

The Australian Society of Archivists Survey of Salaries and Conditions of Employment

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Archivists devote great attention to the preservation and conservation of materials. Remarkably little time and thought, however, is devoted to the care of archivists themselves and to the physical and industrial conditions in which they carry out their work. Such concerns are important and they need to be researched and discussed to a much greater extent than to date. The existence of the A.S.A.'s Industrial Committee is a recognition that the Society is committed, in principle at least, to the investigation of such questions.

The A.S.A. Industrial Committee had its genesis in a motion passed at the 1977 Biennial General Meeting of the Society:

"that a member or members of the Executive Committee or Council be appointed by Council to gather information relating to wages, salaries and conditions of employment and other industrial matters to enable Council to advise member institutions and organizations on the appointment of archivists and the establishment of archival services."

At the B.G.M., the Chairman also recommended that:

"the person or persons . . . and the Training Sub-Committee, should be directed to take account of the aspect of development and promotion of career opportunities."

As a consequence of these directives, the Industrial Committee was established at the Council meeting on 30th July 1977. Peter Crush was appointed its first Convenor; Ken Smith, Michael Saclier and myself were subsequently invited to become members of the Committee.

From the discussion at the 1977 B.G.M. and from communication

between the members of the Committee, its three main objectives emerged as:

1. The collation of information about the industrial situation of archivists;
2. The establishment of national standards for the employment of archivists in Australia;
3. Co-operation with the Training Committee in the area of manpower planning and the promotion of career opportunities.

These three objectives subsequently became the basis of the Terms of Reference for the Industrial Committee. As adopted at the Council meeting on 31st March 1978, the Terms of Reference read:

1. To gather, collate and make available to the membership information about existing industrial conditions for Archivists in Australia.
2. To gather information on industrial conditions for archivists throughout the world for the use of Council and the membership.
3. To establish national standards for the employment of archivists in Australia including developing a policy on industrial democracy, and considering appropriate designation for professional and para-professional staffing of archives.
4. In conjunction with the Training Sub-Committee, to gather information about existing and potential employers of archivists in Australia with the objectives of:
 - (a) promoting career opportunities;
 - (b) endeavouring to ensure that archival positions are filled by suitably qualified persons; and
 - (c) applying manpower planning to the profession.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, the initial Industrial Committee and the second one, established after the 1979 B.G.M., with myself as Convenor, agreed that the first objective — the collation of information about existing industrial conditions for archivists in Australia — had the highest priority. I therefore prepared a draft questionnaire, intended for circulation to archival agencies, and, in January 1980, distributed it to the Committee members for comment and criticism. The advice received from the members — Ian Pearce (Archives Office of Tasmania), Sue McKemmish (Australian Archives, Victoria), John Sutterby (State Archives, South Australia), Ken Smith (City of Sydney Archives) and Mike Saclier (A.N.U. Archives), as well as from Council members — was incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

In May 1980, the A.S.A. "Survey of Salaries and Conditions of Employment" questionnaire was distributed to forty-eight archival and

related agencies. The covering letter described the purpose and the scope of the questionnaire:

“As a step towards establishing consistent conditions of employment for archivists and manuscript librarians and in order to provide potential employers with a guide in these matters, the Society is undertaking a survey of salaries and conditions of service for archivists and manuscript librarians.

The purpose of the survey is to collate information about the salaries and conditions of employment of archivists and manuscript librarians in this country, similar to surveys carried out by associations of archivists overseas, such as the Society of Archivists (U.K.), the Association of Canadian Archivists, and the Society of American Archivists . . .

Your assistance is sought in completing the attached questionnaire with respect to those of your staff who are employed as archivists or manuscript librarians.”

Return of the questionnaires was requested by 17th June 1980. Respondents were assured that “returns of individual institutions to the questionnaire will . . . be kept confidential and information gained from the survey and published will not identify institutions by name”.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five questions, some with sub-sections, about the following matters:

1. Number of staff employed, full and part-time
2. Positions occupied by staff:
 - a. Titles and descriptions.
 - b. Number of positions in each category
 - c. Essential qualifications for each category
 - d. Desirable qualifications for each category
 - e. Salary scales for each category
 - f. Incremental steps within each scale.
 - g. Award under which each category is employed.
3. Short term contract appointments
4. Employment of para-professional, clerical and technical staff.
5. Trade union covering archivists/manuscript librarians
6. Number of days in a working week
7. Number of hours in a working week
8. Normal hours of work each day
9. Flexitime
10. Annual leave
11. Sick leave
12. Compassionate leave
13. Maternity leave
14. Study leave
15. Leave without pay
16. Long Service Leave

17. Superannuation
18. Staff facilities
19. Conditions of employment for part-time employees
20. Condition of work premises
21. Protective measures
22. Staff assessment
23. Staff access to their own records
24. Management-staff consultative machinery
25. Exchange of staff with other institutions

Forty-eight Australian archival agencies (or institutions thought to have archives) received the questionnaire. Of these, twenty-six responded. While not overwhelming, the rate of response nevertheless enabled the collation of meaningful results. The co-operation of those institutions which did reply, often with useful supporting documentation, was therefore greatly appreciated.

The twenty-six institutions which responded can be sub-divided as follows:

Government archives	8
Educational institutions	12
Other	6

It should be noted that the "Government archives" category included two Regional Offices of Australian Archives and one institution which declined to submit a completed return; "Educational Institutions" included two institutions which, at the time, did not employ archivists; "Other" comprised 4 government agencies and 2 local government councils.

The remainder of this article summarises the replies and indicates some of the important findings of the survey; the detailed results are published at the conclusion of the article.

On average, government archives employed six full-time archivists per location; educational institutions, two; other archives, five. The number of persons employed as part-time archivists varied greatly; five institutions, however, did not use part-time archivists at all. This confirms the general impression that archival agencies are small in staff number and are more likely to utilise full-time rather than part-time employees. Only four institutions employed short term contract staff.

Despite the typical smallness of archival agencies, hierarchical structures and job specialisation have introduced a considerable degree of job differentiation. On average, government archives had four job titles and descriptions; educational institutions, two; other agencies, two. Differentiation is less marked the further one goes down the hierarchy; institutions with four or more job categories tended to have the majority of their staff

concentrated in these latter categories. This of course is a statistical reflection of the pronounced lack of promotional opportunities within archival agencies. Incremental progression likewise was confirmed as a feature of larger institutions.

A university degree was regarded by the majority of respondents as an essential qualification for archival positions; experience, the Diploma in Archives Administration (now the Diploma in Information Management — Archives Administration) and library qualifications were listed to a lesser extent. The Diploma headed the poll for “desirable” qualifications, followed by university degree, experience and librarianship diploma.

Two years later, the salary information was somewhat out of date but it would be surprising if its general outline was incorrect. The average starting salary for an archivist in 1980 was \$13,323, but this varied widely from \$9,738 to \$17,927. Government archives paid the lowest average starting salary: \$11,182; educational institutions, the highest, \$14,409. Altogether, the educational institutions were the most advantageous in terms of starting salary — this varied from \$10,147 to \$22,842.

The maximum salaries which archivists could attain in 1980 were hardly in a tax bracket where tax is much of a problem. The average finishing salary was \$19,814; overall, the average was slightly higher (just) in government archives (\$20,802) than in the other two categories of archival agencies. The maximum finishing salaries were reasonably similar in all three categories with the educational institutions just ahead (\$26,586) of government archives (\$25,595). Quite obviously, archival administrators are nowhere near the giddy heights of senior public servants, let alone the politicians, the captains of industry or the doctors.

Where staff other than professional archivists/manuscript librarians were employed, it was generally for the performance of clerical duties. Few institutions employed para-professional or technical staff.

Industrial coverage and protection of archivists' conditions varied: five institutions had no award or agreement covering such employees. In five institutions, archivists were covered by a librarians' award; in another five, by an award specific to that institution; and in six, by a general public service award. In two institutions, archivists said they had no trade union with which to affiliate; in two, archivists were covered by HAREA; in thirteen, by Public Service unions; in four, by unions covering a particular institution; and in two, by municipal employees' unions.

For full-time employees, all institutions reported a five day working week. Hours in the working week varied from 35 to 37½; usual work hours ranged from 8.15a.m. to 4.36 p.m. to the traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., but the majority of institutions reported that flextime schemes (of varying

complexity) were available. Annual leave ranged from 20 to 23 days; most institutions had a minimum of five days' sick leave on full pay; compassionate leave was generally available; maternity leave was variously unpaid or included a paid component (but was unavailable in one institution); study leave generally comprised a specified period of time but could be discretionary; leave without pay was invariably discretionary; long service leave and superannuation were generally available under standard conditions. Part-time rates of pay and leave entitlements were usually related to full-time rates but part-time employment did not generally entail permanent employment, superannuation or similar benefits.

Facilities available to staff included parking, lunch room, sick bay, canteen and recreation facilities. The majority of premises (the questionnaire made no distinction between office and repository areas) were air-conditioned, regularly cleaned, and contained both open plan and separate offices. Staff were generally issued with dust coats but other protective clothing or devices, including uniforms and dust masks, were sparingly distributed.

Regular staff assessment was operative only in five institutions. In most institutions, staff had access to their own personal records. Management-staff consultative mechanisms, usually of a very informal nature, existed in the majority of institutions which replied. (A respondent from a one-person archives had the perfect mechanism for his consultative needs: "I often talk to myself".) Six of the respondents exchanged staff with other institutions; seventeen indicated that they were interested but that such exchanges could prove difficult to effect.

The A.S.A. questionnaire was an initial information gathering venture: the survey itself could have been better designed, the rate of response should have been higher. Nevertheless, the results gained from it do enable us to indicate areas where the Society could play an important role without, in any way, affecting the legitimate operation of the industrial unions which cover archivists and manuscript librarians. Indeed, to date, the statistical results of the questionnaire have proved useful to a number of institutions and individuals in their respective industrial salary and conditions negotiations.

Much more can, however, be achieved and gained. In particular, the Society should consider formulating a set of guidelines about desirable salary and industrial conditions for institutions and individuals interested in establishing an archives; codifying the essential qualifications for the appointment of archivists; arousing awareness about such matters as occupational health, grievance procedures and the implications of techno-

logical change; and continuing the collation of information about the conditions which working archivists experience in this country (including the effect of current "efficiency" measures such as "razor gangs", staff freezes, management reviews and corporate planning). The expansion of career avenues for archivists and the development of opportunities for archivists within their own institutions are also of paramount importance. Such objectives, however, need to be grounded on the acknowledgement that archivists, like any other occupation, are entitled to conditions which strengthen rather than downgrade or restrict both their self-esteem and recognition of their important role in the community.

Summary of Results

No. of questionnaires circulated: 48

No. of respondents: 26

Government archives (Includes two Australian Archives Regional Offices)	8	(Nil return: 1)
Educational Institutions (Universities and CAE's)	12	(Nil return: 2)
Other (4 government agencies; 2 local government councils)	6	

1. Staff employed as archivists or manuscript librarians:

		Government	Educational	Other
Full-time:	Maximum	81+	6	27
	Minimum	3	0	0
	Average	6++	2	5+++

(+ at 13 locations; ++ per location; +++ 4 out of 6 institutions had 1 archivist; another had 0 full-time archivists)

Part-time:	Maximum	22+	8++	2+++
	Minimum	7+	Casual++	

(+5 institutions showed a 0 return; +4 institutions showed a 0 return; +++5 institutions showed a 0 return)

2.1. No. of job titles and descriptions:

Maximum	7	4	5
Minimum	2	1	1
Average	4	2	2

2.2 *Average No. of positions per job category* (from senior positions down):

1st category	1	1	1
2nd	3	1	2
3rd	5	2	3
4th	11	2	19
5th	16		1
6th	10		
7th	4		

2.3 *Essential qualifications* (a number of respondents listed more than one):

Dip.Arch.	1	5	3
Degree	5	10	2
Experience	2	4	4
Library quals.	3	1	3
HSC	1	1	1

2.4 *Desirable qualifications:*

Dip.Arch.	6	6	3
Degree	4	5	3
Experience	2	3	3
Dip.Lib.	1		1

2.5 *Salary scales* (for full-time employees):

Starting salary:

Minimum	\$9350	\$10147	\$9717
Maximum	\$12820	\$22842	\$18124
Average	\$11182	\$14409	\$14377

Finishing salary:

Minimum	\$16799	\$16079	\$15131
Maximum	\$25595	\$26586	\$20658
Average	\$20802	\$20254	\$18396

2.6 *Incremental steps* (for any of positions listed):

Maximum	12	8	9
Minimum	0	0	0

2.7 *Industrial agreement or award:*

No award		4	1
Librarians'	3	2	
Institutional award		4	3
Public service (general)	4		2

3. *No. of short-term contract positions:*

	0	3	1
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4. *Other staff:*

Para-professional:

Maximum	3	0	2
Minimum	0	0+	0
Average	1	0	0.5

(+Some employed on casual basis at times)

Clerical:

Maximum	134	4	4
Minimum	3	1+	0
Average	25	2	2

(+Some employed on casual basis; clerical assistance also may be obtained from other sources within the same institution)

Technical:

Maximum	5	0	3
Minimum	0	0	0
Average	2	0	0.5

5. *Employees' trade union:*

None		2	
HAREA		2	
Public Service	7	3	3
Union covering the institution		3	1
Municipal			2

6. *Days in the working week:*

5 days	7	9	6
2 days		1	

7. *Hours in the working week:*

14 hours		1	
35 hours		5	
36¼	1	2	1
36¾	4	1	3
37½	2	1	2

8. *Usual work hours:*

9-5		9	1
8.45-5.15	1	1	2
8.15-4.36			1
8.45-5.00	3		2
8.30-4.51	3		

9. *Flexitime:*

Available	7	5	4
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10. *Days of annual leave for full-time employees:*

23 days		1	
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20 days	7	8	6
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(Conditions under which annual leave can be expended vary greatly)

11. *Days of sick leave (on full pay):*

Minimum	5	5	5
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12. *Compassionate leave:*

Not available	1	1	
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Discretionary		2	
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Fixed no. of days	6	7	6
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13. *Maternity leave:*

Unpaid	4	2	2
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Paid leave included	3	6	4
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Not available		1	
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14. *Study leave:*

Specified hours/days	7	4	4
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Discretionary		3	2
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Not available		3	
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15. *Leave without pay:*

Discretionary	7	8	6
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16. *Long Service Leave (generally available after 10 years' service):*

Minimum entitlement (days)	60	60	60
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Maximum entitlement (days)	90	90	
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17. *Superannuation:*

Available	7	8	6
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18. *Facilities:*

Parking	7	10	4
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Lunch room	7	10	5
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Sick bay	4	7	4
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Canteen	4	10	2
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Recreation facilities	4	8	2
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19. *Part-time conditions:*

Part-time rates of pay, leave entitlements, etc. are usually related to full-time rates, entitlements but part-time employment generally does not entail permanent employment, superannuation and similar benefits.

20. *Conditions:*

Air-			
conditioned	5	7	5
Open plan	6	7	2
Separate			
offices	7	3	5
Regularly			
cleaned	7	10	6

21. *Protection:*

Uniforms	1	3	
Dust masks	2	4	3
Other			
(generally			
dust coats)	7	5	5

22. *Regular assessment:*

Operative (may			
be partial —			
only for			
certain staff			
categories)	3	1	1

23. *Staff access to their personal records:*

Available	6	5	5
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24. *Management-staff consultative mechanisms:*

Available	7	8	3
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(In general, very informal)

25. *Exchange of staff with other institutions:*

Practised	1	4	1
Interested +	5	10	2

(+ Institutions that indicated interest often also indicated that such exchanges could be difficult to effect)