, there is no intention of enacting any new provision on the matter now under consideration. No recommendation to this effect was made by the Attorney-General's Committee on the Copyright Law of the Commonwealth which reported on 22 December 1959. It is believed that no organization has made representations concerning this particular matter; and indeed, as Mr Cox's article shows, it would not be at all easy to decide on a new policy. What is involved is a fundamental clash between the right of privacy in which even celebrated persons have a limited share, and the interests of historians and their allies, the archivists. One difficulty is that probably it would be impossible to have a provision for the benefit solely of "reputable historians"; the daily press, the Sunday press, the sensational press, and "disreputable historians", would necessarily share in the benefits of a new law designed to procure the disclosure of unpublished letters. Some compromise would be essential and it is very difficult to know where to draw the line.

Yet the possibility of a copyright continuing forever was probably never contemplated by the draftsman of the *Copyright Act*, and there is much to be said for the view that at some time after the death of a letter writer, copyright in the letter (whether then published or unpublished) should cease. My own suggestion is that the only substantial interest to be protected after a letter writer's death is the legitimate feelings of close relatives then living. Hence I would support a provision which terminated the copyright in unpublished letters at the death of any surviving parent, widower or widow and any child, which ever event occurs last. Perhaps the views not only of children but grandchildren should be considered? Or at least grandchildren living at the letter writer's death. What about brothers and sisters? But I would very much dislike to see the present proposed Bill further delayed while matters of this sort are argued and decided at Ministerial level.

REFERENCES

1. Vol. 28, p. 381.
2. Repealed as to the U.K. by the U.K. *Copyright Act* 1956, but kept in force so far as it operates in Australia.
3. See *Law of Copyright*, Copinger and James, 8th ed., pp. 31, 85-6. Later editions deal with the U.K. Act of 1956 and so are not relevant to present Australian law.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Editor,
Archives & Manuscripts.

Dear Sir,

I read with considerable interest in the last issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* an article by Mr Strahan on Melbourne University Archives; having visited the repository and met Mr Strahan I am appreciative of the notable contribution which he and his staff have made in collecting and preserving business archives in Australia.

There are, however, several points in the article which by implication, particularly in the case of those who are unfamiliar with the Australian scene, may give readers an incorrect picture of our archival institutions; unfortunately, also, Mr Strahan has made a number of generalisations which indicate that he is not aware of what is being done in other parts of Australia.

There is the statement that University archivists have realised that it is unsatisfactory to sit back and wait for material to come to the repository. No archivist worth his salt would do this, and from the back files of *Archives*

and Manuscripts Mr Strahan could read of field work carried out in Queensland and Western Australia, beginning in this State as long ago as 1951 with a trip of some 700 miles through the Eastern Goldfields. In Tasmania regular country tours are made jointly by staff of the History Department and the State Archives. The last Annual Report of the Archives Authority of New South Wales records a visit by its officers to Broken Hill. In November 1965 two of my staff made a round trip of 1,200 miles to Leonora, primarily to take over the records of the goldmining company, Sons of Gwalia Ltd., but collecting *en route* a variety of material from other sources including what Mr Strahan calls the vast and neglected areas of schools, churches, local authorities etc. etc. No doubt there are further activities, both in the areas mentioned and elsewhere, of which I am not aware.

There is an unfortunate implication in the article that no restriction is made on access to material in government archival institutions. In actual fact the reverse is too often the case and even the "responsible research scholars" may be called upon to prove their *bona fides*. Conditions of access to government archives vary from State to State and depend largely on departments concerned; it is obvious however that success in acquisition of records, whether from government or non-government sources, depends on gaining and keeping the confidence of those making the deposit, and untold damage could be done by abusing it. It is part of the basic training of the archivist to guard his records against frivolous or irresponsible use, whether or not any formal restriction has been placed on them. Most Australian archivists were brought up on Jenkinson's *Manual of Archive Administration*, and are very well aware of all that is implied by the moral defence of archives.

Mr Strahan refers more than once to the fact that qualified staff are employed in University archives. If by qualified he means graduate staff, I would be surprised if any archives institution of standing in Australia employs other than graduate staff in a professional capacity. As our repositories grow in size however there is an increasing amount of work for technicians and other non-professional officers. Unfortunately, because life would be much easier if this were true, the possessor of a university degree, even with experience of post graduate research in the social sciences, is not automatically equipped as an archivist. To be a well qualified archivist requires education, training and experience in that field; this is recognised in requirements for membership of professional associations of archivists. Professional membership of the Society of Archivists in Great Britain, for instance, is only granted to graduates who have in addition a minimum of four years experience in a recognised archives institution.

I could not refrain from a smile at the statement that the success of University archives was not a matter of more money or staff. Money and staff are certainly not everything but the lack of them is probably the main barrier to progress at the present time.

In conclusion let me say again that it is good to read of what has been achieved by Melbourne University Archives in just over six years. There is much to be done if the records needed as source materials for study of the history and development of this country are to be preserved; archivists are all too few and if we are to achieve anything it must be by co-operation rather than competition.

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