

Correspondence

Archivists and Genealogists

I felt I must write and disagree with the views expressed on page 18 of the May 1983 issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* with respect to genealogical research. Whilst it is true that some family historians are indeed doing research of the type outlined in this article, it must also be appreciated that many others are involved in individual and joint activities, which are of considerable value to their fellow Australians at large.

The first point, in my view, that appears to be largely unappreciated by many members of the Archives and Library fraternity is that the increasing demand by family historians for their services is not only providing them with employment but, in some cases, creating increased employment in these professions. The Society of Australian Genealogists, for example, which has some 9,000 members and is the largest genealogical society in the world, has employed a full-time trained archivist for almost two years, and a number of part-time archivists for several years before that.

The second point that I should like to make is that many family historians publish their findings in various forms and lodge copies with libraries for future reference by, not only their own families, but local, academic, sociological, medical and various other types of historians in the future. As a society we encourage the publication of factual information and the results of family history research in this way.

Thirdly, hundreds of family historians are engaged throughout Australia in microfilming, indexing and transcription work of previously untapped historical records about Australians. These sources have previously been largely unavailable for research, and it is the genealogists who are making them available. They are *not* just in it for themselves! Perhaps the most obvious example of such a project is the transcription of Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney, the largest cemetery in the world, which contains an estimated one million burials. Already over 100 members of the Society of Australian Genealogists have transcribed some 120,000 monumental inscriptions in this cemetery, and in due course these will be indexed and published as a Bi-Centennial project.

For the above reasons, I therefore respectfully reject the assertion in your article that genealogical research does not “confer any significant benefit on the rest of society”.

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Director, Society of Australian Genealogists.