

MISCELLANY

by Michael Saclier

ASSOCIATION OF ARCHIVISTS

The draft constitution which the Steering Committee proposes to circulate for discussion is at present in the second draft stage and it is hoped that the Steering Committee will be able to reach agreement shortly so that the document can be distributed before Christmas.

This timetable is of course something like an admission of failure (or at least an admission of inaccuracy of judgement as to how long the process would take). In my optimistic innocence I had hoped that we would by now have long passed the present stage and be preparing for a general meeting and conference to inaugurate the new society. Alas I had not foreseen the length of time which it would take to draft documents and then redraft them to obtain a consensus, hold meetings, tabulate results and so on. I apologize therefore for the fact that rather than having our new organization in the spring it looks as though we won't have it until the autumn.

A second point which exercises me somewhat are complaints which have been filtering through from some librarians who, having been for many years members of the Archives Section of the L.A.A., feel somewhat slighted because they have been denied a say in the formation of this association. Some, I understand, have even been denied access to the *Newsletters*. Those to whom I have spoken accept the argument that a decision on the kind of association to be formed could only be made by archivists—even though some meetings contained a number of non-archivists, the majority were of that ilk—but they also maintain that they as interested people and potential associate members of a society have a legitimate interest in its formation. I must say I am inclined to agree with them — certainly as to the legitimacy of their interest. I hope that in future the Steering Committee will be able to communicate more freely and successfully with all those interested in the formation of the society.

TECHNICAL GLEANINGS

The following three items gleaned from recent copies of *The American Archivist* caught my attention and may prove of interest to any who have not seen them.

1. *Pitney-Bowes Model 263 Copier*. Said to produce 60 copies per minute with the first one in *four seconds* this machine uses a strobostatic light source (go and look it up) “operating at exposures of one hundred millionths of a second”. With a number of specified advantages apart from its claim to be the fastest desk top copier now made the machine might go some way towards easing Mary McRae's conscience about the glaring green light of the Xerox machine (*A. & M.*, 5(7) May 1974, p. 176). *Amer. Arch.* 37(1), Jan. 1974, p. 100.
2. *Xerox Micro Spheres Paper*. “The Preservation Research Testing Laboratory of the Library of Congress conducted aging tests,

dated March 1, 1973, of Xerox Micro Spheres Paper. Under conditions described [in the note] the paper proved to be highly acid and, as a result, to deteriorate rapidly on accelerated aging. The amount of acid generated undoubtedly would be dangerous to other documents with which this paper might be stored. The paper is best suited for short term use." *Amer. Arch.* 37(2), April 1974, p. 312. How much copy paper (of all types) reposes in your records?

3. *Wei T'o Nonaqueous Aerosol Spray Deacidification Solution for Paper.* One of the most important products from the point of view of institutions with no conservation facilities or minimal ones is the above: despite the danger it stands of being strangled by its name. An aerosol pack of magnesium methoxide dissolved in methanol and dichlorotetrafluoroethane. On entering the paper the solution reacts with the acids contained therein to form magnesium salts (mainly magnesium sulphate) while the excess magnesium methoxide forms magnesium hydroxide initially which later reacts with carbon dioxide to form magnesium carbonate, thus providing continuing alkaline protection against future acid invasion. The spray is marketed by Wei T'o Associates, Inc., 5830 56th Ave., N.E., Seattle, Washington 98105, U.S.A., at \$US6.00 per eleven ounce unit less 10% discount for orders of multiples of six plus postage or freight. In case the above seems expensive (and from the details given in the note it would appear that the cost of treating a page would vary between five and fifteen cents) it is claimed that the process is more economical than aqueous deacidification methods because of the much greater labour component (400-500% greater) in the latter methods. *Amer. Arch.* 36(4), Oct. 1973.

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT HANDBOOK

In the paper published in the last issue of this journal I made a reference to the recommendation in the Lamb Report that the Archives should take over the A.J.C.P. and wrote that "it could well be that some frustrated users may have convinced Dr Lamb that the [lack of finding aids] was more likely to be set right by the Archives than by the National Library given the extraordinary dilatoriness of the latter institution in producing the *Handbook*."

It seems only fair to record that, since I wrote that, the National Library has published parts 2 (Colonial Office), 3 (Home Office) and 4 (War Office) of the *Handbook*. Part 1 appeared in 1972. These are available from the Sales and Subscription Section, National Library of Australia, Canberra at a cost of \$1.00 for parts 1, 3 and 4 and \$2.50 for part 2. Part 5 will (I am given to understand) be available in 1975.

MOVING IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS . . .

The profound silence which surrounds the future of the Australian Archives and which is so productive of rumours of greater or less credibility is sometimes broken by cryptic utterances issued without explanation or elaboration. Take the item at the head of column 2 of page 4 *Australian Government Gazette* No. 77, 19 September, 1974:

**DEPARTMENT OF THE SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE
Australian Capital Territory**

Offices created: Australian Archives: Second Division — Assistant Director General \$17300 (one). Third Division — Principal Executive Officer \$13991-14483 (one); Principal Project Officer \$13004-13498 (two); Executive Officer \$12019-12510 (one); Senior Project Officer \$12019-12510 (four); Clerk \$12019-12510 (one); Project Officer \$9876-10538 (seven); Clerk \$8886-9548 (one).

There are two significant points about this item. One is the general upgrading of the salary structure of the upper and middle levels of the Australian Archives — the A.D.G. Level 1 and in the Third division, one Class 11 (the top of the division), two class 10, six class 9, seven class 7 and one class 6. It should be remembered that the former position of Chief Archivist was classified as Class 10 or 11, supported by a small number of class 8s at the head of major divisions. The Class 8s in turn led a small number of class 6s who each supervised a group of archivists (Class 5 being the basic professional level). It is to be hoped that this up-grading represents a starting point for the up-grading of professional archival salaries generally.

The second interesting point is the fact that the salary ranges given in this notice (published in the third week of September) were in fact those in force before the 1974 National Wage Decision of the Arbitration Commission was handed down on 2nd May, 1974. A four months delay in such a matter bodes ill for expedition in other areas. But then, at the time of writing, it is seven and a half months since the Honourable the Special Minister of State tabled the Lamb Report in the House of Representatives and spoke of the imminent appointment of the Director General and the introduction of the Archives legislation.