

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA ARCHIVES SECTION

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The Australian Archives Access clearance position

There have been suggestions that in some quarters supervisors are discouraging students from undertaking research based on Australian government archives because of access difficulties. To clarify the position, it should be mentioned that, in the four years since the Commonwealth Archives Office was assigned responsibility for regulating access to Australian government records, some 600 metres of records in the open period have been cleared for access.

Delays in releasing material have been very substantially reduced, and waiting time is less than one month, except in cases where special consideration is necessary. Priority has naturally been given to clearance of material on request, but it has also been possible to concentrate effort on whole series of records in some areas, ahead of demand. Some 180 metres of material has been cleared in this way.

The major areas covered in Canberra are correspondence of the Department of External Affairs, and in particular its main correspondence series for the period 1927-1942, as well as groups of earlier correspondence of the Prime Minister's Department. In Melbourne, in response to research trends, clearance of whole series has been chiefly in the areas of wartime records relating to aspects of munitions and aircraft production.

As a result, it is now in many cases likely that searchers will find a significant amount of material already available for use when they commence research on the basis of requests submitted. Subject to continuing availability of resources, it is proposed that effort on clearance of whole series should be concentrated in Canberra on records of the Prime Minister's Department, Department of External Territories, and the Governor General's Office, and all Defence records in Melbourne, as representing areas of popular interest.

However, it is desirable that the requirements of users should be reflected as far as possible in planning these clearance programmes. Consideration is being given to establishing machinery for this purpose. In the meantime, however, perhaps you would arrange for the Australian Archives to be informed of any of the more immediate needs which are known to you.

Development of Regional Branches

Recent developments within the Australian Archives include the appointment of Mr. K. Martin as Senior Archivist, Victoria, and of Mr. B. T. Burne (formerly Chief Archivist in Zambia and Director of the Western Pacific Archives) to act in the newly created position of Senior Archivist, N.S.W.

A Regional Branch of the Australian Archives has just been opened in Hobart, and a representative has taken up duty in Townsville as the first step towards establishment of a functioning branch there. This means that the Australian Archives now has branches in the A.C.T. and all State capitals, and also in Darwin and Townsville. Records of Australian government agencies are lodged in the repository in the area where they are located.

Although it has not yet been possible to meet the goal of making full sets of finding aids available for all repositories, copies of the Summary Guide are available in all branches (except, temporarily, Townsville). At present this Guide, which is intended to be a comprehensive guide to archives in all branches, relates mainly to archives in the A.C.T. Branch. Enquiries concerning Australian archives may be made at any branch, and will be referred to the branch holding appropriate material.

The Archives Office of New South Wales

Work on the new Kingswood Repository is now very much behind schedule and although the initial three cells are nearing completion it is unlikely that they will be available for occupation before April 1974. It may be a sobering influence on intending repository builders to learn that approximately 50 per cent of the working time on the building between August 3, 1973 and February 1, 1974 has been lost through strikes and other delays.

During 1973 the Public Service Board approved the appointment of two additional Archivists to the Archives Office establishment and in January and February 1974 five new officers were appointed to fill these and other positions which had become vacant in 1973. The professional staff establishment of the Archives Office, exclusive of the Principal Archivist, is now ten officers and it is hoped that the new appointments will enable the Archives Office to reduce its very substantial arrears in processing work. The Board also approved the appointment of a Records Manager who will supervise the management of semi-current records in the Government Records Repository, freeing the Archives Office staff of many responsibilities in this sphere.

Archives Office of Tasmania

The revolution appears to be coming! Those who have visited the Tasmanian Archives will appreciate the lack of joy inspired by the sombre grey block of the approach to the search-room, and of part of the search-room itself. Legend hath it that the local Public Works Department approaches with paint and brushes to lighten our gloom.

Mary McRae's well-known difficulty in thinking accurately in terms of shelf-feet is not improved by metrication: thus we report that we seem to be accessioning hectares of records. The staff now numbers ten, with Ian Pearce recently confirmed in his position as deputy. Most staff have Honours degrees, some (to their surprise) also have the relevant L.A.A. papers or even the L.A.A.'s Diploma in Archives. A new recruit is Mary Nicholls, LL.B., formerly research assistant in the History Department, University of Tasmania. Relieving for six months (while Clare Cowling discovers Europe) is Liz Barrow, B.A. Hons., imported from Melbourne, who used to think she wanted to be an archivist. Our duly optimistic annual estimates envisage the recruitment of a full-time operator for the newly installed microfilm camera, a conservator, and a records clerk to help run the semi-current records side. We close until April 5 for the annual stock-taking, which far from being a euphemism for an extended archival picnic, means hard work for all, discovering all that which has been left undone. Meanwhile, we are out of space, and until the promised compactus arrives, are gradually encroaching upon the search-room as the only open space left.

The South Australian Archives

Publication of Baudin's Journal

As a major item in its programme for the publication of historical sources, the Libraries Board of South Australia released in March a translation of Baudin's *Journal de mer. The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin: Commander-in-Chief of the corvettes Geographe and Naturaliste: assigned by order of the government to a voyage of discovery*. Translated from the French by Christine Cornell. With a foreword by Jean-Paul Faivre. Adelaide, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974. xxii, 609p. front, 2 maps. 30 cm, \$15.

Baudin's journal has never previously been published, even in France. The translation which stemmed from a suggestion by Sir Grenfell Price, was materially assisted by the award to Miss Cornell of a research grant for the purpose by the University of Adelaide. The translator's access to the five volumes — 1359 pages — of Baudin's manuscript was through a microfilm obtained in the course of the Libraries Board's microfilming project of French records of South Australian interest carried out by the South Australian Archives in 1963. The records to be filmed were selected by Mr. B. S. Baldwin, of the Archives staff, while on an extended visit to France.

Funds for publication were generously provided by Miss Mabel Somerville in remembrance of her father, J. D. Somerville, and his work in the State Library and Archives, and also through the assistance of the Literature Board of the Australian Council for the Arts.

The book has been printed in 12-point Bembo 1-point leaded on 89 gsm Old Vale Antique at the Griffin Press, Netley, South Australia.

New Staff

The newly created position of Assistant Archivist in the South Australian Archives was advertised in the press recently. Mr. B. S. Baldwin has been appointed.

In the Adelaide branch of the Australian Archives, an additional archivist is to be appointed. Responsible to the Officer in Charge, the appointee will extend the professional services of the Australian Archives in South Australia.

Battye Library of West Australian History

Recent acquisitions in the Battye Library include the papers and manuscripts of well-known author and historian Malcolm Uren, who died last year.

It consisted mainly of articles he had written, transcripts of material he had collected, and research papers for the biography of John Forrest which he once proposed to write with the co-operation of another local historian Robert Stephens but which was never achieved.

In 1973 the responsibility for pre-school education was taken over by the Western Australian Institute of Technology from the Kindergarten Union. The Union has since transferred its records including minutes and files to the Battye Library.

WA Public Works Department Plans

For the past 16 months a part-time Assistant Librarian in the Battye Library has been compiling a subject index to non-current Public Works Department plans held by the library.

This has now been completed and a great deal of valuable material formerly inaccessible has been made available. Practical application of use of the index was made recently when the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority copied a plan giving construction details of water condensers used on the Goldfields in the 1890s. The Department hopes to build similar condensers in the desert regions to alleviate the water problems for Aborigines.

Western Australian Biographical Index

Under the auspices of the Battye Library a committee has been formed in Perth to compile a Western Australian Biographical Index.

It is thought that a fairly comprehensive file on Western Australians from the foundation of the Colony onwards could be collected with the help of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society and its affiliated bodies, established historians, students and other interested people. It is hoped to include as many as possible of those who came to live in Western Australia before 1850 and thereafter to include noteworthy people to about 1914.

Copies of the proposed index will be housed at the headquarters of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society, the Battye Library, the University of Western Australia and the Murdoch University where they will be available for reference.

A survey and report on the project, terms of reference, sources, etc. has been compiled by a part-time graduate employed by the University of Western Australia and a good response has been already received from private researchers.

Western Australian Parliamentary Debates

From 1870 when Western Australia received representative government until 1876 the Parliamentary Debates were reported in the *Inquirer* and *Herald* newspapers but no official copy was published. The Western Australian Parliament has now undertaken to do so.

The newspapers have been searched by Battye Library staff and copies of the debates made. These are being edited by the Chief Hansard Reporter and the first volume for the 1870-1871 Session is about to go to the printer. It is hoped that the first three volumes will be completed during the present recess of Parliament.

Western Australian Census

The Battye Library of West Australian History is publishing for the first time the Census of Western Australia taken in 1837. The original manuscript document forms part of the Colonial Secretary's Office records of Western Australia. The published version consists of one volume of 109 pages and bound. The price is A\$25.00.

This Census, compiled only eight years after the settlement of Western Australia, is an important document historically as it is the only Census for the Colony for which the original schedules have survived. It contains the information taken down by collectors on each property or settlement visited and includes name, whether over or under-12 years of age, marital status, occupation, place of residence and birth. The number of children in each family is noted, whether male or female and the number born in the Colony. Information concerning properties was also taken, noting the general location, acreage under cultivation and number and type of animals owned. The published version will reproduce the original arrangement and also include the same material arranged in alphabetical order of surname.

It is intended to produce by Xerox in near print form a number of copies sufficient only to meet known demand, initially at least. Orders will be welcomed at the above address and should be received not later than June 30, 1974.

Oral History Conference — La Trobe University

On Friday, March 1, 1974 a one day Oral History Conference was held in the Department of History at La Trobe University in Melbourne. In terms both of numbers attending and of the range of interests represented, this conference had a broader base than the one which was held in Sydney last year under the auspices of the Arts Council. The La Trobe conference was attended by approximately seventy people. These included representatives from the following institutions: the Australian National University; the Flinders University of South Australia; Melbourne University; the University of Papua and New Guinea; Wollongong University College; the Australian Broadcasting Commission; the National Library of Australia; and the State Library of Victoria. A number of Victorian Colleges of Advanced Education were also represented. Post-graduate students, representatives from local history groups and a number of individuals who have been actively engaged in the collecting of oral history materials for some years, were present.

The conference offered a rich and highly diversified experience with speakers discussing a variety of topics: oral tradition and the development of formal oral history programmes in Africa and New Guinea; interviewing techniques and the training of interviewers; ethical problems associated with the collection and use of tape recorded interviews; oral-visual history or the dynamism and efficiency of the video-tape; oral history in cultural research; the value of recording programmes in documenting regional history; and the oral history programme in operation at the National Library.

There was a general consensus at the conference that archives institutions and libraries have an active role to play in the development of oral history programmes in Australia. Opinion was strongly in favour of the suggestion made at the previous Oral History Conference in Sydney with regard to the central listing of tape recordings of research value through the medium of *Manuscripts relating to Australia: Guide to Collections*. The National Library is now planning to approach holders of collections of tapes for details of their collections so that a number of entries may be prepared for the *Guide* in the near future.

Royal Historical Society of Victoria

On Monday, March 18, 1974, the Premier of Victoria, the Honorable Rupert Hamer officially opened the new and permanent home of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria at 459 Collins Street, Melbourne. After many years occupying temporary premises, the Society is now accommodated in handsome air-conditioned rooms on the 14th floor of the new City Mutual building which stands at the corner of Collins and William Streets. The Society's rooms overlook a broad sweep of the city and its surroundings. There are particularly fine views over parklands and Port Phillip Bay.

Perhaps the most welcome aspect of the Society's move to Collins Street is the secure home which will now be given to its excellent library and fine collection of manuscripts, paintings, rare maps and atlases. For many years most of the Society's treasures have been in store. Now however, with the appointment recently of a librarian and hopefully soon, someone to organise its collection of manuscripts, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria will be able to begin to both enjoy and utilise its rich heritage of original source material.

To celebrate the opening of these new premises, Dr T. M. Perry of the Department of Geography in the University of Melbourne spoke on the Society's collection of maritime paintings, books, maps and documents, a selection of which had been placed on view on the occasion of the bi-centenary of the birth of Matthew Flinders.

Matthew Flinders 1774-1814 — A Bi-Centenary Exhibition

To celebrate the bi-centenary of the birth of the navigator Matthew Flinders, the La Trobe Library in the State Library of Victoria mounted an exhibition (March 1-April 29, 1974) showing aspects of Flinders' life through a selection of original manuscripts, rare charts, pictures and printed materials drawn from the library's collections.

The La Trobe Library is fortunate in possessing a number of original Flinders manuscripts which were presented on different occasions by Mrs. Anne Petrie, Flinders' daughter, and by her son, Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie. These include the holograph "Narrative of an expedition to Furneaux Islands on the coast of New South Wales in the Port-Jackson Colonial schooner *Francis*", 1798; "Appendix to the Abridged Narrative" — an important document which presents the most comprehensive and carefully reasoned statement made by Flinders covering the causes of both his imprisonment on Mauritius and of General Decaen's refusal to set him free after receiving the order to do so; and the volume containing "Public Letters and Orders" August 31, 1807 to May 31, 1814, Flinders' draft letter book.

In addition to this exhibition, the *La Trobe Library Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 13, April 1974 has been devoted entirely to Matthew Flinders. This issue includes a comprehensive list of the La Trobe Library's holdings of papers relating to Flinders, together with authoritative notes on the most important manuscripts prepared by Dr T. M. Perry of Melbourne.

Australian National University

The University Council at its meeting on March 8 considered the report of a working party set up to investigate a proposal to create a central University Archives. The report recommended that Council approve in principle the creation of a University Archives to bring together under one organisation the archives of the University administration, the non-current records of schools, faculties, departments and units and the business and trade union archives of the Research School of Social Sciences.

The report pointed out that until an adequate repository was available, no physical bringing together of the records was possible but that in the meantime the professional resources of the Archives Unit, RSSS should be utilised to provide assistance and advice in the record management field.

Council accepted the recommendations and a committee representative of the various interested areas of the University will be set up to work with the Archives Officer RSSS in the development of the University Archives.

The A.N.U. submission to the Australian Universities Commission includes amongst the building projects an extension to the R. G. Menzies Building of the University Library of which the ground floor of 16 000 sq. ft. is earmarked for long-term housing of the Archives. This building if approved would be ready for occupation by mid-1978 or late 1977.

Preservation of Monash University Archives

Although only fifteen years old, Monash University is already preparing a scheme for the selection and preservation of its archives. A member of the History Department (H. S. Broadhead — formerly of the Commonwealth Archives Office) has been seconded to the Administration for a year to plan a records disposal programme which will cater for developing administrative and scholarly requirements and document the rapid growth of the University since 1961.

There is at present no intention of appointing a full-time archivist. The University's own needs do not warrant it, and since the La Trobe wing of the State Library of Victoria and the Archives Section of the University of Melbourne have established themselves as collectors of private and business archives in Victoria, Monash has no plans in that direction. It is therefore anticipated that once the disposal programme has been established as an integral part of the University's record management arrangements, the scheme will function satisfactorily, at any rate for the next ten years or so, as the part-time responsibility of registry staff working under the general supervision of a member of the History Department. During this period the processing of the archives, once selected, is not likely to be very extensive (is it uniformly so anywhere?), but by making an early start with its records disposal planning Monash should avoid most of the frustrations and losses suffered by those institutions which ignore the problem for as long as they can contrive to conceal it in mouldy basements or corrugated-iron sheds.