

EDITORIAL

OUR FUTURE

Decisions reached at the recent General Council, L.A.A., meeting have thrown some doubt on the possibility of retaining *Archives and Manuscripts* as a letter-press printed publication. For many years now, there has been uncertainty as to how the finances of the Association should be allocated, especially as between the conflicting claims of head office expenditure on the one hand and expenditure at the Section, Branch, Division and Regional Group level on the other. Our continued ability to produce *Archives and Manuscripts* in letter-press depends on funds being made available by the central body, unless indeed we decide to try to finance this publication or a successor quite independently of the Association.

Archives and Manuscripts grew out of a *Bulletin for Australian Archivists*, two issues of which were produced independently by some of the Archivists of Australia in 1954/55. The Archives Section of the Association has managed to continue to produce issues, more or less regularly, since November 1955. For some seven years we had to be content with a stencil duplicated publication, but from 1963 onwards funds were voted by the Association's Executive Committee to enable letter-press printing to be undertaken.

At the recent General Council meeting, however, a proposal was adopted to allocate funds to subordinate bodies on a *per capita* basis according to membership. For the various Sections of the Association, the amount agreed upon was 80c per head. As the Archives Section has a membership of only about 180, the product of this *per capita* allocation for 1969 will only be \$144. The cost of producing *Archives and Manuscripts* by letter-press, and of otherwise supporting the modest activities of the Section, is about \$500 *per annum*. It becomes clear, therefore, that the Section will have either to settle for a less professional-looking journal, or else to abandon to another organization or association of archivists the responsibility for producing a fitting journal for the exchange of ideas and the publication of news about archives institutions and archival theory and practice in Australia.

It may happen, of course, that some other choice is open. One clause of General Council resolution 22/68 gives some ground for hope. This states that

per capita credits for subordinate bodies should not preclude additional credits to particular subordinate bodies for special purposes approved by General Council or the Standing Committee.

To what extent, if any, either General Council or Standing Committee would be prepared to exercise their options in favour of *Archives and Manuscripts* is not clear. It is the purpose of this editorial to argue that *Archives and Manuscripts* should be allocated finance under this clause so that it may continue to appear in the manner to which we have now become accustomed.

Of all the Sections within the Association, the Archives Section's interests most acutely diverge from the interests of the Association as a whole. It is not axiomatic that an Australian association of archivists should be part of the Library Association of Australia. In most other parts of the world, associations of archivists are separate from library

associations. There are basic differences between the practice of archives keeping and that of librarianship. The present writer has usually tended to play down those differences, rather than emphasize them, but the fact remains that they exist. One can establish an archives institution without knowing anything about library administration; one can build up a set of archives without knowing anything about the acquisition of library books; one can arrange and describe archives without knowing anything about library classification and cataloguing; and one can give service to official and other enquirers without knowing much about library reference work. It is true, of course, that it is likely that these jobs will be done better if the archival practitioner *does* know something about the corresponding processes in librarianship. A knowledge of librarianship will at various points in the practice of archives keeping enlighten and inform. It cannot be said, however, that librarianship encompasses as important a field of knowledge for the government archivist as does departmental records administration.

It follows, therefore, that many of the problems with which a librarian is concerned have no bearing whatever on, or have only peripheral interest for, the archivist's world. The converse is also probably true. The present issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* contains three articles which in all fairness one would not expect a librarian to find much interest in. Yet these three articles (and, one hopes, the others published in this issue) contain material which is of very real interest to the practising archivist in Australia.

It is on the basis of divergence of interest, therefore, that we claim the need to have our own publication, and on this basis we base our hopes that the General Council will be prepared to allocate money for this purpose. If this divergence were so great that librarians were determined to cut us off altogether, we would not complain. If you stretch the argument of divergence to its logical conclusion, then the need for a separate professional association of archivists is proven, and there is no longer any need for an Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia. There is evidence, however, that quite a few of the leading librarians of Australia have not thought this to be the case. Our members have always included, not only the leading archivists of Australia (or some of them) but also quite a few of those for whom archives keeping is only a subsidiary or peripheral interest.

Given the situation, then, that archives management is thought to be an activity which is relevant to the practice of librarianship, the Association needs to reflect on the ways in which it can continue to foster its sub-department of archives. It is a well-known principle that smaller bodies need special encouragement. In Federal Australia, for instance, special financial and other arrangements are made for the smaller States. It is also a well-known principle that in a voluntary association not all the useful work is done at the headquarters. In Australia we are dedicated to the ideal of the pluralist society, and any attempt at undue centralization is bound to do more harm than good.

We have seen a tendency in the Association to bolster centrally organized services at the expense of the regional or specialist activity. The *Australian Library Journal* has advanced from a quarterly to a bi-monthly frequency, and then from a bi-monthly to a monthly one.

No corresponding advances in the specialist or regional activities of Sections and Branches have been allowed. In the near future, we can expect the headquarters expenses of the Association (which include the *Australian Library Journal*) to cost about \$48,000 *per annum*; expenses on Branch and Section activities to cost only \$8,714 *per annum*; and expenses on special projects to cost only \$1,285 *per annum*. Of the \$48,000 allocated for central office expenditure, about \$14,000, or nearly one-third, is eaten up by the *Australian Library Journal*. Surely *A. & M.*, despite its more restricted appeal, is worth a mere \$500 yearly if \$14,000 is spent on the *Journal*!

If the Association is to set out on a policy of building up central services at the expense of branch and sectional ones, it must realize that the nett result will almost certainly be a weakening of the entire body corporate. The Association depends for its continued existence upon the life it displays at its extremities — at the local level in Branch, Section and Division meetings. No such association as ours can prosper unless a large number of people in various parts of Australia continue to give it their time and their talents. Extreme centralization of activity is the best way to deny them the opportunity to serve in this way.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE UNDERLYING THE DUTCH MANUAL FOR THE ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF ARCHIVES

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Some eleven years ago Dr G. W. A. Panhuysen, the former State Archivist in the province of Limburg, wrote a very interesting study about the intended revision of the well-known Manual by Muller, Feith and Fruin¹. In this excellent paper the author pointed out that the principle of arranging records systematically, according to their original order, had been formulated for the first time not by Muller himself but by his predecessor Dr P. J. Vermeulen. When Vermeulen published his Inventory of the archives of the province of Utrecht up to the year 1810, he stated in its preface that one of the chief requirements for a scientific arrangement of archives should be to put every section, as far as this could be done without becoming too scrupulous, into its original sequence, this being the only practical arrangement to be substituted by no other.

Already in 1875 Vermeulen saw the importance and the necessity of restoring the original order, although the correct application of this principle in the opinion of Muller was still not very clear to him. However, the origins of what we call now the restoration of original order, a notion which in the days of Muller was confused with the principle of provenance², had its root in a previous period and they even came out as a result of