

The Manuscripts Collections of the Australian National University Library

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In the ANU Library the term 'manuscript' is used to include 'Literary, scholarly and scientific papers, personal papers such as correspondence, diaries, memoirs, private or corporate archives'. The collections at ANU include typed and stencilled documents, photocopies and microforms. Published manuscript facsimiles are not included in the manuscript collections. Institutional libraries often find it difficult to handle manuscripts. There is also a long tradition of them expecting to be given manuscripts rather than having to buy them. 'In general', A.N.L. Munby suggests, 'most libraries do not acquire manuscripts as energetically as printed books'.¹ When they do collect them they often do it badly. 'Far too many manuscripts collections', S.R. Strachan has suggested, 'are begun in a rush of ill-considered enthusiasm, or begin as matter of chance, or simply drift into existence without their custodians really being aware of what is happening . . . of the obligations imposed, or of why they are being kept at all.'² Inevitably large libraries accept material without asking themselves whether they should do so. 'There are circumstances in which manuscripts collections ought not to be started', Strachan concludes, 'and though this may seem a little like voting against motherhood, it is definitely so.'³

Many libraries, then, are forced to being something which could be called 'manuscripts collections' even though they lack at least two of Strachan's pre-conditions for such a collection. These are:

'The assurance that a sufficiently large number of manuscripts will be collected to justify the formation of a separate, worthwhile collection.'

2. 'The assurance of adequate financial support and administrative continuity.'⁴

At ANU from 1977 to 1980, under the direction of Dr Frank Kunz, Reader Services Librarian, Social Sciences and Humanities Division, ANU Library, a manuscripts policy was formulated and put into operation. The Library hoped to come to grips with the sort of problems described previously. The progress made is largely due to Dr Kunz and Miss Maya Zaric who ably assisted him.

Like other libraries, ANU, in its manuscripts policy, recognises 'that the Library will always be the recipient of a limited amount of original manuscript material donated to it by members of the University and others who, for various reasons, regard the ANU Library as the most suitable repository for it'. However the collection policy at ANU will remain 'passive rather than active' and 'when collections . . . are offered . . . consideration should be given to the question of whether the ANU Library would be the appropriate repository'. The organisation and processing of manuscripts collections (other than those in Asian language scripts which are the responsibility of the Asian Studies Division) are now the responsibility of the Social Sciences Librarian in the Social Sciences and Humanities Division. Manuscripts already catalogued are listed on a separate microfiche manuscripts catalogue; the first catalogue contains between ten and twenty per cent of all MSS holdings. There is no classification or subject arrangement but there are serial numbers for different groups.

Five sequences are used. These are:

1. ANU MSS — miscellaneous general manuscripts.
2. ANU DOC — miscellaneous general documents (small items). These two sections include 'literary and other MSS; . . . reminiscences; private archives, notes and research papers; . . . and miscellaneous items'.
3. ANU MSS E — ethnic and emigré archives which are subdivided by language.
4. ANU DOC E — ethnic and emigré archives (small items). These sections 'contain MSS and private archives of immigrants to Australia . . . the Russian collection . . . is the largest'.
5. ANU MSS GT — unpublished theses from universities other than ANU.

Comprehensive indexing has been done, particularly for the larger collections. As with all gift material it receives, the ANU Library spells out in its manuscripts policy that donors must 'accept conditions which are reasonable and conform with proper manuscript management practice'. Access, copying and copyright matters are carefully looked into.

Perhaps the most interesting and important of the manuscripts

collections at ANU are those relating to Russian emigrés. 'This is the age of the refugee, the century of the rootless man', Taft and Robbins have written, 'expelled from one place and unwelcome in another, the European refugee . . . is the man of three parts instead of two — body, soul, and passport.'⁵ The reasons for emigration were many as were the places where the emigrants went. One of the most striking examples of mass exodus was from Russia between 1917 and 1922. The estimated number of emigrants is approximately 1,500,000.⁶ It may have been as high as two million. The flight was a bitter one and John Stephan concludes, 'the Russian diaspora never reached a consensus on how to cope with exile'.⁷ But cope they had to and most came to accept it. As one emigré said in America in 1927, 'I don't hope to go back to Russia. I don't recognize Russia now. Russia and my past are somewhere in my dreams.'⁸

Many emigrés fled east through Siberia towards China and the Pacific. This was partly because the easiest routes, to the west via Finland, Poland and the Ukraine, were obvious and well guarded. Over 250,000 Russians headed towards the Far East between 1918 and 1922 and more than half settled in China.⁹ A major centre of Russian influence was Harbin in the centre of the central Manchurian plain. By 1922 Russians comprised 120,000 of a total population of 485,000.¹⁰ Life there was never very easy but in 1945, as Russian troops began to march into the Japanese puppet-state of Manchukuo, flight and exile became their lot again. The White Russian population of Harbin had declined to 50,000 by this time and half of these now emigrated to Brazil and Australia.¹¹

'The Russian emigré community in Australia is quite substantial', Dr T.H. Rigby, Political Science, RSCS, ANU, wrote to the ANU Librarian in 1976, 'and still includes persons with experience of the Revolution and Civil War . . . of particular interest . . . are those Russians who came to Australia from China.'¹² From 1920 to 1939 a steady stream of Russian emigrants came to Australia 'many of them coming through China'.¹³ In 1947 under 5,000 people were revealed by the Australian census to come from Russia or the Ukraine. In 1961 the figure for those born in the Soviet Union was 15,673 and those born in the Ukraine was 13,873.¹⁴ A survey in 1976 by interested researchers at ANU revealed that only in the Mitchell Library and the Baillieu Library at the University of Melbourne had any real effort been made to systematically collect Russian emigré material in Australia.

In 1976 interest in making the ANU Library a central point for Russian emigré material was rewarded. This university has long been an important area for research into Russian studies, emigration and immigration.

'Russians have played and continue to play a significant part in Australian development', Dr Rigby wrote to the Russian journal 'Unification' in 1977, 'one which has not yet been properly studied. It is desirable that the record of this should not be lost . . .'¹⁵ A leaflet was prepared describing the Russian Emigré Collection at ANU as 'a permanent memorial to the many thousands of Russians who, at various times and under various circumstances, have made their homes in Australia'.

The Library was fortunate to secure the willing help of Professor C.M. Hotimsky, without whose invaluable assistance and advice the project would not have proceeded very far. One of the collections received and catalogued was the papers of Petr Moiseevich Perekhrst. He was born in 1892 in the city of Kiev and during the First World War served as a staff officer in the Russian military. When the White Army evacuated Odessa he was the last high-ranking officer to leave. He worked at the Russian Passport Bureau in Istanbul for a while before settling as an industrial chemist in Belgium. The Davis Gelatine Company brought him to Australia in 1949 and he retired from that company in 1957. He was active in church affairs and in several Russian organisations in Sydney. His death occurred in 1974. There are 16 boxes and one volume of papers including personal papers and correspondence, scrapbooks, papers re Russian organisations in Australia and miscellanea.

The Library also has nine volumes of papers and photographs relating to the life of Mihail Ivanovich Nesteroff. He was born in October 1893 in Rostov, Russia. Orphaned at an early age, he and his sister were raised by their maternal grandparents. In 1911 he entered the Imperial Russian Navy's Engineering Academy at Kronstadt, near St Petersburg, being commissioned as an engineer-midshipman in 1914. During 1915-1917 he served on board the auxiliary naval cruiser 'Oryol' in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. He fled eastwards in 1921 from Vladivostok to Shanghai and from 1925 to 1936 lived in Canton. In Hong Kong from 1936 to 1955, he endured a period as a prisoner-of-war there (1941-1945). He worked as an engineer with the China Light and Power Company until his retirement in 1955 when he migrated to Australia. He died in 1976. His papers include letters to his wife (1935-1941), miscellaneous papers, photograph albums (containing mainly snapshots taken aboard 'Oryol' and in Japanese, Indochinese and East Indian ports, 1915-1919), an album of postcards showing views of Shanghai, Hong Kong, Saigon and Singapore (c. 1910-1930), and an album of postcards (mainly Russian) on various subjects. Other emigré archives, also fully catalogued, are those of a Polish army officer, Wladyslaw Krauze, who came to Australia as a displaced person in 1951, and a Russian scientist, Dr Sergei Iakovlevich Paramonov,

who came here as a refugee in 1947 and subsequently worked for the CSIRO.

Besides our emigré material the ANU Library has other significant collections. One such is the as yet uncatalogued papers of James Normington-Rawling, 1898-1966. He was an historian who belonged, in the words of Robin Gollan, 'to the largest political party in Australia — the party of ex-communists'.¹⁶ He was a prominent communist in the 1930s, acting as a research officer preparing pamphlets, speeches and articles. Active in the anti-war movement in the late 1930s, he was expelled in November 1939 allegedly 'for supposed Trotskyite leanings'.¹⁷ Like others who opposed Nazism, he could not, it seems, come to terms with the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 23 August 1939 and Russia's invasion of Finland later in that year. Bitter and disillusioned he took his betrayal, as he regarded it, very seriously and turned against the party he had worked so hard for. He denounced communist infiltration of trade unions, the Labor Party and other organisations and gave evidence to the Royal Commission Inquiring into the Origins, Aims, Objects and Funds of the Communist Party in Victoria.¹⁸

He worked on Communist Party history part-time until his death leaving two collections of papers, one being at the Mitchell Library, the other at the ANU Library. The collection here is of great interest to students of Australian politics and society. 'Clearly', Frances de Groen has written of it, 'those interested in the general political background to Australian literature could benefit from a better organised presentation of the Rawling papers. History or political science students may find that the papers conceal a goldmine. Certainly there is a wealth of original source material languishing amidst the plethora of disintegrating newspapers and unsorted notes.'¹⁹ The collection is important and the Library hopes soon to give it the attention it deserves.

The ANU is also the major Australian centre for Asian Studies, and Asian manuscripts are well represented in our collections. With regard to vernacular manuscripts, the Library has a few manuscripts from each of the major regions of Asia in which the Library collects publications, i.e. East, South and Southeast Asia. The largest group are Chinese, comprising a total of fifteen items relating to history, literature and religion, the earliest item dating from the 16th century. These are all in the traditional Chinese handsewn fascicule format.

Southeast Asian manuscripts include several Javanese epic works handwritten on paper in the Javanese script, two Burmese folding books, and two palm leaf manuscripts of Buddhist texts. Several of these date from the 19th century. There are also two South Asian palm leaf books,

one a verse translation of the *Bhagavata Purana* in the Oriya language dating from the 19th century and the other a collection of Jataka stories in Sinhalese. Both of these items have the text incised with a metal stylus. The Library also holds four manuscript items in Japanese, two of them being letters by 19th century political leaders in Japan. Another is a collection of records on the silk and cotton trade presented to the Tokugawa government (1600-1868), and the last is a family history transcribed in 1847.²⁰

Of our other holdings I can make only a brief mention. Mr J.G. Starke, QC, BA, LLB(W.Aust.), BCL(Oxon.), has donated an important collection of manuscript legal material relating to an unfinished project, the compilation of an Australian Digest of International Law. Dr Trevor Williams, who is preparing a further volume on the life of Lord Florey, made extensive use of the Florey Papers held here (with the permission and support of Lady Florey in Oxford). There are many other manuscripts collections in the ANU Library and to illustrate their variety and importance the following is a list of some of those already fully catalogued:

1. Sir Frederic William Eggleston, *Confidential notes on Victorian politics*, 1 volume.
2. Sir Frederic William Eggleston, *Notes and extracts on international affairs, 1919-1948*, 3 boxes.
3. Alan Gould, *The Vinlanders*, Poems written during the tenure of a creative arts fellowship at ANU in 1978, 1 volume.
4. Australian Associated Press, *Reports from East Timor, Sept. 15-Dec. 10, 1975*, by R. Collins and J. Joliffe, 1 folder.
5. Samuel Shumack, *Copy of original writings, with notes on the Shumack Family of Canberra*, 1 volume.
6. K.J. Kenafick, *The Australian labour movement in relation to war, socialism, and internationalism, particularly as evidenced in the careers of John Curtin and Maurice Blackburn*, 17 volumes.
7. Leslie Allen Holdsworth, *Literary papers and notes, 1901-1951, mainly poems, translations and lecture notes on English and Classical literature*, 6 boxes.
8. ANU Library, *Autographed book used on special occasions*. Begins with the signatures of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, on the occasion of the opening of the R.G. Menzies Building of the Library, on 13 March 1963.

There are also many theses held in the Library's manuscripts collections which are copies of those completed at universities other than ANU.

To conclude, the ANU Library has modern manuscripts collections, some catalogued, many uncatalogued. As with many other libraries, staff shortages and other priorities have prevented us from proceeding as far and as quickly as we would wish. A.N.L. Munby has written '... such modern archives are often formidably bulky ... the work involved in processing such papers and making them fit for use by readers is often a very heavy burden on a library with a comparatively small staff'.²¹ Our

first priority will probably continue to be the Russian Emigré Collection although we hope for substantial progress on Normington-Rawling in the future. This delay is regrettable but inevitable. There are many factors which according to Munby, ' . . . play their part in determining how our collections of manuscripts expand. Their expansion on sound and scholarly lines, however, cannot be achieved without a good deal of thought from us all.'²²

FOOTNOTES

- 1 A.N.L. Munby, 'The acquisition of manuscripts by institutional libraries', A.N.L. Munby, *Essays and Papers*, edited . . . by N. Barker (London, Scolar Press, 1977), p.69.
- 2 S.R. Strachan, 'Starting an archives or manuscripts collection: the setting', in R.S. Hill and M.D.W. Hodder, editors, *Archives and Manuscripts: a New Zealand seminar* (Wellington, New Zealand Library Association, 1977), p.37.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*, p.40.
- 5 Donald R. Taft and Richard Robbins, *International Migrations: the immigrant in the modern world* (New York, Ronald, 1955), p.169.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p.172.
- 7 John J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: tragedy and farce in exile, 1925-1945* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p.14.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.15.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.33.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.40
- 11 *Ibid.*, p.367.
- 12 T.H. Rigby to ANU Librarian, 29 April 1976.
- 13 'Russians in Australia', *The Australian Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5 (Sydney, Grolier Society of Australia, 1977), Third edition, p.259.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 T.H. Rigby to the Editor, Edinenie (Unification), Sydney, 28 November 1977.
- 16 Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labour Movement, 1920-1955* (Canberra, ANU Press, 1975), p.287.
- 17 Frances de Groen, 'Harpur's Biographer, J.N. Rawling: background information and papers', *Notes and Furphies, Bulletin of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, No. 3 (October 1979), p.2.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p.3.
- 20 I am grateful to the Asian Studies Librarian at ANU, Miss Enid Bishop, for providing me with this survey.
- 21 Munby, 'The acquisition of manuscripts by institutional libraries', *Essays and Papers: A.N.L. Munby*, p.79.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p.81.