

could be made available to any Australian archivist who reads German and is interested.

I left Germany full of admiration for the archival colleagues whom I met there - not only for their competence, which one would expect in a country where there is such a long background of professional training, but also for their ability to explain their work in a foreign language which, although some of them spoke it fluently, must have been most exhausting for others as they had not used their English for a considerable time.

TO CATALOGUE OR NOT TO CATALOGUE:  
THE SUBJECT/FORM CATALOGUE OF  
THE QUEENSLAND STATE ARCHIVES

by

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During the last twenty or thirty years it has become more and more obvious that it is not the sole *raison d'être* of an archives institution simply to preserve those records which have been entrusted to its care. Records management has become one of the major influences in archives administration in that archivists often advise on records-keeping practices, they are expected to have a thorough knowledge of past and present methods of records-keeping, and so on. Arrangement and description, considered also to be part of efficient records management, are playing an increasingly important role as part of the archivist's duty with the development of sophisticated systems for arranging and describing records.

Previously, it was one of the minor functions of the archivist to make "his" records available for reference and research purposes, with no obligation on his part to assist the student or scholar. It was sufficient for him to present the material to the unwitting newcomer and leave him to it. Any Australian archivist who failed to do more than this now would be charged with archival negligence, and cries of "What useful purpose does *he* serve anyway?" would be heard far and wide. Furthermore, there would surely be enquiries into the reasons for "wasting" government or company or university finance by employing an archivist and trained staff when, after all, record clerks could do the job just as well! In a sense, the archivist needs to justify his own worth by providing

facilities for reference and research, even when he feels that the field of enquiry has little intrinsic value.

Even the most valuable holdings of archives are practically useless if the archivist or the researcher cannot *find* the material required. In his paper presented at the 14th Biennial Conference of the L.A.A. in 1967, Professor F.K. Crowley remarked:

Personal memory-banks are no substitute for orderly subject-card catalogues, comprehensive finding lists, and a systematic coverage of the main series held in an archives. <sup>1</sup>

The advantages to be gained from these finding-aids do not benefit the customer alone: they are of great assistance to the archivist as well.

Minutely detailed indexing of every piece of information in the record collection could not be contemplated unless one had either a hugh staff working on the project full-time or a computer, and yet the archival method of inventorying or calendaring records affords so little detail as to be nearly useless for rapid reference to special material. <sup>2</sup>

This latter assertion amply illustrates the need for some intermediate form of finding-aid - the subject catalogue.

The *normal* dealings with departments concerning their own records are restricted to the issue of files; the usual pattern is for the departments to order the files according to their own systems of identification - there is no need for the subject approach here. But when it comes to material for research purposes, it is a different story. The inventory and the calendar are of little assistance. Research being perhaps the more permanently valuable aspect of the work of an archives institution, it is as necessary to cater to the needs of research workers as it is to departments.

It seems that although most Australian archives institutions provide "comprehensive finding lists" to records and "a systematic coverage of the main series" held in their collections, few have provided the "orderly subject-card catalogues" which are preferred to "personal memory-banks" by at least one user of archives material. That is not to say that the subject catalogue is the more important form of finding-aid - it is simply one which has been little-used in Australian practice <sup>3</sup>.

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In the Queensland State Archives, there are two types of catalogue - the continuous control series catalogue and the subject/form catalogue.

The continuous control series catalogue (or descriptive catalogue) is

composed of the main entry cards. It is arranged alphabetically by the name of the creating authority, and sub-arranged in classified order. The classification symbol also indicates the location of any series<sup>4</sup>. The catalogue entries normally relate to *individual series*, not to particular files or bundles or volumes. A series may, of course, be as large as 500 bundles or volumes, or as small as a mere folder. The Queensland State Archives does not as a rule *create series* - the records received are treated, as far as possible, in the way in which the office of origin treated them, when this can be ascertained.

A catalogue entry for a series is composed of details of the provenance, title of the entry (subject or form heading), description of material, covering dates, classification symbols, accession numbers, and linear measurement, *e.g.*:

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

IN-LETTERS

General Correspondence records. 1859 - 1896.

COL/A 1-807

48/672 - 1476  
1246A, 1446A

220'6"

In this case, 807 bundles can be adequately described by one entry, as fuller details of the covering dates and in-letter numbers included in each bundle can be consulted in the accession register<sup>5</sup>.

In some cases, series do in fact consist of only one bundle or volume requiring a separate description for that bundle, as in the following example:

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT

NEW STATE MOVEMENT

Papers respecting proposed separation of central and northern parts of Queensland, together with reports, press cuttings, etc. 1871 - 1899.

PRE/6\*

49/25

2"

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\* The example quoted above is classified as part of a miscellaneous category of records, *i.e.* a departmental symbol (PRE) followed by a number, and without a series symbol preceding that number, unlike, say, PRE/A 7 - the seventh item of the series of Premier's Department in-letters. This miscellaneous category consists of several small series each of which may be made up of only one or two bundles. They are not classified separately since many of them have become

series by the fact of their being removed from the general system of correspondence for an administratively significant purpose *viz.* ease of access to papers which were being referred to continuously over a period of time.

The main functions of the descriptive catalogue, then, are to enable staff and students to discover what records are held for any given record group (and within that group, which series of records) and to ascertain the full descriptions, covering dates, number of volumes etc. for any particular series. The descriptive catalogue is relevant only for material which has been fully accessioned. Intermediate records are not included if they are records which are only to be retained temporarily, although very recent records may be described in the catalogue, particularly if they continue series which can properly be termed "archives". For example, coroner's inquest depositions of the Justice Department covering the period 1859 - 1966 are classified as JUS/N 1 - 1551. As depositions after 1966 are received, it is a simple matter to classify them, continuing the series from JUS/N 1552.

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As the subject/form catalogue is used in close conjunction with the descriptive catalogue, it is necessary to understand the operation of the descriptive catalogue before proceeding to any explanation of the subject/form catalogue, and this is the reason for the somewhat lengthy digression away from the subject of this paper.

All entries in the descriptive catalogue are given a filing title or heading, either by subject or by form; these are allocated after the material has been fully described and classified. For example, general correspondence records of the Colonial Secretary's Office are given the heading "In-letters"; papers of the Premier's Department relating to federation are headed "Federation", and so on. Every card in the descriptive catalogue is duplicated in the subject/form catalogue. The greater number of cards in the subject/form catalogue is a result of the use of alternative headings for some series or bundles, since there may be two or more subjects covered.

The subject or form headings used are not part of the description of any series - they are simply a guide for cataloguing purposes. Since there is no reference work such as the *Short list of subject headings* (compiled by Heather Sherrie and Phyllis Mander Jones) for use in an archives repository, the Queensland State Archives has compiled its own list of headings and references. This list is the authority for the choice of subject or form headings, and as it is in catalogue card form, new headings are easily interfiled with the existing ones. However this will be explained in more detail later.

In the subject/form catalogue, the cards are arranged alphabetically by subject or form, sub-arranged by the name of the creating authority and, if necessary, further sub-arranged in chronological order. The form of the subject/form card exactly follows that of the main entry - full "bibliographical" details are given. The only differences are that the title is underlined (instead of the provenance) and that other titles may be used for cross-reference as in the following example:

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT

NEW GUINEA

Correspondence and associated papers relating to New Guinea, and to the steamer "Merrie England". 1888 - 1908.

PRE/15 - 18

44/15 - 18

2'5"

In this instance, the additional subject heading is MERRIE ENGLAND, Steamer.

The purposes of this type of entry are to indicate what records (which are restricted in subject coverage) relating to a particular subject are held, the offices or departments concerned with that subject, and the covering dates and number of volumes or bundles of those records.

The subject/form catalogue brings together all the material on a given subject emanating from different sources. For example, the heading "Sugar Industry" applies to records from several departments or offices - Agriculture and Stock Department, Crown Solicitor's Office, Justice Department, Premier's Department, Royal Commission on Sugar (1916), Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry (1939), Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry (1942 - 3), Thuringowa Shire Council, and Works Department. In addition, there are other headings - Sugar Cane, Sugar Cultivation Act, 1913, Sugar Experiment Stations, Sugar Works Acts, 1922 and 1930. In this way, all the special material relating to sugar and the sugar industry can be found easily, and so consulted by the enquirer or the Archives staff; this could then lead to other channels of research such as departmental correspondence, inter-departmental memoranda etc.

One might argue that the use of subject headings as a guide to the holdings of an archives repository is a dangerous practice in that the choice of subject is often arbitrary and that the cataloguer attempts to impose artificial "labels" on records. This danger is overcome in the Queensland State Archives, partly by the complementary function (and use) of the descriptive catalogue and partly by choosing subject headings consistent with those applied by the departments themselves.

Schellenberg was aware of these problems when he wrote:

Catalogs of record items are not an effective means of generally making known the holdings of a repository. They hide the wood for the trees by focusing attention on single items, without revealing the nature of the collections of which such items are a part.<sup>6</sup>

The subject/form catalogue does not reveal the nature of any collection of records as a whole, nor is it intended to do so. This is the function of the descriptive catalogue which provides the broad view of the holdings and which must be consulted in conjunction with the specific entries in the subject/form catalogue. Any student visitor to the Queensland State Archives is informed that the subject/form catalogue is not a complete guide to the records on any given subject, and that only the descriptive catalogue gives adequate details of record groups. In addition, an experienced staff member is in attendance at all times to advise students on sources of information which cannot be discovered from the subject/form catalogue.

The choice of subject headings need not be arbitrary or artificial provided that they follow those allocated by the departments themselves as mentioned previously. For example, material in the Colonial Secretary's or Home Office records dealing with Hospitals is given that heading in the catalogue since this is the way in which the departments concerned described these records. Should one allocate a heading such as "Public Health", *this* would involve imposing an artificial label. In many instances, subjects covered in the subject/form catalogue reflect the functions of a particular department rather than exist as subjects *per se*, as in the case of "Hospitals" where responsibility for the administration of hospitals devolved successively upon the Colonial Secretary's Office, the Home Office, the Department of Health and Home Affairs and now on the Health Department.

A prominent former archivist who visited the Queensland State Archives recently, when asked for his opinion of the system, wrote:

The system isn't by any means the complete answer to all archival problems but it is a most intelligent first step which I would be happy to advocate for any new institution. You are doing the essential by identifying series and giving both a provenance and subject approach. What it lacks at the moment is an adequate system for describing the relationship of one thing to another but this is difficult to do satisfactorily without experienced staff.

This latter point about the need to describe "the relationship of one thing to another" is illustrated above by the example of hospitals, which have been the

responsibility of four departments at various times. The need is to describe the relationships between administrative functions rather than between the records themselves, and this need has made itself felt on many occasions. However the graduate members of the staff of the Queensland State Archives are fully aware of the administrative link-ups in questions of this nature.

A more relevant example of this can be gained from an examination of the cards relating to Division-1 Boards and Local Government :

#### WORKS DEPARTMENT

##### DIVISIONAL BOARDS

Correspondence records respecting the formation and work of Divisional Boards, arranged alphabetically. Antigua - Yeerongpilly. 1880 - 91.

WOR/N 1 - 24

26/814 - 37

8'

and,

##### COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

##### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Correspondence records respecting local government. 1861 - 1929.

COL/O 1 - 93

48/1 - 93

30'10"

The Works Department was responsible for the administration of Divisional Boards until 1891 in which year responsibility was transferred to the Colonial Secretary's Office. However, the Colonial Secretary's Office from 1861 had been responsible for other local authorities such as municipalities, shire councils and so on. This means that records dealing with Divisional Boards come from two different sources, one dealing specifically with Divisional Boards and the other dealing generally with Local Government. There is a definite need for some notation on the respective cards to the effect that the administrative responsibility for Divisional Boards changed hands in 1891. At present, the only indication of any link between the two headings is to be found in the list of subject headings as:

##### DIVISIONAL BOARDS

##### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

and,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

*See also* LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

DIVISIONAL BOARDS

The list of subject headings and references obviates the need to have numerous alternative headings and cross-references in the subject/form catalogue, *e.g.*:

LEASES OF CROWN LAND

*See* CROWN LANDS LEASED

SPECIAL LEASES

PASTORAL HOLDINGS

AUCTION PERPETUAL LEASES

INFORMAL LEASES

In addition, the use of “standard” headings facilitates the assigning of headings to other materials. The list also includes form headings - in fact every heading used in the subject/form catalogue appears in the list of subject headings and references, together with *see* and *see also* references - it is the authority for the use of subject and form headings.

The form headings are perhaps less important for ready reference than the subject headings, but then their purpose is slightly different. The form entries indicate the covering dates, number of volumes or bundles, the provenance etc., for a particular form of records, *e.g.* electoral rolls, letterbooks or minute books. The form approach also enables one to establish which agencies or sub-departments were in a position to create their own records. Letterbooks, for instance, provide a clue to the degree of autonomy exercised by certain sub-departments. The existence of letterbooks among the records of a sub-department is a more positive criterion for deciding its autonomy than the existence of in-letters, since an office may have *received* letters but may not have been empowered to *write* them. For example, from 1859 until 1875 (when the post of Secretary for Public Instruction was created), the Board of General Education, although nominally under the control of the Colonial Secretary’s Office, was empowered to create records *in its own right*, and for this reason its records have been treated

as a separate record group in the Queensland State Archives. On the other hand, the Immigration Board, an *ad hoc* body, was not entitled to create its own records, and they remain as part of the Colonial Secretary's Office records proper.

Other form entries, such as "In-letters", "Registers of In-letters" and "Indexes to Registers of In-letters", indicate respectively the extent of the incoming correspondence of a department, the extent to which those in-letters were registered and the contemporary finding-aids which were created by each department. The existence or otherwise of indexes to the registers, or self-indexing registers, is of prime importance, since in-letters are practically useless without them. The enquirer needs to know which records are going to be of assistance in any field of research.

The major purpose of the subject/form approach is to enable the enquirer and the archives staff to locate material on a particular subject or having a particular form quickly and easily. The visitor to the Archives can be directed to entries in the subject/form catalogue appropriate to his field of interest; he can decide whether or not some or all of the entries are relevant, then he can request one or more bundles or ask that a further search for material be made. More often than not, the subject or form entry will lead him to other sources which by their nature, cannot be listed, such as departmental reports and general correspondence; the latter involves the use of contemporary finding-aids.

The Queensland State Archives uses several other forms of finding-aids, some of which were not primarily compiled for that purpose, but which fill in some of the gaps left by the descriptive and subject/form catalogues. Numerous small indexes have been created in response to demands for the indexing of particular series - passenger lists of immigrant ships (supplementing departmental indexes), stock mortgages (arranged by name of the pastoral holding), land sales at auction (arranged by parish) and coroner's inquest depositions (arranged by name of the deceased) are included in this category.

The accession books are also useful finding-aids in that material entered as a collective entry in either of the catalogues is listed bundle by bundle (or volume). They are particularly useful for locating such series as school files and pastoral holdings files which are arranged alphabetically.

These finding-aids, used in connection with the catalogues, enable one to locate most material in the repository. By using them, the visitors and the staff become familiar with the holdings of the Archives and this familiarity leads to knowledge of *where* to look for other material which cannot be approached specifically either by subject or by form. For instance, a person examining a Premier's Department bundle of records dealing with Federation, which he has found as a subject entry, notices that particular departments or persons

corresponded with the Premier on that subject and knows that there must be other material elsewhere. This leads him to an examination of the records of those correspondents, say, letters from the Premier to the Governor, and so on.

To sum up, there are certain advantages and also disadvantages in taking a subject/form approach to the holdings of an archives repository.

One disadvantage is that the subject/form catalogue may well give the student the impression that the only records held dealing with a given subject or having a special form are under the relevant heading in the catalogue. Of course this is not true and students should be warned. There is also the danger that series are forced into categories to which they do not belong. The heading on the subject or form entry card is *not* part of the description, but people may think it is. Here again, they must be made aware of this.

The advantage of major importance is that the subject/form catalogue provides a ready approach, by subject or form, to those holdings of the Archives which have been fully accessioned. Again, it allows for better control over the various series by establishing relationships between records from different sources in the subject area and by revealing what records of a particular form are held.

The disadvantages are not insurmountable; the advantages make it all worthwhile, and the staff and users of the Queensland State Archives could be pardoned for recommending the use of such a system to other archives institutions.

Some justification for the use of a cataloguing system can be found in the writings of Ernst Posner who, in 1939, remarked:

A reaction has made itself felt in recent decades. It was pointed out that the original arrangement of a body of archives might not be the most desirable for purposes of research; that registry schemes might be primitive and foolish and not worth being reconstructed, especially if only fragments of the *fonds* were preserved; that, on the other hand, something must be done to make archives easily accessible for answering questions formulated according to the needs of present-day inquiries; and that, therefore, the archivist should do something more than secondhand registry work in order to make his possessions available for the scholar.<sup>7</sup>

He quoted as the first exponent of this school of thought the German archivist Max Bar who showed the inadequacy of the "original order" concept and proved that "a more rational order might be set up without destroying the possibility of reconstructing the former connection of archival units". This thinking is somewhat foreign to Australian practice which follows Jenkinsonian theory more closely than any other. Breaking the original arrangement of a *fonds* is not something to be embarked upon lightly - only the most experienced archivist

who is well-versed in all schools of thought could ever attempt it effectively.

In the Queensland State Archives, some liberties with original order have been taken, particularly with series which are arranged in two ways - numerically and alphabetically. This was the case with a series of immigration records where some were found to be arranged numerically and others alphabetically by the name of the immigrant - these records, which all belonged to the *same* series, are now arranged alphabetically.

The arguments regarding the validity of preserving original order are somewhat controversial and rather than committing himself to this viewpoint, Posner continues:

The struggle of ideas will go on for some time. It seems as if the future will bring a midway solution: The files and records will be arranged on the shelves and will be inventoried according to their original order; then the archivist will try to establish a more sensible arrangement, consistent with modern needs and likely to meet the questions of modern research work, by cataloging and indexing the records and by preparing accurate and exhaustive descriptions of the contents of the different *fonds* ... The work will have to be revised, supplemented, or even done again in the future. But that is no reason to desist entirely from the attempt to adapt our finding media to the needs of our own times without destroying the original arrangement of records.<sup>8</sup>

The catalogue is used a great deal in American practice, but their computerized systems make ours look very pale in comparison. However, the subject/form approach is well worth considering, not as an alternative to other finding-aids, but rather as a supplement to them. The subject/form catalogue as devised in the Queensland State Archives is well suited to the needs of present-day trends in research work.

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#### References.

1. Professor F.K. Crowley. - "Archives of Australia: a user's view or twenty years as a customer." L.A.A. *Conference Proceedings*, vol. 1 (1967). pp. 68 - 69.
2. Elizabeth A. Ingerman. - "A new method of indexing manuscripts." *American Archivist*, vol. 25, no. 3 (Jul 1962). pp.331 - 340.
3. This statement is based on replies received from several Australian archives institutions in response to a questionnaire circulated earlier this year.

4. For a full explanation of the system of classification used, *see* R. C. Sharman. - "An experiment in archives classification." *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 2 no. 6 (April 1964). pp. 16 - 22.
5. *See* P. R. Eldershaw. - "Accessions procedure in Tasmania." *Bulletin for Australian Archivists*, vol. 1 no. 2 (March 1955). pp. 3 - 7. A similar accessions procedure has been adopted in Queensland.
6. T.R. Schellenberg. - *The management of archives*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1965. p. 281.
7. Ernst Posner. - "Some aspects of archival development since the French revolution." *Archives and the public interest*, selected essays by Ernst Posner. Washington, Public Affairs Press, 1967. pp.32 - 33.
8. *Ibid.* p. 33.

## THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ARCHIVES

by

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THE ESTABLISHMENT of the University of Sydney was authorized by an Act of the Legislative Council of New South Wales passed in 1850. The custody and care of the University's official records have always been part of the general responsibility of the Registrar and as early as 1851 the Secretary to the Senate, who was also appointed to act as Registrar to the proposed Sydney University College, was instructed specifically to keep two books - the minutes of the College Proceedings Book and the College Students Book <sup>1</sup>.

In December 1853 the Senate adopted by-laws which authorized the Vice-Provost (i.e. the Vice-Chancellor) and the Registrar to be jointly in charge of the university seal, and in which the Registrar was also instructed

To keep all necessary records of the proceedings of the University;  
conduct all necessary correspondence; and keep such books of  
accounts <sup>2</sup> and registers as may be necessary.

By this regulation all of the University's central administrative records were made