

ARCHIVES AND READER SERVICES: A STATISTICAL SURVEY

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The end of all archival effort is to preserve valuable records and to make them available for use. In the professional literature, much attention in the past has been devoted to a diversity of problems and approaches to technical matters. Seldom does the subject of archives and reader services find its way into print. On the Australian scene little has eventuated since Robert Sharman's 1965 survey on reference and research work undertaken in government and university archival institutions.¹ But the questions concerning who uses archives, and why, do not appear to have been studied in any systematic way either comprehensively or in any one institution.

Most of the material contained in this article is taken from the *Preliminary Report on Reader Services in the Archives Office of New South Wales* (unpublished, completed in August 1975). The original purpose in compiling this report was to create a bank of statistics relevant to the operation of reader services in the Archives Office. In its final form of 260 pages, the report had two identifiable parts. The first part, while it was statistically oriented, was in effect concerned with analyzing reader services as they stood and discussing future changes and developments. The second part of the report is the extensive appendices which constitute the postulated statistical data bank. The report did not contain formal recommendations as such, but rather highlighted problems and suggested possible alternatives and solutions.

The Archives Authority of New South Wales is a statutory body established under the Archives Act (1960) to undertake the preservation, storage, arrangement, repair and processing, and have the custody and control, of the State archives of New South Wales. The Archives Authority also has the management of the Archives Office of New South Wales. The Archives Office is an office and repository in which such public archives as are made available to the Archives Authority and are considered by it to be worthy of permanent preservation, are deposited and preserved as State archives. State archives are records of New South Wales Government Departments and statutory bodies and do not include private or business records.

At present, plans are being prepared for a new building to house the Archives Office and its collection of State archives which, since its inception in 1960, has been located in the State Library Building. The proposed new building, which is being located in the centre of the historic Sydney "Rocks" area, is intended to be a city base for the Archives Office in which most services to the public will be provided and the core of heavily-used, valuable State archives will be housed. The new Government Records Repository at Kingswood, on the other hand, will be an out-of-town repository for the storage of vast quantities of semi-current records and less-used State archives.

For the past decade the Archives Office has diligently collected

and cumulated statistics on four aspects of reader services: the number of visits made by readers (monthly and annually); the number of issues of State archives made to readers (monthly and annually); the number of reader's tickets granted (annually) and the number of reference enquiries received (annually). Apart from the annual compilations themselves, the Archives Office also retained the raw material from which these statistics were compiled. The fundamental problem with these figures has been their inaccuracy. Statistical checks revealed that the mean variance for these figures is in the vicinity of 20%.

In April 1974 a number of procedural reforms were implemented and since this date the statistics referred to above are now accurate, although their validity as an indication of the level of service provided is still questionable. The overall picture of reader services in the Archives Office, from a statistical viewpoint, is best conveyed by reference to Table 1. In addition to the actual figures, the table also provides for each figure the percentage increase or decrease in comparison to the previous year.

TABLE 1
Analysis of Annual Statistics: 1967-75

Year	No. of visits	%	Issues of St. arch.	%	Enquiries	%	No. of R/T	%	No. of u/t	%
1967	2201	—	9136	—	?	—	315	—	—	—
1968	2222	1.0	10215	11.8	93	—	594	88.6	—	—
1969	2369	6.6	11139	9.0	200	115.5	565	-4.9	—	—
1970	2412	1.8	11939	7.2	275	37.5	507	-10.3	—	—
1971	2528	4.8	10935	-8.4	355	29.1	541	6.7	—	—
1972	2486	1.7	12343	12.9	526	48.2	545	0.7	—	—
1973	2554	2.7	11275	-8.7	610	16.0	561	3.0	—	—
1974	2595	1.6	12700	12.6	740	21.3	564	0.5	350	—
1975	3253	25.4	15504	22.1	1227	65.8	587	4.1	785	124.3

Unfortunately, because of the dubious reliability of some of these statistics, minimal attention should be accorded to individual pre-1974 figures. However, the salient point to emerge from Table 1 is that the pre-1974 figures tend to show a steady increase in reader patronage, and, in particular, a rapid rise in the number of enquiries received. Furthermore, in retrospect, 1975 may well be seen as a turning point in reader services owing to the dramatic increase in patronage. The following comparison provides an indication of the rapid growth in service. Table 2 compares the various facets of reader services for the period January-April in the last three years and indicates the respective percentage increases.

TABLE 2
Analysis of January - April Period for 1974-5-6

Category	Jan.-Apr.		%	Jan.-Apr.	
	1974	1975		Increase	%
Number of visits by readers	699	948	35.6	1299	37.0
Number of issues of State archives	3043	4819	58.4	6889	43.0
Number of enquiries	192	408	113.0	439	7.3
Number of reader's tickets granted	198	222	12.1	235	5.9
Number of undertakings issued	115	236	105.2	366	55.1

The reasons behind this increase are complex and open to conjecture. However, it appears to be the cumulative effect of a

prolonged interaction, rather than any one reason, which has resulted in the unprecedented increase. To a greater or lesser extent, the reasons involved can be delineated as: easing of restrictions on persons tracing their own family history; the maintenance of accurate statistics; the commencement of the Diploma in Archives Administration course at the University of New South Wales; improved finding aids; continuing emphasis on tertiary education and research in general, and effective staff. However, if it were not for the fact that the Archives Office should have its own building and an increased staff within the next two or three years, this increase in reader services would pose almost insurmountable problems for the Archives Office if the present rate of increase was maintained.

Differentiation of Users

In theory, if not in practice, the use of State archives is restricted to holders of a reader's ticket, which among other matters requires the applicant to provide two recommenders. Reader's tickets are generally only granted to 'bona fide' researchers—a term which has been interpreted as excluding undergraduates, school children, amateur genealogists and persons intending to make only one or two visits. Reader's tickets are renewable annually upon request.

'Undertakings', on the other hand, are issued to persons who wish to use State archives but who do not hold a reader's ticket. Undertakings are generally used by persons proposing to make only one visit and if they make subsequent visits then they are required to complete a separate undertaking on each visit. Similarly, persons wishing to use State archives before their reader's ticket is granted are required to complete an undertaking. The undertaking serves to inform the user of the conditions under which State archives are made available and provides the Archives Office with a record of the persons using State archives and for what purpose.

In addition to reading room services, the Archives Office receives hundreds of written and telephone enquiries each year.

Throughout the report, issues of State archives were utilised as a base figure by which comparisons could be afforded. Statistically this is not necessarily a valid method of comparison. However, it does provide a convenient guide.

The following table shows the relative numbers of users of State archives in 1974 expressed numerically, and as a percentage of the total. Their respective usage of State archives is also shown numerically and as a percentage.

TABLE 3
Analysis of Users

Category	Number	% of Total	Issues of St. Arch.	% of Total
Holders of reader's tickets	238	32.9	8969	70.6
Undertakings (granted R/T later)	37	5.3	981	7.7
Holders of (expired) reader's tickets	34	4.7	644	5.1
Undertakings	308	41.6	993	7.8
State Library Staff	?	?	253	2.0
Unknown	112	15.5	860	6.8
TOTALS	729+	100.0	12700	100.0

The crucial point to emerge from the above table is that 42.9% of users have a reader's ticket of some kind. They are responsible for 83.4% of issues of State archives. The corollary of this is that while 41.6% of users have an undertaking, they account for a mere 7.8% of issues. The category in Table 3 designated as 'unknown' mainly comprises people requesting the issue of State archives using a Mitchell Library reader's ticket. However, since late 1974 users in this category have been requested to complete an undertaking or apply for a reader's ticket, and hence a check of 1975 statistics would reveal that this category has almost ceased to exist. Similarly, any archival material requested for use by State Library staff is recorded.

From the information available it is possible to differentiate the users of State archives, in general, by three factors—their sex, address and subject. These three matters are applicable equally to all categories of users.

The following table (Table 4) shows the percentage of holders of reader's tickets and undertakings by sex. In addition, it shows the percentage of enquiries made by males and females. Basically, it can be seen, that in all categories, the Archives Office tends to have considerably more male readers than female.

TABLE 4
Analysis of Users by Sex

Sex	Holders of R/T %	Undertakings %	Enquiries %
Male	61.5	44.2	52.0
Female	38.4	31.8	44.0
Unknown	0.1	24.0	4.0
TOTALS	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5 below compares the address of users holding a reader's ticket, persons completing an undertaking and persons making telephone and written enquiries in 1974. The table demonstrates a fairly normal distribution pattern in that users living in Sydney tend to apply for a reader's ticket, whereas those living outside the metropolitan area are more likely to make brief visits or seek information by writing.

TABLE 5
Analysis of Users by Address

Address	Holders of R/T %	Undertakings %	Enquiries %
Sydney (metropolitan)	71.4	62.7	34.8
N.S.W. (country)	17.2	19.8	16.2
Other States	11.0	13.0	42.9
Overseas	0.4	4.5	6.1
TOTALS	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6 below shows the subjects pursued by the different categories of users. Overall the table reflects the predominance of genealogical research. The only category of user not accurately mirroring this preoccupation are holders of reader's tickets, which are largely not issued for genealogical studies.

TABLE 6
Analysis of Users by Subject

Subject	Holders of R/T %	Undertakings %	Enquiries %
Local history	24.5	15.9	11.9
Genealogy	12.8	52.2	59.5
Biography	10.0	6.8	8.8
Social issues	7.9	3.9	1.5
Education	6.9	2.0	3.5
Architecture	5.1	2.0	1.9
Political issues	4.6	0.3	0.8
Transportation (forms)	3.9	2.6	2.5
Economic history	2.1	1.0	0.4
Dip.Arch.Admin.	1.7	—	—
Aborigines	1.5	—	0.1
Legal issues	1.4	3.2	3.6
Other subjects	7.6	6.5	4.7
Unknown	10.0	3.6	0.8
TOTALS	100.0	100.0	100.0

Having established the major characteristics of the users of State archives as a whole, I now propose to analyse in greater detail the three principal categories of users—those readers issued with a reader's ticket, those completing an undertaking and correspondents (reference enquiries).

Analysis of holders of reader's tickets

Since 1968, when the Archives Authority decided to refuse the issuing of new reader's tickets to persons researching their own family history, the Archives Office has ostensibly been serving two major categories of reader—post-graduate university students and staff, and local historians. Statistically, while reader's tickets are increasing in number, this growth is at a significantly slower pace than undertakings and enquiries, largely as a result of the restriction on family history. (See Table 1.)

In the report, the following discriminators were used to differentiate between the holders of reader's tickets: sex, address, qualifications, tertiary courses in progress, occupation, subject being studied, plans to publish, and ticket renewals. Unless otherwise stated, the figures quoted are for 1974. A summary of the findings follows.

Nearly 90% of the holders of reader's tickets lived in New South Wales and half of the remaining 10% resided in the Australian Capital Territory. The overwhelming majority of holders of reader's tickets residing in Sydney were found to be concentrated in known 'middle class' socio-economic areas, particularly the Eastern Suburbs and the North Shore, with very few from the Southern Suburbs and practically none from the Western Suburbs.

A total of 43.9% of the holders of reader's tickets possessed tertiary qualifications, the most common being the Bachelor of Arts degree, held by 62.3% of this group. It is interesting to observe that while only 43.9% of reader's ticket holders had tertiary qualifications, they were nevertheless responsible for 63.6% of the total issues of State archives made to those holding reader's tickets in 1974.

The report found that 28.6% of the holders of reader's tickets were

using State archives as part of a tertiary course. The following table (Table 7) provides a breakdown of these course and also shows the respective percentage of State archives used by the persons undertaking the various courses.

TABLE 7
Analysis of Tertiary Courses in Progress by Holders of Reader's Tickets

Course	Number	% of Total	% Issue of St. Arch.
Master of Arts	38	23.6	10.7
Bachelor of Arts (Honours)	34	21.1	15.5
Bachelor of Architecture	28	17.4	13.1
Ph.D.	18	11.2	7.2
Master of Education	10	6.2	5.1
Dip.Arch.Admin. (U.N.S.W.)	7	4.3	37.6
Bachelor of Education	5	3.1	0
Bachelor of Law	3	1.9	0.2
Bachelor of Science	2	1.2	0
Bachelor of Economics/Commerce	2	1.2	0
Other tertiary courses	14	8.8	10.6
TOTALS	161	100.0	100.0

In terms of numbers of reader's tickets, the most significant courses being undertaken were Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Master of Arts and Bachelor of Architecture. However, in terms of the issues of State archives, the course which predominated was the Diploma in Archives Administration, followed by the three just enumerated. Furthermore, the 28.6% of reader's ticket holders undertaking tertiary courses were responsible for 38.1% of the issues of State archives made to reader's ticket holders in general.

Table 8 below shows the occupations of holders of reader's tickets and the respective percentages of issues of State archives for which each occupational group was responsible.

TABLE 8
Analysis of Holders of Reader's Tickets by Occupation

Occupation	Number	% of Total	% Issue of St. Arch.
Undergraduate (mainly hon.)	57	10.1	6.2
Teacher (school)	57	10.1	8.3
University staff	52	9.2	13.9
Home duties	52	9.2	5.1
Clerical	44	7.8	2.9
Retired	43	7.6	4.3
Post-graduate	40	7.1	20.7
Research officer	27	4.8	12.4
Writer	26	4.6	7.3
Executive/manager	18	3.2	0.9
Librarian	17	3.0	2.2
Doctor/dentist	16	2.8	0.8
Research assistant (uni.)	14	2.5	8.1
Solicitor	13	2.3	3.3
Grazier	9	1.6	0.3
Engineer	9	1.6	0.3
Technician	7	1.2	0.6
Tradesmen	5	0.9	0.4
Other than above	32	5.9	1.8
Unknown	14	2.5	1.2
TOTALS	563	100.0	100.0

From Table 8 it is interesting to observe that the two main occupational groupings to emerge can be expressed as follows.

GROUP 1

	%
University staff and students	28.9
School teachers	10.1
Other professionals	14.5
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Total	53.5%

GROUP 2

	%
Home duties	9.2
Clerical duties	7.8
Retired persons	7.6
Related groups	15.4
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Total	40.0%

The above simple differentiation of the holders of reader's tickets according to stated occupation, tends to reflect the dichotomy that pervades archives usage. On the one hand is the academic, university-oriented researcher working on advanced and often highly-individualistic projects, while on the other is the not so academically-oriented clerical worker, retired person or housewife working on family history or local history. While it is conceded that this simplification is crude, it does highlight the crux of the statistics compiled.

Again, referring to Table 8, the figures in column three, which are expressed as a percentage of the total number of issues of State archives made to reader's ticket holders, are even more illuminating in this context. Fundamentally they lend support to the notion, which is justified by experience, that some occupational groups—the academically-oriented ones—appear to be adept at using archival material. The following table demonstrates this supposition.

TABLE 9
Analysis of Issues of State Archives to Holders of Reader's Tickets According to Occupation

Occupational—Group 1	% Total of R/T	% issues of St. Arch.
University staff and students	28.9	57.2
School teachers	10.1	8.3
Other professionals	14.5	19.0
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TOTALS	53.5	84.5
Occupation—Group 2	% Total of R/T	% issues of St. Arch.
Home duties	9.2	5.1
Clerical	7.8	2.9
Retired	7.6	4.3
Related groups	15.4	10.4
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TOTALS	40.1	22.7

Table 9 shows that although only 53.5% of reader's ticket holders can be broadly classed as being 'academically-oriented', they account for 84.5% of the issues of State archives made to all reader's ticket holders.

The following table (Table 10) differentiates between the holders of reader's tickets according to the major subject areas which they claimed to be researching. Thus it can be seen that the main subject areas according to grants of reader's tickets emerge as local history, genealogy and biography. But in terms of the issues of State archives, genealogy predominates. It is also believed that a significant number of persons claiming to be researching local history or other subjects are largely compiling family histories.

TABLE 10
Analysis of Holders of Reader's Tickets by Subject

Subject	Number of R/T	% Total of R/T	% Issues of St. Arch.
Local history	138	24.5	16.2
Genealogy	72	12.8	19.8
Biography	56	10.0	5.9
Social issues	44	7.9	7.0
Education	39	6.9	10.9
Architecture/buildings	28	5.1	3.8
Political issues	26	4.6	4.4
Transportation (forms)	22	3.9	0.8
Economic history	12	2.1	2.3
Diploma in Archives Administration	10	1.7	14.6
Aborigines	9	1.5	0.3
Legal matters	8	1.4	1.2
Other subjects	43	7.6	2.5
Unknown	56	10.0	10.3
TOTALS	563	100.0	100.0

Very few researchers when applying for a reader's ticket state that they have any intention of publishing the results of their work. Of the 563 successful applicants in 1974 only 50 or 8.9% expressed the intention to publish their work. One-fifth of the readers intending to publish their work were preparing biographies for inclusion in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

A breakdown of reader's tickets granted in 1974 shows that 86, or 15.3% of the total, were originally granted in 1966-67, which was the first year in which separate archives reader's tickets were granted. Table 11 shows the categories of holders of reader's tickets according to three groupings: 1970 and earlier 1971-73 and 1974.

TABLE 11
Analysis of Holders of Reader's Tickets by Ticket Renewals

Category	Number of R/T Issued	% Total of R/T	% Issues of St. Arch.
1970 and earlier	185	32.9	18.8
1971-73	147	26.1	23.6
1974	231	41.0	57.6
TOTALS	563	100.0	100.0

Table 11 reveals that 59% of reader's tickets granted in 1974 were in fact renewals of reader's tickets granted previously and only 41%

were actually new tickets as such. It is evident from this table that although nearly one-third of reader's tickets issued in 1974 were renewals of tickets held for over four years, in terms of the usage of State archives (gauged by issues) this group accounted for only 18.8% of total issues, which is considerably lower than what proportionally would be expected. Similarly, it is interesting to observe that the group of reader's tickets which were new applications, that is, 41% of the whole, were responsible for 57.6% of issues of State archives made to the holders of reader's tickets.

The other findings to emerge from this aspect of the study concern the number of visits made to the Archives Office by the holders of reader's tickets for the purpose of using State archives. Table 12 below shows that over half of reader's ticket holders in 1974 did not use their tickets, and only one-third of the holders of reader's tickets made more than one visit to the Archives Office in that year.

TABLE 12
Analysis of Holders of Reader's Tickets by Visits

Number of Visits	Number of R/T holders	% Total of R/T
0	293	52.1
1	74	13.1
Under 5	91	16.2
5 or more	105	18.6
TOTALS	563	100.0

Analysis of undertakings

As stated previously, 'undertakings' are issued to persons who wish to use State archives but who do not hold a reader's ticket. In 1974 some 345 of these were issued. Of these, 37 (10.7%) of the applicants subsequently applied for, and received, a reader's ticket. This particular category of undertaking was therefore excluded from the following statistics since they have already been counted as holders of reader's tickets and the fact that they previously completed an undertaking is consequently largely incidental.

Table 13 provides a breakdown of undertakings according to the address of the person completing it. The table shows that while persons issued with an undertaking predominantly reside in Sydney, there is a good representation from New South Wales country areas and visitors from foreign countries (New Zealand, United Kingdom and United States). Furthermore, it is likely that a higher number of interstate and overseas persons are involved than the number indicated because some are known to have given their temporary Sydney address rather than their permanent address.

Table 14 below provides an analysis of the purposes (subject) for which undertakings were issued. In addition, the table attempts to correlate these categories with issues of State archives. It can be seen from Table 14 that over half of the undertakings (52.2%) were issued for the purpose of tracing family history, that is, mainly searching passenger lists and convict records on microfilm. Family history enquiries accounted for an even higher percentage in terms of issues

of State archives (57%). The other main subjects to emerge from the table were: tracing details of land holdings, including the use of maps (10.4%); biographies (6.8%); and local history (5.5%). Preliminary analysis of undertakings issued in the period January-April 1976 shows an upsurge of interest in family history with about 70% of undertakings being issued for this purpose.

TABLE 13
Analysis of Undertakings by Address

Area	Number of U/T	% Total of U/T	% Issues of St. Arch.
Sydney (metropolitan)	193	62.7	57.3
N.S.W. (country)	61	19.8	24.5
Victoria	19	6.1	3.7
Queensland	9	2.9	5.5
Tasmania	4	1.3	2.2
South Australia	3	1.0	2.5
Western Australia	2	0.7	0.4
A.C.T.	0	0	0
Overseas	14	4.5	2.9
Unknown	3	1.0	1.0
TOTALS	308	100.0	100.0

TABLE 14
Analysis of Undertakings by Subject

Subject	Number of U/T	% Total of U/T	% Issues of St. Arch.
Genealogy	161	52.2	57.0
Land holdings/maps	32	10.4	5.5
Biography	21	6.8	5.0
Local history	17	5.5	5.0
Legal records	10	3.2	2.6
Transportation (forms)	8	2.6	1.5
Education	6	2.0	3.3
Buildings	6	2.0	4.3
Convicts (general)	6	2.0	1.3
Immigration (general)	5	1.6	2.3
Economic history	3	1.0	0.8
Social issues	1	0.3	3.2
Political issues	1	0.3	0
Other subjects	20	6.5	4.9
Unknown	11	3.6	3.3
TOTALS	308	100.0	100.0

The following table (Table 15) shows the number of visits recorded by users issued with an undertaking. Table 15 reveals that persons using an undertaking tend to make only one visit to the Archives Office—nearly 80% come within this category—while a further 15% make two visits. Hence, less than 6% of persons issued with an undertaking made more than two visits to the Archives Office in 1974. However, preliminary analysis of 1975 and 1976 undertakings shows that this trend is changing in that a larger number of persons without a reader's ticket are making more than one or two visits to the Archives Office. This is probably due to the easing of restrictions on persons researching their own family histories and the increasing amount of records made available on microfilm for the use of these readers.

TABLE 15
Analysis of Undertakings by Visits

Number of Visits	Number of U/T	% Total of U/T
1	242	78.6
2	48	15.6
3	11	3.6
4	3	1.0
5	1	0.3
6	2	0.6
7	1	0.3
TOTALS	308	100.0

Table 16 is designed to indicate the usage of State archives by persons using an undertaking to gain access. The main significance of this table lies in that it shows 85% of users in this category have less than five issues each.

TABLE 16
Analysis of Undertakings by Issues of State Archives

Number of Issues	Number of U/T	% Total of U/T
0	35	11.4
1	115	37.3
2 - 5	115	37.3
6 - 10	27	8.8
11 - 15	4	1.3
16 - 20	9	2.9
Over 21	3	1.0
TOTALS	308	100.0

Analysis of reference enquiries

The statistics elaborated in this section concern the 666 written and telephone enquiries recorded during 1974. It should be noted that only a small number of telephone enquiries were recorded, and that in particular, telephone enquiries of a brief nature were never included. The following factors were applied in differentiating and analyzing enquiries in order to categorize them: date of receipt; sex of enquirer; address of enquirer; subject matter of enquiry; whether it originated from a Government Department; were photocopies required, and whether there had been previous contact with the Archives Office.

TABLE 17
Analysis of Enquiries by Address

Area	Number of enquiries	% Total of Enquiries
Sydney (metropolitan)	185	27.9
N.S.W. (country)	120	18.0
A.C.T.	29	4.4
Victoria	132	19.6
Queensland	51	7.7
Tasmania	20	3.0
South Australia	26	3.7
Western Australia	13	2.0
Northern Territory	1	0.1
New Zealand	46	6.9
Overseas	43	6.4
TOTALS	666	100.0

Table 17 provides a breakdown of reference enquiries according to the address of the enquirer. It can be seen from this table that 28% of enquiries come from the Sydney metropolitan area, while a further 18% are from the New South Wales country area. Thus, 46% of enquiries are from persons residing in New South Wales. The remaining 54% of enquiries are composed of 41% from other Australian States with the remaining 13% coming from overseas.

Table 18 shows the subject matter of the enquiries received in the Archives Office. If this table is further summarised it can be seen that enquiries are overwhelmingly concerned with the history of individuals—over two-thirds of enquiries fall within the ambit of this broad category. This finding highlights the need for personal name indexes to passenger lists and similar high usage records.

TABLE 18
Analysis of Enquiries by Subject

Subject	Number of Enquiries	% Total of Enquiries
Genealogy	393	59.5
Biography	60	8.8
Local history	47	7.1
Legal records	24	3.6
Education	23	3.5
Maps	18	2.6
Transportation (forms)	17	2.5
Land holdings	15	2.2
Buildings	13	1.9
Convicts (general)	8	1.2
Political issues	6	0.8
Economic history	3	0.4
Social issues	2	0.3
Other subjects	32	4.8
Unknown	5	0.8
TOTALS	666	100.0

Some of the other findings that emerged from this part of the overall study of reader services follow. It was found that at the present time only about 10% of enquiries are from Government Departments, although these are often quite involved. There would appear to be some scope in the future for offering a specialised reference service to government instrumentalities.² Some 10% of enquiries are actually requests for photocopies, which are usually in response to a quote received from the Archives Office. It appeared that about one in every six enquirers initially approaching the Archives Office will write or telephone a second time within twelve months. Further research needs to be made into the area of telephone enquiries, which are now being accurately recorded, before a comparison can be attempted with written enquiries.

Hours of opening

Since the creation of the Archives Office in 1960, State archives have been made available for consultation in the reading room of the Mitchell Library. This has enabled readers to use State archives in conjunction with the resources of the Mitchell Library and, in

particular, has saved the Archives Office from the necessity of maintaining a separate reading room and its own Australian reference library. The disadvantages of this arrangement arise from the fact that the Mitchell Library reading room is old and not suited to the needs of the Archives Office, and furthermore that the operations of the Archives Office must largely conform to the requirements of the Mitchell Library.

The Mitchell Library itself is open for 67 hours per week (10 a.m.-10 p.m., Monday to Friday; and 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday). The Archives Office has an archivist either on duty in the reading room or on call for 54 hours per week during the following hours:

Monday	10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.
Tuesday	10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.
Wednesday	10.00 a.m. - 9.30 p.m.
Thursday	10.00 a.m. - 9.30 p.m.
Friday	10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.
Saturday	10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

The Archives Office operates a separate enquiry and stack service point from the Archives Desk which is located in a corner of the reading room. There is an archivist present in the reading room from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday; for the remainder of the time, when there are usually insufficient readers in the reading room to warrant the full-time presence of an archivist, the archivist on duty remains in the Archives Office on standby and only goes to the reading room when specifically requested. At other times when the Mitchell Library is open but there is no archivist available, State archives can be made available for use if prior notice is given.

The following table (Table 19), was devised to indicate the level of service provided by the Archives Office at different times of the year. For convenience, calendar months have been used and figures are provided for three facets of reader service: visits by readers, issues of State archives, and numbers of enquiries received. To facilitate comparisons, these figures have been converted into percentages.

Table 19 reveals the busiest month as August. Basically, the table depicts two cycles per year—a distinct busy period and a quieter period. The months December, January, February, March and April

TABLE 19
Analysis of Reader Services by Calendar Months

Month	No. of Readers	% of Total	Issues of St. Arch.	% of Total	No. of Enquiries	% of Total
January	161	6.2	688	5.4	38	5.7
February	177	6.8	679	5.3	53	8.0
March	183	7.1	711	5.6	47	7.1
April	155	6.0	609	4.8	54	8.0
May	271	10.4	1409	11.1	68	10.2
June	197	7.6	858	6.8	63	9.5
July	270	10.4	1472	11.6	68	10.2
August	284	11.0	1569	12.4	65	9.8
September	253	9.7	1196	9.4	59	8.8
October	220	8.5	1150	9.0	50	7.5
November	249	9.6	1500	11.9	58	8.7
December	175	6.7	850	6.7	43	6.5
TOTALS	2595	100.0	12700	100.0	666	100.0

appear as a quiet period, while May, June, July, August and September constitute a busy cycle in the middle of the year.

Table 20 attempts to establish whether certain days of the week are busier than others in the reading room. Although it is necessary to note the dangers inherent in this type of generalization, the table shows that, except for Saturday, the quietest days in the reading room tend to be Monday and Friday, while the busiest is clearly Wednesday. The fact that Wednesday emerges as the busiest day in terms of the above criteria is largely due to two factors: it was one of the days on which the Diploma in Archives Administration students did their practical work in the reading room; and also Wednesday includes a night shift. If the night shift figures are omitted, then Tuesday emerges as the busiest day.

TABLE 20
Analysis of Reader Services by Days of the Week

Day	No. of Readers	% of Total	Issues of St. Arch.	% of Total
Monday	418	16.1	2051	16.1
Tuesday	493	19.0	2249	17.7
Wednesday	563	21.7	2818	22.3
Thursday	463	17.8	2278	17.9
Friday	430	16.6	2048	16.1
Saturday	228	8.8	1256	9.9
TOTALS	2595	100.0	12700	100.0

The archivist on duty in the reading room mans the Archives Desk there between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., and is relieved by a second archivist for morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, according to a weekly roster. The busiest periods in the reading room tend to be 10 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. During peak times the Archives Office can have four or more microfilm reading machines in use and up to twenty seated readers.

In May-June 1975, attempts were made to categorise and analyse the work performed by archivists in the reading room. These preliminary surveys were tabulated and compared, but were not conclusive and further research needs to be undertaken in this area.

Another aspect of the day shift is the so-called 'intermediate shift', which is a device employed by the State Library to enable it to staff reading rooms from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The intermediate shift traditionally goes from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and in particular is designed to cover the period 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. while the night shift staff have dinner. The Archives Office uses this shift to extend service to 6 p.m. on the three nights that there is no night shift. The intermediate shift consists of one archivist 'on call' for the hour 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. each week day.

At present there are no statistics available concerning intermediate shifts. However, it appears that not many readers actually come to the Archives Office after 5 p.m.—requests for an archivist in the hour 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. are mainly from readers who have already been in the reading room for some time.

The Archives Office at present provides reader services on two nights of the week—Wednesday and Thursday from 6 p.m. until 9.30 p.m.—which in practice is merely the continuation of the normal

day service on those two days. One archivist is rostered to work from 2 p.m. until 9.30 p.m. to fulfill this obligation. A nightly activity sheet is kept by the archivist on duty and this enabled the compilation of very detailed statistics covering such matters as the number of readers in the reading room; the number of issues of State archives; the number of consultations required; the amount of time involved in providing reader services; and the time at which reader services ceased at night.

Reader services at night for the Archives Office (and the Mitchell Library) have been declining over a period of time. It is significant that three years ago when the Archives Office reduced its night service from three nights to two nights per week there was absolutely no reaction from readers. In summary, the statistics concerning night services tended to show that these are not well patronised in comparison with the day service. Although by opening at night on Wednesday and Thursday, the hours of opening for those days are extended by nearly 50%, the corresponding increase in user patronage is only about 10%.

The Archives Office has the same hours of opening on Saturday as the Mitchell Library, that is, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. An archivist and an attendant are rostered for duty, but, owing to shift allowances, their hours are not identical. The archivist is required to work 10.30 a.m. to 5 p.m., while the attendant works 10 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. In 1974 the 'average' Saturday shift involved service to 4.4 readers and the making of 25.5 issues of State archives. But more recent figures, covering the period January-April 1976 are more than double these. The consequence of this makes any discussion of Saturday shifts difficult. However, there is no evidence to suggest that a significant number of persons depend on the Archives Office to open at night or on Saturday in order to use State archives. Rather, it appears that because the Archives Office offers this service then a small number of readers, who also use the Archives Office at other times, will avail themselves of it along with casual enquirers.

The Archives Office, like the State Library, is open on all public holidays, except Christmas Day and Good Friday. The hours of opening on public holidays for the Archives Office are generally 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the staff is the same as for a Saturday shift. Table 21 shows the patronage of the Archives Office on public holidays in terms of numbers of readers and issues of State archives in 1974, 1975 and the first four months of 1976.

It is probably a debatable point whether the figures in Table 21 justify the Archives Office being open on public holidays with two staff on duty. It is perhaps significant to appreciate that the readers who visit the Archives Office on public holidays are the same people who come at other times—they do not constitute a special group in any way.

For the present, while the Archives Office is located in the State Library and shares the Mitchell Library reading room, its hours of opening are likely to remain largely unchanged, or at least largely dependent upon the policies of the State Library. However, when the Archives Office establishes its own reading room, considerable thought will be given to hours of opening and usage patterns displayed by readers.

TABLE 21
Analysis of Usage of State Archives on Public Holidays

Public Holiday	No. of Readers			Issues of St. Arch.		
	1974	1975	1976	1974	1975	1976
New Year's Day	1	0	2	1	0	12
Australia Day	2	4	4	3	62	8
Easter Saturday	3	6	10	20	81	28
Easter Monday	1	7	4	12	61	12
Anzac Day	3	3	3	7	23	27
Queen's Birthday	1	5	—	5	10	—
Bank Holiday	7	9	—	24	35	—
Eight-hour Day	2	7	—	27	33	—
Boxing Day	1	1	—	6	2	—

Analysis of records used by readers

Although most of the *Preliminary Report on Reader Services in the Archives Office of New South Wales* was concerned with the users of State archives, the picture would have been incomplete if attention had not also been paid to the records used. Hence part of the report attempted to differentiate and analyse the records used by readers. This was done at three levels: by their shelf location number; their provenance (that is, Government Department), and their chronological period. This information was ascertained by the laborious task of converting the 12,700 issues of State archives made in 1974 into cards according to shelf location. The entries on the cards—name of user and date used—were subsequently tabulated, checked against shelf lists in the Archives Office and finally typed.

Since the shelf location system in the Archives Office is essentially pragmatic there is little point in discussing the analysis of the records by this criterion. However, one point of general interest concerns the relatively high usage of the small collection of photocopied material. The survey established that nearly 15% of total issues of State archives in 1974 consisted of microfilm or xerox copies of original material. These are mostly convict records and passenger lists, many of which were microfilmed by The Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and were mainly issued to persons undertaking genealogical research.

Table 22 below is a summary of a much larger one contained in the report and shows the respective provenance (Government Department) of the records used by readers in 1974. The figures high-

TABLE 22
Analysis of the Records Used by Provenance

Government Department	Issues of St. Arch.	% of Total
Colonial Secretary	5806	45.9
Education	1426	11.3
Immigration	937	7.4
Surveyor General	682	5.4
Treasury	500	4.0
Principal Superintendent of Convicts	434	3.4
Shipping Master	376	2.9
Supreme Court	288	2.3
Others (59)	2251	17.4
TOTALS	12700	100.0

light the overwhelming importance of the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, which comprised nearly half of the total issues. Table 22 also reflects the perennial interest shown in education, immigration, land and legal records, which was also apparent in Table 6.

The third level at which it was attempted to differentiate the records used was done by separating them according to age. Table 23 is a summary of these findings whereby the records used were placed into appropriate chronological capsules (decades) with cumulative percentage totals. Table 23 revealed that over half of the records used were from the period prior to 1850; over three-quarters of the records used were from the period prior to 1870; while over 90% of the records used were from the period prior to 1900. Records from the twentieth century accounted for only 8.4% of total issues. In theory, the most heavily used records (chronologically speaking) were those from the period 1820-60, which constituted 61.8% of total issues.

TABLE 23
Analysis of the Records used by Age

Chronological Period	Issues of St. Arch.	% of Total	Cumulative %
1788-99	134	1.1	1.1
1800-09	153	1.2	2.3
1810-19	554	4.4	6.7
1820-29	1553	12.1	18.8
1830-39	1929	15.3	34.1
1840-49	2216	17.5	51.6
1850-59	2137	16.9	68.5
1860-69	928	7.3	75.8
1870-79	705	5.6	81.4
1880-89	655	5.2	86.6
1890-99	556	4.4	91.0
1900-09	397	3.1	94.1
1910-19	291	2.3	96.4
1920-29	201	1.6	98.0
1930-39	114	0.9	98.9
1940-49	24	0.2	99.1
1950-59	24	0.2	99.3
1960-69	11	0.1	99.4
?	75	0.6	100.0
TOTALS	12700	100.0	

Conclusion

The principal concern of this article has been discussion of who uses archives and for what purpose, and to a lesser extent what type of records are used. The depth of this study has been limited to one institution—the Archives Office of New South Wales. It should be emphasized that this survey is really only a preliminary one and results obtained are not entirely conclusive as many variables remain only partly explored.

It should be apparent at this stage that the questions concerning who uses archives, and why, are very broad and involve consideration of a large number of factors. The resulting complexity and the problems associated in coping with variables makes the elaboration of overall conclusions awkward if not impossible.

It was never the intention of this article to provide a final catch-all answer to the questions raised. Rather, I have attempted to analyse the various facets of reader services according to a multiplicity of discriminators on which data could readily be compiled. The rationale behind this article was therefore to provide a factual framework concerning the role of various factors which appeared to be basic to any consideration of archives users. To what extent these results (individually and collectively) can be generalised and applied to work performed at other archival institutions is for my colleagues to decide.

This survey has highlighted the need for gauging initial findings in an aspect of reader services research against a corresponding barometer of usage in attempting to validate the conclusions drawn. All too often basic findings were cast in a different light when analysed in the context of issues of State archives.

It is hoped that this article will stimulate other archivists to examine their reader services with a view to establishing how the profession can best promote the use of archives and serve its public.

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