

of researching for and writing local history, and by making themselves responsible for that part of the archivists' training involving the treatment of private records.

Whether the requirements of Commonwealth, State and Private Owner will ever be met by one organisation, and what will be the inter-relationships within such an organisation are questions for the future. Whatever the form adopted, however, the most important consideration is that the provisions which have been made for the Commonwealth and State central Archives and which are now being framed for those of business houses should not be allowed to outstrip those made for the rest. If ever the problem is to be considered from the point of view of Australia as a whole, some immediate action must be taken on behalf of the remaining segment; otherwise the position may well deteriorate beyond redemption.

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## MANUSCRIPTS IN THE MITCHELL LIBRARY, SYDNEY

### A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR ORGANISATION

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### INTRODUCTION:

David Scott Mitchell, founder of the Mitchell Library, began collecting an Australian and Pacific library less than a century after the first white settlement. He was able to preserve many items, especially manuscripts, which might otherwise have been lost. Under his will he endowed the Library and stipulated that it should be vested in the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales on condition that it be provided with suitable space in the Library building and with trained staff. The result of these conditions is that the Mitchell Library can continue to grow. Since the Mitchell Library was opened in 1910, it has been greatly enriched by gifts from public spirited citizens, from donors abroad and from societies and Government agencies of Australia and other countries. The income from the endowment enables the Trustees to make selected purchases.

In October 1955 the collection of manuscripts contained 6,400 catalogued volumes or files, 340 sets of volumes and boxes of loose documents as yet not fully catalogued, and many thousands of single



documents in filing cabinets.

Special application must be made for permission to use manuscripts and the form provided must be completed.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION

a. SCOPE: Like other collections in the Mitchell Library, the manuscripts cover Australia and the South-West Pacific, but there is also a small amount of miscellaneous material.

The collection comprises personal papers, family papers, church and missionary papers, station papers, papers of societies, associations, institutions, companies, businesses, municipal archives, literary manuscripts, archival estrays from Australian states other than New South Wales. As a rule no further additions are made to the last named documents.

The manuscripts may be original documents, compilations, contemporary manuscripts, typescript or photographic copies, films, and may include sketches, photographs, prints, maps and printed books, pamphlets, leaflets, etc.

Some series of New South Wales Government archives are housed in the building and, until 1953 were cared for by officers in charge of manuscripts. Since 1953 there has been a separate archives staff who have charge of series in the Library and of those housed outside the centre of the city. General descriptions of series and some detailed lists are available and arrangements can be made for the issue of archives in the Mitchell Library Reading Room.

b. ARRANGEMENT: No distinction is made between primary source material and compilations, between originals and copies except in the case of film and glass copies (negative and positive), which are shelved with all other film and glass copies.

The collection is organised as follows:

Catalogued Section: a. Volumes or boxes divided into four groups. Each item has a call symbol consisting of a letter and a number. The letters used are A, B and D denoting size and C denoting a location for small or specially valuable manuscripts. The numbers in each section are running numbers and are allotted as the items are catalogued. b. Single documents or small files in envelopes in filing cabinets. The envelopes are arranged alphabetically by the first letter of the covering heading, then numerically. This file is called the A file. Call symbols run, Aa1, Aa2, Aa3 etc., Ab1, Ab2 etc.

There is a small collection of valuable items in the safe in the Librarian's room.

Uncatalogued Section: a. Volumes or boxes, each labelled "Uncat. MSS Set" with running numbers for each set and for each item within sets. b. Single documents and small files in filing cabinets in alphabetical order.



Segregated Sets: For various reasons\* some sets are not incorporated in the Catalogued Section A - D arrangement or in the Uncatalogued Section. They are: 1. Tasmanian Papers. 2. Bonwick Transcripts. 3. Municipal Councils' Archives. 4. Methodist Church Papers. 5. Beauchamp Collection.

## GUIDES

A survey of important items in the Manuscript Collection can be made by consulting the book The Mitchell Library, Sydney, Historical and Descriptive Notes, published by the Trustees in 1936, supplemented from 1937 by lists of important accessions published in Historical Studies, Melbourne University Press, 1940 to date. Lists of important accessions, including manuscripts are published in the Annual Reports of the Public Library of New South Wales.

Catalogues or lists on cards or sheets available to Readers are as follows:-

Index Catalogue of Manuscripts. On cards, c. 250 drawers. Some sets or single volumes are indexed in great detail, for others there are only one or two entries. The Index Catalogue thus gives an unbalanced view of the collection. For sets and volumes fully indexed it is a useful guide but the staff is not numerous enough to keep pace with detailed indexing and it is questionable whether it is advisable to throw all index cards into one alphabet.

Short Catalogue. On cards. This is designed as an alphabetical catalogue under authors or collectors of groups of papers with an index of subjects. It will be published. It will not cover single documents in the A File nor volumes of sketches.

Typed list of items in the safe.

Author or Main Entry List of Uncatalogued Manuscripts. On cards. which are kept in a separate alphabet as a supplement to the Index Catalogue of Manuscripts. These cards indicate lists or descriptions where they have been made.

Entries for segregated sets, including some index entries have been made for the Index Catalogue of Manuscripts or for the List of Uncatalogued Manuscripts. A list of the Bonwick Transcripts is also available and items in the Beauchamp Collection are partly catalogued in the Catalogue of Printed Books.

Supplementary Card Indices exist for: 1. The Appendix to Bigge's Report. 2. Victorian Governors' Despatches. 3. Macarthur Papers (incomplete) and Pay-Roll of the New South Wales Corps. 4. Soldiers' Diaries (First World War 1914-1919). 5. Transcripts of Documents of Australian and Pacific Interest in French Archives (temporary list). 6. New South Wales Governors' Despatches 1844-7 (temporary list).

\* Tasmanian Papers are mostly archival estrays and are usually wanted together. Bonwick Transcripts are indexed in part. Municipal Archives and Methodist Church Papers are likely to grow and one of the conditions of the latter's transfer is that they be segregated. The Beauchamp Collection of Illuminated Addresses is partly indexed.



## SORTING AND CATALOGUING OF CURRENTLY RECEIVED MATERIAL

Except for very large sets which are added to the Uncatalogued Manuscripts Sets, material received currently is sorted and catalogued.

The arrangement of collections varies according to the nature of the material, and the amount of sorting done according to its importance. Papers such as those of A.G. Stephens, which consist of letters written to him by various literary men, are best sorted primarily by the writers of the letters; papers such as those of J.D. Lang fall into groups such as emigration, Scots Church, family papers, etc., the papers of a Governor or of public men can usually be divided into private and semi-official, etc. etc. When the interest is purely biographical a chronological arrangement is usually adopted.

The principle of respect des fonds is applied to the papers of businesses, societies, etc., that is the arrangement of the papers while they were in use, as far as it can be ascertained, is preserved or restored; for this reason printed material, views, portraits and maps found among such papers and private papers are left with them if they belong there. When necessary, entries are made for the Catalogue of Printed Books, Picture Catalogue or Map Catalogue.

After sorting, the papers are either placed in folders or envelopes, loose or clamped together with brass interscrews, and boxed, or they are cased or bound, according to their importance and expected use. They are usually numbered, paged or foliated at this stage, so that their order is preserved during repair and binding, or if left loose, during use.

A typed title page, contents list, description, complete or selective index, as warranted, is made for each box or volume. Duplicates of these or more detailed descriptions are sometimes made into brochures to stand at the end of the set.

For each set, whatever its size, main entries, general subject entries and form entries are made as required. Full card indexing is not undertaken. The index or description to volumes and sets described in the preceding paragraph has been proved to be adequate for most research work. However index entries, author or subject, are sometimes made for particular volumes in a set, for important documents or even for items of information not well known or easily found in other types of material and not covered by the general entries. These index entries are always made for items relating to special Mitchell Library interests such as Sir Joseph Banks or Captain James Cook.

The headings used are those in the Catalogue of Printed Books except that for main entries subject headings are sometimes necessary and that many special headings must be used such as Account Books, Autograph Letters (used only for collections of letters of purely autograph value), Certificates of Discharge (Army), Certificates of Discharge (Merchant Marine), and sub-headings such as Gallows under places, Tickets of Leave under Convicts, etc.

In choosing the form for a personal name, unless the person can be



positively indentified and the spelling in the document proved incorrect (in which case authorities are entered on the back of the card), the spelling used is kept to avoid misleading readers, who might otherwise assume the identification proved.

The main entry usually includes a description and any lists of contents or indices are noted on this entry.

Manuscripts are always checked with the printed collections and notes are made on the cards for both Manuscripts and Printed Books Catalogues.

If the material is a copy, the location of the original is given if known.

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LIBRARY ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
ARCHIVES SECTION

Minutes of a General Meeting during the General  
Conference at Brisbane, 24th & 25th August, 1955

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1. The Archives Section met at the University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane at 11.45 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m. - 4.30 p.m. on 24th August; 11.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. - 3.30 p.m. on 25th August.
2. The following members were present: Miss P. Mander-Jones, Representative Councillor, in the Chair; Mr. I. Maclean, Hon. Secretary; Miss J.F. Arnot; Mr. C.G. Austin, representing the Historical Society of Queensland; Mr. A. Horton; Dr. F.E. Kunz; Mr. D. MacMillan; Mr. A.A. Morrison; Mr. J.L. Pring; Professor F.W. Robinson.
3. Procedure: It was decided to take business in the order in which it appeared on the Agenda.
4. Annual Report: The Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1954 had been circulated and was adopted.
5. Election of Officers for 1956:  
(a) Officers. Nominations had been received for:  
Mr. I. Maclean, President and Representative Councillor,  
Mr. H.J. Gibbney, Hon. Secretary.  
These officers were declared elected unopposed.  
Mr. K. Penny was proposed and seconded as Hon. Treasurer and was declared elected unopposed.