

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

G. L. Fischer, M.A., A.L.A.A.
Archivist of the University of Sydney

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 ¹.

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 ² and registers as may be necessary.

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

subject to one senior executive officer. Virtually the same position obtains today. The current By-Laws Chapter VI, Section 4 (1) require the Registrar to keep certain specific records, conduct the correspondence of the University, and more generally to have

the care of all such records and registers, and of all records of the proceedings of every Faculty and of every board and Committee appointed by By-Law or otherwise by the Senate.

After the brief registrarships of R. Greenup (1851 - 52) and L. Hutton (1852 - 43), Hugh Kennedy (1853 - 82) and Henry Ebenezer Barff (1882 - 1923) brought continuity to this important administrative post. The survival to this day of complete sets of originals of Senate, Professorial Board, and Faculty minutes, indicates that both men carefully carried out their responsibilities. Barff no doubt saw especial practical value in his custodianship of the University's records, for in 1902, midway in his term of office, the University celebrated its golden jubilee. To mark the occasion, Barff compiled a *Short historical account of the University of Sydney*, published by the University in 1902, in an edition of 1,000. It remains a useful work to this day, and forms a substantial background source for another Registrar's history - R. A. Dallen's *The University of Sydney: its history and progress*, published in 1914³. However, neither of these works is presented in any great depth; the last thirty years of the University have not yet been accorded any general published history.

It may be significant that the first steps toward setting up an official archives in the University of Sydney were taken in 1953, the year after the University celebrated its centenary, and when the lack of a full-scale history was no doubt remarked. But strangely enough, the appointment of an official university archivist owed more than a little to the world wars of 1914 - 18 and 1939 - 45⁴. As part of the University's War Memorial, certain records about members who had served in the forces were assembled and these were used in the compilation of a Book of Remembrance. As Honorary Archivists for this work, the University appointed Mr A. Cousins and Mr G.E. Hall. They were engaged in their work from at least the 1930s, but by August 1953 Hall had died and Cousins had to relinquish the work. In considering the appointment of possible successors, the Senate agreed to look more widely at the whole question of the University's archives, and a special committee recommended in October 1953 that the appointment should be made of a full-time archivist who would be a member of the Registrar's staff, and whose duties would embrace the care of university societies records and staff records as well as official administrative archives. The special committee also recommended the establishment of an Archives Advisory Committee comprising the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and the Professor of History, with power to co-opt. On 3 May, 1954 the Senate

appointed the first archivist, Mr D.S. Macmillan, M.A., who came from Scotland to take up the post later in the year ⁵.

Despite inadequate and scattered storage areas which were always separated from the archivist's office, a valuable nucleus of early administrative records, together with a number of important groups of private and societies papers and some pictorial matter was brought together and made available for research and administrative use. The Advisory Committee laid down access conditions which permitted general access to university archives up to the year 1914; requests to use records of a later date were to be referred to the Registrar for approval. These conditions remain in force today.

Management of the records was based on the principle of provenance, though accessioning, detailed listing and arranging were not greatly developed ⁶. Some miscellaneous material was given a broad physical classification - e.g. containers were devoted to 'Early University History' or 'Early Graduates' and items from various sources, originals and copies, were simply placed in these boxes as they were acquired. A series of miscellaneous manuscript and printed items, filed in alphabetical order under a key-word (often author-type) was also established. These devices were possibly meant to obviate the need for a separate and current catalogue or guide to cope with non-group material. In 1961 the Archivist issued a *Guide to the records of the University of Sydney 1849 - 1960*. Arranged on a function/form/subject basis, the *Guide* was indicative of the records then held, but as the groups and miscellaneous items had not been numbered in any way, nor related to any scheme of location, subsequent changes in the location of the material have made for difficulties in finding specific items ⁷.

The Archivist made surveys of records of the Administration and of some teaching departments, but this work appears to have been mainly for the purpose of appraising likely transfers to the Archives and not as part of a current records management program. Some contemporary departmental records were deposited in the Archives, possibly with the idea of a subsequent examination and reduction.

The Archives Advisory Committee had early decided that the University Archives itself would be unable to enter the field of business archives in a practical way. However, the Archivist did play a notable part in the establishment and work of the Business Archives Council of Australia (N.S.W. Branch) and in the Council's surveys of business records. For a time the University Archives provided storage space for a number of groups of business records, but at the direction of the Business Archives Council these have all been dispersed to the University Library and the Mitchell Library.

Early in January 1969 approval was given for new office and storage space to be provided for the University Archives on portion of the unused ninth floor of the University Library book stack tower. About 2,000 feet of standard 36" x 15", and 100 feet of 36" x 24", steel shelving was erected, and two steel plan cabinets, two filing cabinets for illustrations, two sorting tables, two trolleys, and a domestic vacuum cleaner have been provided. A small reading area⁸ for three or four people and supervised from the Archivist's office is a great advance on the earlier necessity to permit readers to work unsurveilled in the cramped storage areas, or in the Archivist's office. The Archivist has a large comfortable office with natural lighting and a dramatic panorama of the Sydney sky-line (when it is not alarmingly obscured by sulphurous and other smog!). There is a smaller office, also with natural lighting, for the secretary/typist, the only other staff member.

Though now most comfortably, and for a few years at least (taking into account the possibility of some limited expansion on the same floor) adequately housed, the Library location has some disadvantages. It is considerably removed physically from the Registrar's Department of which it is a part, and service of many files and bulky minute books can present some problems. The ninth floor is not air conditioned and while natural conditions in the new location are likely to encourage mould and brittleness far less than any other location the records have occupied, still the situation is not ideal. Physical communication itself presents some frustrations because it is necessary for the University Archives to fit into the Library's general requirements. For example, entry and exit must be made through the main front doors of the Library and at certain times of the day (notably on lecture hours) queues of library readers slow up exit progress while book checks are made. While not necessarily subject to the book check itself, Archives staff cannot always by-pass the queue. There is only one lift in the building and some waiting time is inevitable through lift maintenance, breakdowns (rarely), and just plain heavy use by other people. From main entry level the Archives is in fact only six floors up, but climbing these is somewhat daunting, and for some people impossible. At certain vacation times the Library building must be cleared and closed at 5 p.m.; while there are no doubt ways round this, it would involve some compromise of the Library's necessary security arrangements.

None of the difficulties outlined above is grave and the work of the Archives is in no important regard hindered by them. They are, however, inseparable from a tenancy-relationship, and point to the need for the University Archives to have independent accommodation if possible, directly linked with the Administration. It is conceived that the building of a new administration block at the University of Sydney may be able to provide such accommodation.

There is much work to be done on the arrangement and listing of official and private archives already held in the Archives. A start has been made on this, but at the same time it has been necessary to consider some approach to current records management matters, to the reception of transfers and deposits of official and private records, to making contact with departmental heads and with officers of societies, as well as providing some elementary controls and the beginnings of new types of finding aids for administrative and reader use. In addition, the University Archives has undertaken a micro-filming program covering some basic records. It is planned to keep control records and finding aids to a simple and minimal level. Transfers of official records are being recorded and listed in groups according to provenance, and, so far as is practicable, at the series level⁹. Non-official records are now recorded in an accessions register book, but are controlled similarly at the group and series level. To accomplish all this it has been necessary to establish several categories of record types: G - official university groups, S - university societies, P - personal papers, and M - disparate miscellaneous manuscripts and other documents. General guides to all these categories have been commenced on standard library catalogue cards. Series lists to a few groups (official and other) have been prepared in quarto typescript. For material in the M category it is planned to prepare a Guide in quarto typescript based on the card guide which is kept currently, together with an index to details given in each entry.

A start has been made on arranging miscellaneous illustrations in several categories - portraits (self-indexed), views of buildings and grounds (arranged alphabetically by location) and general views. The last category will need some separate form of indexing (see below) to bring out their subject content, since it is not proposed to arrange the illustrations themselves on a subject basis. At present it seems inevitable that a general illustrations register, through which all views will receive an accession number, will have to be used. Illustrations forming part of a group, official or other, will naturally remain with that group, though their subject content may be brought out by the insertion of references in the sequences already mentioned, through Series Lists, or through a form of general indexing (see below). Plans of university grounds, buildings and equipment have been arranged according to provenance where appropriate; other material of this kind will be included in the M category of Miscellaneous manuscripts.

Some examination of current records management possibilities has been commenced this year in the Records Office of the Registrar's Department¹⁰.

The Records Office is charged with the raising of all official files, correspondence and general, and with their registration and indexing. These files include series dealing with staff and students, the latter growing at about the rate of 4,000 a year¹¹. This year some 50,000 files of the numerical registration system employed up to the end of 1967 have been transferred to the Archives and are being serviced back to the Records Office at about 20 a week. (A loan from system has been devised to control this and other borrowing of official records.) Any reduction of the files already transferred will have to be effected through an individual file review, but, as most of the files are less than fifty years old and thus potentially current from the staff/student point of view at least, the value of an individual review at present seems slight. Since 1968 the Record Office has classified files through a subject numerical scheme, and it is hoped that a retention and disposal schedule can be based on these tables without reference to every file (certain categories, e.g. typewriter maintenance, could be scheduled for disposal without examination). It is also intended to survey other series in the Records Office, the whole exercise in this small section, hopefully, becoming a pilot program which might then be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to other administrative and teaching departments.

Present experience suggests that the normal type of current records management and survey may have little relevance to the records of the various teaching departments within the University. In these a good deal of individuality seems to prevail. Size plays an important role - a small department's records may be virtually synonymous with the professor's own filing cabinet; a large department may maintain its own student record cards and examination results which to some extent duplicate those held in the administration. The transient nature of both academic and clerical staff within a department tend to blur the general picture still further - what one man has built up over some years could be discontinued and even dispersed by a successor. Any attempt to apply regulations to prevent this might well be seen as an invasion of academic freedom. Geographical dispersion of departments presents other problems, units of several departments being located at a considerable distance from the main site. To date, the writer's experience in this field has been confined to making initial contact with departmental heads which, even at the rate of two a week, is a drawn-out procedure.

The nature of the University's organization and functions obviously affects the kinds of records it will produce and the retention periods applicable to them. Direction of the University's affairs is given through numerous elected

committees and boards, ranging from the all-important Senate through the Professorial Board, faculty and departmental committees, down to special committees which may have a butterfly existence of one meeting to accomplish one specific task. This form of government leads to the production of major series of minute books, often remarkably large and heavy in format because of their numerous inclusions. Once all handwritten, today most are specially bound volumes into which typescript minutes and enclosures are pasted. Most are accompanied by contemporarily written indexes; the entries under each letter of the alphabet are not alphabetically arranged and the manner of making entries may vary from one committee to another, and from one year to another in the same committee. There is a certain amount of inclusion - duplication of material as a matter proceeds, say, from a suggestion at a minor or initial level, to its final adoption as a by-law by the Senate. It is in these series, however, that the University's basic history is most conveniently and authoritatively documented and the Archives holds complete sets from the foundation year.

Since the University of Sydney is authorized by law to bestow certain distinctions and awards it must to some extent operate like a government registry and maintain perpetually records substantiating the awards it has made - e.g. examination passes, degrees awarded, special conditions approved. Extensive series of examination registers are the result of this function and they represent the ultimate authority as to the student's achievement and status.

The responsibility to preserve societies records in the University's official archives repository may suggest a threat to official archival custody, but a practical approach to university archives work would hardly support the setting up of a separate repository to deal with this type of material¹². In any case, most of the student and graduate societies are formally affiliated with the University and some receive grants of money or other privileges which give them a quasi-official standing. Even the personal papers of academic and other staff often have such a close official connexion such as to render their deposit in the University Archives not only appropriate but to some degree desirable¹³. Except where the owner or his agent directs otherwise, collecting of personal papers is confined to those members of the University whose professional lives terminate at the University; it is unlikely in any case that younger staff members who are likely to move on to other universities would want to fragment their own personal papers. It might be added that all three types of record groups are in segregated sections in the repository.

A marginally archival activity of the University of Sydney Archives is the collection of all publications officially emanating from the University and from its affiliated societies and student clubs. Calendars, faculty handbooks, orientation handbooks, and examination papers are examples of printed records assuming almost the significance of archives, being issued as authoritative series and containing information not available elsewhere - quite apart from the incidental information they provide about contemporary conditions. Other official and societies publications are often as elusive as they are numerous. Changing editorial staff and policies, the *ad hoc* nature of many of them, and the uncertain moods and energies of their authors make their collection difficult and some will surely be missed. All of these publications are arranged according to the official department or society that produced them, but they are not placed with archives of those bodies.

A special function of the University Archives is the distribution of official publications as required by the Commonwealth and New South Wales Copyright Acts. For the most part this duty stops with publications of the Administration, but some departmental and student publications are distributed as a service of the Archives. The obligation does at least provide an opportunity for the University Archives to acquire publications on a formal basis for its own collection. It is not the policy of the Archives to acquire the published work of academic and other staff, though these items are accepted if presented or otherwise available readily. The publications of the Sydney University Press (the commercial publishing body of the University) are also, as a matter of policy, not acquired by the University Archives. In contrast to American university archives, at least, the University of Sydney Archives is not the repository for university theses and dissertations¹⁴ for which degrees have been awarded, though copies of rejected theses are lodged with it.

Reader use of the University Archives, either personally or by letter, is not high. Only a few hundred enquiries are received each year at present, though some of these coming from the Administration are protracted and involved. To assist in all types of reference work, and partly arising out of such work, two special finding aids have been started in 1969. One is a general reference index on standard library catalogue cards and using library-type subject headings and references. This will index the results of researches carried out, or specific pieces of subject information located; it will also take care of subject content in certain miscellaneous illustrations referred to above. It should be noted that this is *not* a catalogue of the records and other material in the

University Archives; it is simply an information index. The second aid is a biographical index relating to any person, past or present, associated with the University of Sydney in a significant way. This also is on standard library catalogue cards, reference being made to biographical notes or press cuttings prepared in the University Archives, or to specific manuscript, or printed sources. It is proposed to index certain sources (e.g. Senate reports in the Calendars) completely, both for the General Reference Index and the Biographical Index, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* is currently watched for biographical references. Within a year, with only a few hundred entries made in both tools, their potential value in reference work and in avoiding needless searches has been clearly indicated. Reference use of the University Archives by readers is controlled through a simple system of Issue Slips, maintained monthly under the enquirer's name; the slips record details of the enquiry and of the material issued to him, or used in answering his enquiry by telephone or letter. Xerographic, photoprint, and microfilming services are all available to readers through the University's twin departments of Illustration and Photography.

As might be expected there is a sympathetic interest in the work of the Archives from all sections of the University. However, it is still up to the Archivist to demonstrate in a practical way that the University Archives has a practical value, through systems of record keeping and reference information that work efficiently and speedily, and by public relations through exhibitions and publication of records. And it still needs to be demonstrated in some quarters that the University Archives has an administrative function as well as an historical function, the latter being sometimes misconstrued as a kind of curiosity shop activity in which awkward museum objects or documents of vindication can be conveniently laid up.

At present the student temper in all universities would seem to be inimical to the survival of archival materials. There is no reason to imagine that this is axiomatic. One activist student expressed concern to the writer about whether the University Archives was preserving all examples of student publications no matter what their degree of anti-establishment might be; without such preservation he felt that future research (perhaps even his own?) on the current university scene could only be indifferently documented. While this kind of self-consciousness about records might seem a little dubious to the archivist, it does encourage the view that though many old university traditions are being challenged and discarded, regard for the sources of historical study at least is not entirely discounted.

References

1. These records did not eventuate as the proposal that the University of Sydney should be an examining body for associated colleges consisting of its own sub-ordinate University College as well as other provincial and religious colleges was dropped in 1852.
2. For an account of some of these, see 'Early accounting records - The University of Sydney, 1851 - 1861' by H. G. McCredie (the present Registrar). In *Bulletin* of the Business Archives Council of Australia, May 1958, pp. 12 - 19.
3. 2nd edition in 1925, 3rd edition in 1938.
4. As a destroyer of archives, war is obvious enough; its role in awakening archival interest has been little remarked, but consider the establishment in 1942 of the Australian War Archives Committee, and, more obliquely, the first publication of Jenkinson's *Manual* as part of the *Economic and Social History of the World War* (O.U.P., 1922).
5. Dr Macmillan resigned from this post at the end of 1967 to take up an appointment as Associate Professor in the Department of History, Trent University, Ontario. The writer was appointed in September 1968 and took up the post in January 1969.
6. Details of some transfers, deposits and gifts were recorded in the Archivist's reports to the Archives Committee.
7. For the present this *Guide* remains the only published list of records in the University Archives. A few copies are still available for distribution, or xerographic copies could be made in special cases.
8. Although the resources of the University Library are only a few floors away, a few standard general Australian reference works have been placed in the reading room for use by readers and staff.

9. For notable groups of personal papers (e.g. those of Sir Edgeworth David, geologist) it will be desirable to prepare items lists to some series.
10. One section of this department has operated its own retention and disposal schedule independently of the University Archives for some years; its operation so far has not been accompanied by regular transfers to the Archives of series permanently retained.
11. As is usual with personal and staff files, retention periods will be based on the lifetime of the individual concerned, both in his interest and the interests of the University.
12. It is conceivable that a university library could care quite adequately for this type of material.
13. A departmental head, for example, may hold many official files and papers about policy or staff matters.
14. These are held in the University of Sydney Library.
15. One exhibition of documents and illustrations depicting the early history of the University has been mounted this year.