

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

### Notes on the 20th Anniversary of *Archives and Manuscripts*

by H. J. Gibbney and R. C. Sharman

(*Archives and Manuscripts* was first published in November 1955. At first, it was something of an "occasional publication", but from 1960 it began to be published fairly regularly. It was issued twice a year until 1971, and from February 1972 it appeared four times a year. During all of this time it has been the official journal of the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia.

This situation will now change.

In all probability, from the beginning of 1976 *Archives and Manuscripts* will become the official journal of the Australian Society of Archivists. At the Archives Section's Biennial General Meeting, held in Melbourne in August 1975, it was unanimously resolved that the Archives Section should cease to exist, and that the offer of the Australian Society of Archivists to take over the journal should be accepted. At the time of going to press, the decision needed to be confirmed by the Standing Committee of the Library Association of Australia, which was due to meet on October 31, 1975.

It is regretted that the Editor is not able to provide information to this journal's reading public as to what the future holds. The only substitute that the Editor can suggest for a confident look forward into the journal's future is a nostalgic backward glance into the journal's past. This is prepared by courtesy of a former Editor, Mr H. J. Gibbney, and the present Editor, working in harmony.)

The Schellenberg Seminars were held in Canberra from July 18-30, 1954. At these Seminars, Dr Theodore R. Schellenberg, Director of Archival Management at the U.S. National Archives, chaired discussions on archives and records management, and presided over the drawing up of plans for the future of the archival profession in Australia. The archivists who attended had a new world opened before their eyes. Instead of being, as they had been, offbeat members of a library profession dominated by cataloguers, they were the obvious leaders of a profession of their own—a profession in which youth was most definitely at the helm. The spirit of revolt moved in two directions. One was an ambitious scheme to compile co-operatively a guide to pre-Federation archives in Australia—a scheme proposed by Dr Schellenberg. The second was a project to conduct an independent journal for archivists in Australia. The first of these projects did not come to fruition, though some of the archives institutions in Australia, in particular those of New South Wales and Tasmania, have made, and are still making, very commendable contributions towards the proposition that Australian State archives institutions should provide published finding aids. The second of those projects resulted, ultimately, in *Archives and Manuscripts* being published.

It is impossible to tell now who first suggested that a journal should be published, but like lots of the new ideas proposed at the Seminars the suggestion was taken up enthusiastically. Allan Horton, then the Senior Archivist of the Public Library of New South Wales, and H. J. Gibbney, then an officer of the Archives Division of the Commonwealth National Library, but stationed in Sydney, volunteered to edit the new journal, which was called *Bulletin for Australian Archivists*.

On August 6, 1954, Gibbney wrote to Sharman, then State Archivist of Tasmania, indicating that the scheme was under way.<sup>1</sup> Editorial work during September was interrupted briefly by a luncheon to meet David S. Macmillan, who was the newly-appointed Archivist of the University of Sydney, and by a farewell for Dr and Mrs Schellenberg, who left Sydney on September 3. Nonetheless, the first issue appeared early in October. According to the relevant union list (*Serials in Australian Libraries: Social Sciences and Humanities*) the only copies of the *Bulletin* . . . that are available in a public institution in Australia are those in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. As the authors of this article cannot remember clearly what was in the first issue, and have not checked on the copy in the Mitchell Library, it is not possible for them here to list the contents. One of the authors of this article believes that it contained a statement by Sharman on criteria for selection of archives in Tasmania. The other author of this article (Sharman) has no recollection at all of any such statement having been written.

The reaction amongst archivists was fairly uniformly favourable, varying to enthusiastic in the more responsive. The following references come from personal papers in the possession of one of the authors (Gibbney) of this article. Keith Mackenzie, on the staff (in Adelaide) of the Archives Division of the Commonwealth National Library, thought it was "quite a good effort".<sup>2</sup> Michael Standish of Wellington, New Zealand was looking forward to receiving further copies.<sup>3</sup> Peter Eldershaw, of Tasmania, thought it "particularly commendable".<sup>4</sup> Pat Ingham of the State Library of Victoria had not read it (much to Gibbney's horror) when the latter visited Melbourne late in October, but, having done so, she opined that "it promises well".<sup>5</sup> The copy sent to Mollie Lukis in Perth was reportedly misappropriated by Dr Frank Crowley of the University of Western Australia. Having retrieved it, Miss Lukis stated that she thought it was "definitely worthwhile to continue".<sup>6</sup> Ian Maclean, the Chief Archivist of the Commonwealth Archives Division, described it as a "bloody good show".<sup>7</sup>

Since the *Bulletin* was more or less an underground journal at that stage there were problems associated with continuing it. The entry in *SAL:SSAH* referred to above suggests that it was the official publication of the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia, but this was not the case. Gibbney proposed initially that the management of each issue should be taken in turn by the various institutions with expenses paid by the institution, but the idea fell through because the Western Australians, for one, could not guarantee the resources.<sup>8</sup> It was therefore decided to retain the management in Sydney for the time being. All agreed, however, that it should be issued only when the spirit moved the Editors.

Neither of the original editors was skilled in financial management of a venture such as the *Bulletin* . . . , but after the first issue people began to insist on paying subscriptions, ranging from two shillings and sixpence to one pound (£1). This complicated matters and late in that year Jack Kirkwood of the Commonwealth Bank Archives agreed to act as Treasurer.<sup>9</sup> His first statement of receipts and payments, drawn

up in impeccable style, showed a turnover of £2/12/6 and a credit balance of thirteen shillings. He was, of course, worried about the financial situation.

Late in March 1955, Gibbney was sent to New Guinea on duty and the second issue was produced in his absence by Allan Horton. It contained an article by Michael Standish of the National Archives of New Zealand on the research value of inventories and another by Peter Eldershaw on accessioning practices in the Tasmanian State Archives.<sup>10</sup> Gibbney was transferred permanently to Canberra shortly after his return from New Guinea and the management of the *Bulletin* . . . was considered at a meeting of the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia held during the 1955 Conference of the Association in Brisbane, in August of that year. It was agreed that the old informal arrangements could not be continued and it was therefore decided that the Archives Section should now assume control. Part of the price paid for this transfer was a change of name. The title of *Archives and Manuscripts* was adopted largely at the suggestion of Miss Phyllis Mander Jones, the Mitchell Librarian, who believed that the journal had something to offer too for manuscript librarians. With the executive of the Archives Section established in Canberra during 1955-56, Gibbney became Secretary and Editor. He retained that position until Volume 1, Number 6, was produced in November 1959, when, having withdrawn from the LAA, he handed the chair to R. C. Sharman, who has held it ever since.

The journal had been produced by a wax stencil type of duplication process throughout the period of H. J. Gibbney's editorship, and it continued in that format until June, 1963, by which time the Library Association of Australia had agreed to make sufficient funds available to enable letterpress printing to be undertaken. In 1969 the Library Association of Australia began to apply pressure on the Editor with a view to costs being reduced: it was suggested that the journals of subordinate bodies would have to learn to live in a manner less affluent than that to which they had become accustomed. *Archives and Manuscripts* thus began to appear, from the beginning of Volume 4, in near-print form. The work was done by Business Offset Service Pty Ltd., of Sydney, even though for some of the time the Editor lived in Brisbane, for some of it in Canberra, and for some of it in Adelaide. The work was of a high standard, and the publication lost little through the fact that it was printed by a lithographic process. Worse times lay ahead, however, when the Editor changed to an Adelaide offset printer. Confusion reigned over such simple matters as the choice of a colour for the cover stock. Volume 5, Number 1, was supposed to appear in a new cover stock, but the printer ignored instructions and brought it out in the same grey as had enclosed the issues of Volume 4. In these circumstances, Volume 5, Number 2 should have appeared like its predecessor Number 1 in sombre grey, but without advice from the Editor or warning to him the printer switched to a bright canary yellow. Subsequent issues in Volume 5 varied in their cover boards from the bright yellow to a pale cream. A colour-blind editor is of course vulnerable in a situation like this, so he took the only course available to him—he changed printers. The last in the succession of

printers (Hyde Park Press Pty Ltd) handling the Archives Section's journal has given excellent service. What is more, the quotations given showed that a letterpress production would actually be cheaper than an offset one, so the publication is now back in that format which best suits its content and style. The present printers are to be congratulated on their ability to produce a well set-up journal that suits the Editor and agrees with what he planned for the journal. Hyde Park Press have also steadfastly resisted the temptation of imposing uncalled for changes in the colour of the cover stock on an editor whose Daltonism makes him peculiarly defenceless against such perfidy.

Questions of real importance arise over whether or not the archival profession in Australia is mature and diverse enough to support the publication of a journal. During the time that Sharman has been Editor, the question was raised, and the wisdom of hindsight suggests that it was not. G. L. Fischer has, in another place, recounted some of the vicissitudes through which the profession passed at this time.<sup>11</sup> The withdrawal from the Section of almost all the archivists serving on the staff of the Commonwealth Archives Office left the professional body very weak indeed. Nor was there support from the Archives Section of the State Library of Victoria, which under Harry Nunn maintained a truculent silence towards the corpus of archival professionals.

An occasional news note, and one or two controversial articles, were supplied by some of the university archivists, but for the most part the journal depended for its support on the State Archivists and their staffs in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, and upon archivists in a few special positions, like those in the Reserve Bank and the Territorial Archives (later the National Archives) of Papua New Guinea. Manuscript librarians also played their part.

Articles which made a real contribution to the understanding of archives management were sometimes written, not for *Archives and Manuscripts*, but for overseas professional journals, or for the *Australian Library Journal*. Thus P. J. Scott, when he wrote his penetrating and lively article on "The record group concept—a case for abandonment", offered it to the *American Archivist*.<sup>12</sup> One university archivist, asked if he would write some news notes or an article on an overseas trip (in which he must surely have learned much that would have interested his confreres in Australia) replied that his wife had just presented him with an heir, and he was simply too busy to write anything at all for *Archives and Manuscripts*. The invitation to him to contribute something, even something as brief as a news note, was repeated many times thereafter, but no response ensued. The responsibilities of parenthood are onerous!

Articles have frequently been written with a view to stimulating controversy; at times the journal may, in fact, have gone close to tempting legal action against it. On one occasion a rather outspoken article was received, and shortly after the Editor read it through a telegram arrived from the author, containing the text of several amended sentences. The original versions were to be scrapped because

the author had received legal advice that they may have been actionable if published.

Now the journal is, as far as is known, to be taken over by the Australian Society of Archivists nothing remains for the past editors, Sharman and Gibbney, to do, but to wish the new management all the best. Many of the members of the Society are, it is understood, members of the staff of the Australian Archives, which is the modern name for that organization which, as the Archives Division of the Commonwealth National Library, encouraged its members to establish an identity for themselves separate from that of librarians by not supporting the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia. In the years that followed, some few members of the Australian Archives staff gave some support to this journal, but by and large the officers of the largest archives institution in the country made very little contribution to the professional development of their colleagues in the State, university and banking archives institutions of Australia. Let us hope that those days are past, and that Australian archivists will not be disappointed as they look to the staff of the Australian Archives for leadership in matters connected with the profession. There is probably no medium through which such leadership can be better demonstrated than through the professional journal that stands to serve them.

#### REFERENCES

(Numbers 1 to 10 come from personal papers in the possession of H. J. Gibbney)

1. Sharman to Gibbney, August 20, 1954.
2. Mackenzie to Gibbney, October 18, 1954.
3. Standish to Horton, October 29, 1954.
4. Eldershaw to Horton, October 21, 1954.
5. Ingham to Horton, November 8, 1954.
6. Lukis to Gibbney, November 4, 1954.
7. Maclean to Gibbney, October 7, 1954.
8. Lukis to Gibbney, November 4, 1954.
9. Kirkwood to Gibbney, February 22, 1955.
10. Lukis to Horton, April 29, 1955.
11. G. L. Fischer "The Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia, 1951-1971", in *Proceedings of the 16th Biennial Conference (of the Library Association of Australia) held in Sydney, August 1971*, pp. 210-226.
12. P. J. Scott "The record group concept—a case for abandonment", in *American Archivist* 29(4) October 1966, pp. 493-504.