

Approaches to Administrative History in South Australia

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This paper considers some of the more significant issues involved in the preparation of administrative histories, with specific reference to public administration in South Australia. In addition, an attempt has been made to identify and evaluate the nature of some selected archival and other sources of administrative history within the South Australian context.

The study of administrative history has long been regarded as an important and integral part of archival practice. Muller, Feith and Fruin considered it 'absolutely necessary' for every archival collection to be accompanied by an accurate and complete history of the organisation from which it was derived.¹ Jenkinson also saw such background information as 'indispensable equipment' for 'elucidating the meaning of the records' of government, and for understanding the function of the organisation which produced them. For the archivist, Jenkinson believed the study of administrative history was 'a matter not of choice but of necessity' if he was to come to terms with the real nature of the records committed to his custody.² Schellenberg too, has made reference to the utility of administrative history in comprehending the contemporary significance and context of public records, noting that the 'more precise the information on their producer, the more precise is the information on their content'.³ More recently, Michael Roper has expressed the view that fundamental to the study of all records is a 'familiarity with the administration which created them or through whose hands they have passed, with the history of those administrations, their functions and their inter-relations...'.⁴

In Australia, Scott, Smith and Finlay have emphasised the need to research the administrative background of archival records in order to gain 'a full and proper understanding of the evidence and information which they contain'.⁵ In their studies they have discussed the various systems adopted by the Australian Archives for coping with the archival implications of changes in the administrative machinery and record-keeping practices of government. Their judgement is that it is vital to

establish the correct historical context of public records before any clear appreciation of their meaning and value as archives can be made.

Yet despite such compelling assertions about the relevance of administrative history to archives there have been — with the exception of Scott, Smith and Finlay's work — remarkably few studies which have concentrated specifically on examining and interpreting the methods and approaches which might be employed in the writing of administrative history.⁶ Even Jenkinson was obliged to lament that from the standpoint of the archivist, no less than from that of the historian, the study of 'the History of Administration' had in practice been 'dangerously undervalued'.⁷

1. THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

In Australia the administrative machinery of government is composed of two broad categories of public agencies — ministerial departments and non-departmental agencies. According to R.N. Spann the term 'ministerial department' is used to denote an official department of state which is a main arm of executive government.⁸ A department of state may have been established by a special act of parliament to perform a certain public function or combination of functions, though more often it is brought about by an order of the Governor in Council. As a general rule, government departments are made up of a number of sub-departments, divisions, branches, sections and in some cases a network of smaller subordinate regional offices. It is also often the case that a minister of the Crown simultaneously exercises control over the activities of several government departments; for example, following the enlargement of the ministry in South Australia in 1973, eleven ministers had responsibility for forty-six departments (thus the South Australian Attorney General at this time had a number of disparate departments grouped under his control including the Crown Law, Public Trustee, Supreme Court, Registrar General, Electoral and Attorney General's departments).

The term 'non-departmental agency' is generally taken to refer to any independent or quasi-independent administrative unit within the public service, subordinate in status to the ministerial department but usually allied or in some other way associated with its operational structure.⁹ As such, the term embraces a heterogeneous mixture of statutory corporations, boards, trusts, commissions, committees and other types of authorities and instrumentalities. The functions of such bodies are usually fairly narrow and in most cases closely defined in their title (e.g., the South Australian Film Corporation). While some agencies have had their authority decreed by legislation, many others have simply been established by a Cabinet minute or ministerial decision without formal parliamentary sanction. And whereas some agencies operate wholly within the administrative infrastructure of their controlling ministerial department

(e.g., the Vermin Control Advisory Board which is connected with the Department of Lands) others, by contrast, enjoy a considerably greater measure of administrative autonomy (e.g., the South Australian Housing Trust). Clearly there exists wide diversity in the structure and composition of these non-departmental agencies; as Davis has pointedly remarked, the number of these bodies 'is matched only by their variety and it is difficult to make any general assertions which do not need careful qualifications and exceptions'.¹⁰

Administrative Change in South Australia

The study of administrative history is in essence concerned with researching and documenting changes in the administrative structure of processes of government. Sometimes these changes are very complex and difficult to follow, having resulted from the ceaseless expansion, contraction, diversification or rationalisation of government activity, or from other less definable political conditions. These developments have, in turn, led to the creation of new agencies, the abolition or amalgamation of existing agencies, and the transfer of functions from one agency to another. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, intense political instability in South Australia brought about an extraordinarily high rate of change in the administrative arrangements of the public service; between 1868 and 1905 some thirty-four different ministries held office (some for only a few weeks), while for the same period the expanding role of the state in the social, economic and educational affairs of the community gave rise to a substantial increase in the scope of involvement and the range of responsibilities of government.¹¹ As a direct consequence of these developments, a host of new public agencies were established during these years, while many existing ones were either superseded, abolished, merged with other agencies, or otherwise re-organised. By 1890 the South Australian public service had grown to fifty-one departments together with countless other non-departmental agencies ranging in stature from major divisional sub-departments (e.g., the Land Board) to comparatively minor regional branch offices (e.g. the south-eastern branch of the Agricultural Bureau).¹²

It is clear that for over half a century after the introduction of constitutional government in South Australia in 1856, the term 'government department' appears to have been applied very loosely, indeed often quite inconsistently and inappropriately. In fact, prior to the publication of a list of official public service departments in the *South Australian Government Gazette* in June 1917 following the proclamation of a new Public Service Act in November 1916, the term 'department' seems to have had no specific meaning and was used to denote virtually any administrative entity anywhere in the public service hierarchy. Many of these so-called 'departments' were in reality very small and experienced only an ephemeral existence, while their role and functions within the

framework of government administration was not always clearly defined or adequately reflected in their title (e.g., the Agricultural and Intelligence Department, 1906-10). The Act of 1916, by establishing the practice of formally proclaiming changes which occurred at the departmental level in the *Government Gazette* to some extent eliminated many of the seeming ambiguities and anomalies of the earlier period.

After 1917 the rate and complexity of administrative change in South Australia seems to have slowed down somewhat, although during the 1930's with the general curtailment in government activity a number of agencies were in fact abolished (e.g., the Town Planning and Housing Department). By 1938 the situation seems to have become relatively stable with some fifty public service departments being placed under the direction of ten ministerial portfolios. During the prosperous postwar 'Playford era' the number of government departments rose to fifty-five in 1965; concentrated economic growth and industrial development of this period also led to the formation of a plethora of sub-departmental government agencies including many new statutory authorities of widely differing functional responsibilities from the marketing of honey to the provision of a statewide electricity service.¹³

By the mid 1970's the number of departments had declined to forty-nine groups under the control of eleven ministers of state and under twenty-two portfolios. Even so, the remarkable growth in the number of government departments in South Australia over the preceding three decades — the number was considerably higher than in any other Australian state or in the Commonwealth Government — was a principal reason for the establishment in May 1973 of a Committee of Inquiry into the Public Service of South Australia (the Corbett committee) which duly recommended an extensive pruning and re-grouping of departments and their functions in order to 'improve the effectiveness, economy and efficiency of the ... machinery of Government'.¹⁴ As at December 1983, the South Australian public service comprised thirty-three departments under the control of thirteen ministers of state.

On the other hand, there has been no concomitant reduction in the number or variety of the non-departmental agencies and statutory corporations in South Australia. On the contrary, despite some worthy attempts at rationalisation and redistribution of functional activities, the number of these agencies seems to have burgeoned as a consequence of the expansion of government involvement in the tertiary and local manufacturing sectors under the Dunstan Labor administration together with a marked increase in the scope of government enterprise through the establishment of various statutory corporations.¹⁵ By 1982 there were well over three hundred of these non-departmental administrative agencies connected with the different portfolios, consisting mainly of a wide assortment of statutory trusts, boards, commissions and other types of

similar authorities, as well as a varied collection of semi-independent judicial bodies.

Patterns of Administrative Change

In essence there are two levels at which administrative change can occur:

(i) Changes at the agency level

In attempting to identify and interpret the pattern of change in the administrative structure of a particular government department or related agency it is important to find out certain information about the nature of that organisation such as when and for how long it continued to operate, its correct title, its status and role within the public service hierarchy, whether it was associated with any supervising or subordinate offices, whether it experienced any significant gain or loss of functions during its existence, and whether any predecessor or successor agencies were responsible for performing the same or closely related functions.

It is, of course, not at all unusual to find that a government agency has in fact changed its name during its period of existence (sometimes more than once). Generally, this has tended to happen whenever an agency has either gained or lost specific functional responsibilities (as was the case with the South Australian Fisheries Department which in 1966 assumed the functions of the Game Section of the Department of the Minister of Industry to become the Fisheries and Game Department). On other occasions, though, an administrative agency has simply had its title changed without this involving any major gain or loss of functions — usually as a consequence of political change (as happened in South Australia in 1945 when the Office of the Commissioner of Public Works had its title changed to that of Minister of Works Department).

A change of name can also occur when an agency's administrative status or position within the public service hierarchy is altered. An example of a public agency which was promoted in status was the State Tourist Bureau which opened in Adelaide in 1908 as a subordinate office of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration, and which two years later became the Intelligence and Tourist Bureau Department. Conversely, an example of a public agency which was 'downgraded' in administrative status was the Department of the Public Service Commissioner which in 1931 was amalgamated with the Department of Industry; this amalgamation was effected, it seems, mainly because the two departments were considered to 'have so much in common that ... amalgamation was desirable to prevent overlapping of functions and permit uniformity of administration'.¹⁶

It is also quite common for a non-departmental government agency to have come under the administrative direction of several different controlling or supervising departments during its operational lifetime. Thus the South Australian Marine Board, which was established in 1860,

was until 1904 under the control of the Treasurer's Department, after which it was transferred to the Office of the Commissioner of Public Works. In 1914 the Marine Board was amalgamated with the Harbors Board, though the new administrative unit continued to be responsible to the Commissioner of Public Works until 1916 when it was incorporated in the newly established Department of the Minister of Marine. With the promulgation of an amended Marine Board and Navigation Act in 1924, however, the powers and functions formerly exercised by the Board were vested in a new authority — the South Australian Harbors Board — and the Marine Board was thereby abolished.

(ii) Changes at the functional level

At the functional level it is similarly often the case that control of a particular public function can be vested in several different government agencies over a relatively short period of time. As an instance of this, control over the provision of public education in South Australia between 1874 and 1892 was administered by eight successive ministerial offices, being at various times incorporated in the offices of the ministers responsible for the administration of Justice (1874-75, 1884-85), Agriculture (1875-76, 1876-77), and the Northern Territory (1889-92).

Moreover, there have been occasions when the functional responsibilities of an agency have been split between two or more successor agencies. One example of this in South Australia was the re-organisation in 1917 of the departments then under the supervision of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration, which effectively ended the longstanding nexus between the administration of lands and immigration by re-allocating these functions to two separate agencies; thenceforth, responsibility for lands was given to the newly created Lands and Surveys Department, while control of immigration affairs was transferred to the Immigration, Publicity and Tourist Bureau Department.¹⁷

Of course, this process can also be reversed — that is, the functions undertaken by two or more agencies can be taken over by a single existing agency or transferred to a completely new agency. Such a change occurred in 1972 when the Premier's Department and the Immigration, Publicity and Tourist Bureau were amalgamated to form the Department of the Premier and of Development.

Archives and Administrative Change

The implications for the archivist of changes in the administrative structure of government departments and their satellite agencies have been discussed at some length by Scott, Smith and Finlay: extension, contraction, transmission, splitting and creation of new record-keeping systems are some of the effects of administrative change which they have considered.¹⁸ In South Australia, as elsewhere, the rule that records follow

administrative functions has generally been adhered to; that is to say, whenever a government department or agency has been abolished, amalgamated with another administrative entity, or experienced some other form of major organisational change, its records have in almost every instance been transferred along with its functions to another agency. Where the frequency of administrative change has been exceptionally high — as in the case of the administration of land policy in South Australia which during the nineteenth century passed through the control of a succession of public agencies — the problem of trying to establish the correct administrative and functional context of a particular class or series of records can prove quite formidable.

To cope with the dynamics of administrative change and the effect of this on the provenance of official records, archivists have found it helpful to apply a number of key concepts which recognise the existence of several distinct types of government agencies connected with the exercise of certain functions and hence with the production of a related set of administrative records.¹⁹ In effect, these concepts enable the original administrative context of the records to be determined more accurately, thereby facilitating a more meaningful understanding of their value as archives; they may be briefly outlined as follows:

- (i) **Creating agency**, i.e., a public agency which during the conduct of its activities is independently responsible for creating or accumulating its own series or collection of records.
- (ii) **Controlling agency**, i.e., a public agency which exercises administrative control or direction over the record creating agency (e.g., the South Australian Fisheries and Game Department, 1919-64, had as its controlling agency the Office of the Minister of Industry from 1919 to 1925).
- (iii) **Controlled agency**, i.e., a public agency over which the record creating agency exercises administrative control (e.g., the Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee was a controlled agency of the Fisheries and Game Department from 1952-64).
- (iv) **Predecessor agency**, i.e., a public agency from which the record creating agency inherited its administrative functions and records (e.g., the functions of the Fisheries and Game Department were formerly administered by the Fisheries Department, 1912-19).
- (v) **Successor agency**, i.e., a public agency which inherits the functions (and therefore the records) of the record creating agency (e.g., the Department of Fisheries and Fauna Conservation took over the functions — and thereby inherited the records — of the Fisheries and Game Department in 1965).
- (vi) **Transferring agency**, i.e., a public agency which transfers the records of the creating agency to archival custody (this may be either the

creating agency itself or a successor agency, e.g., the records of the Fisheries and Game Department were transferred to the South Australian Archives by the Fisheries Department in 1982).

The concept of the record creating agency and its organic inter-relationships with these associated agencies now forms the basis for all administrative history research carried out at the South Australian Archives. As will be discussed more fully later, this involves the systematic compilation of data according to a carefully prescribed format designed to accurately register information about the functional role, administrative structure and historical character of current and former State Government agencies.

2. SOURCES OF ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY

The list of sources presented here does not purport to be exhaustive, especially so far as the secondary published literature is concerned; however it is intended to provide an overview and evaluation of the type of material available for the study of administrative history in South Australia.

Archival and Unpublished Sources

(i) *Agency administrative history files*

These are being compiled progressively by the staff of the South Australian Archives in an attempt to document as fully as possible administrative change in the South Australian government service (including local government). The files are arranged alphabetically by title of the respective agency and have been built up using a wide range of source material including official guides and reports, Public Service Board administrative chronicles (see below), and the *Government Gazette* which has been comprehensively surveyed with relevant pages photocopied and placed in the appropriate agency's file. To date, the *Gazette* has been consulted back to 1904, though the files on some agencies contain material which relates to the pre-1900 period (e.g., the Office of the Commissioner of Railways). As well, detailed organisational structure charts are being prepared for each agency in order to provide a quick guide to that body's administrative structure. Files have now been created for some three hundred government agencies, chiefly those which have existed since 1900. Additional information is constantly being integrated into the system and eventually it should be possible to document and monitor all major changes which have occurred in the administrative title, structure and functions of a public agency.

(ii) *GRG series lists*

Many of the one hundred and fifty odd GRG (Government Record Group) series lists prepared by the South Australian Archives are prefaced by brief introductory administrative history notes (more elaborate examples being Public Buildings Department and Premier's Department).

Unfortunately, some conspicuous gaps occur where no administrative histories have yet been attempted. (e.g., the State Treasury Department), while many of the histories which do exist seem to focus too heavily on the agency which was responsible for transferring the records to the Archives which, of course, may not necessarily have been the same authority that created them. Even so, despite some unevenness and incompleteness in coverage, the GRG histories constitute an invaluable reference on which to base further, more profound research.²⁰

(iii) *GRS agency registration sheets*

Unlike the Record Group system of archival arrangement which does not always adequately reflect administrative changes at the agency level, the GRS (Government Record Series) system which has recently been adopted by the South Australian Archives involves the preparation of detailed administrative histories of all government record creating agencies. Information about an agency is systematically recorded and documented on agency registration sheets according to a prescribed format which consists of a concise account of how and by what legal authority the agency came into existence, the purpose for which it was created, its organisation, functions, relevant legislation, the titles of any supervising or subordinate agencies, and the titles and date ranges of any functionally related agencies which might have either preceded or succeeded it. Thus far about one hundred and thirty agencies have been fully registered, drawing upon most of the sources discussed in this paper.

(iv) *Archival records*

Often the records of an agency are the most reliable means of finding out about that agency's administrative history; agency letterheads, internal memoranda, circulars, reports and files (referred to in the South Australian Public Service as 'dockets') can all prove useful in following developments in regard to an agency's functional and structural disposition. The records of key government departments — such as the Chief Secretary's Office, the Department of the Public Service Board, or the Premier's Department — which have performed the role of a central co-ordinating agency for all administrative activity, can very often be used to advantage in illuminating changes in the machinery of government.

The South Australian Archives does in fact hold an up-to-date 'file title' index arranged alphabetically by the title of the agency as it appears on the agency's own docket cover. As each entry in the index records details of the agency's correct title, date range of the title, and the titles of any predecessor or successor agencies, it constitutes an effective short-hand guide to the administrative evolution of the public service in South Australia.

(v) *Public Service documents*

As the main co-ordinating and controlling agency within the government bureaucracy, the State Public Service Board is concerned with

monitoring and recording changes in the administrative structure of agencies. The South Australian Archives holds some useful records of the Board which can help in compiling administrative histories (e.g., papers relating to the Royal Commission on the Public Service in South Australia, 1921-28 (GRG24/163/3) contain a comprehensive analysis of the structure of several major government departments at that time).

The Board's predecessor agency, the Public Service Commissioner's Department, 1916-68, regularly issued circulars which often included information about current administrative practices (GRG23/86) and these were continued by the Board after 1968 in the form of its 'Weekly Notices' circulated to all government departments (GRG56/55). Since 1975 the Board has also published its own monthly *Bulletin* (GRG56/54), and since 1979, the newsletter *Equity* (GRG56/64), both of which serve as a chronicle for publicising selected administrative developments within the State Public Service (e.g., the establishment of the State Data Processing Board in November 1980).²¹

The South Australian Archives also holds a copy of the 'Guide to Administrative Developments' prepared and regularly updated by the Board since 1968 for its own benefit in keeping track of administrative changes in the Public Service. The guide shows in tabular form the creation, abolition, amalgamation or any other important variation in the standing of an agency. Each entry also identifies the Public Service Board docket in which the change is recorded (e.g., docket reference 450/75 refers to the decision to amalgamate the Department of Legal Services with the Premier's Department in 1976).

Mention might also be made here of the *Public Service Review*, published quarterly by the South Australian Public Service Association since 1892, which can sometimes prove valuable in explaining administrative changes; between January 1954 and March 1957 the *Review* published a series of short descriptive articles about the origins and activities of some thirty State Government agencies (copies of these are held by the South Australian Archives in the series 'Notes on Government Departments' GRG56/35).

(vi) *Unpublished agency reports and histories*

Agency in-house working reports and reviews can often give some insight into the internal organisation and functions of the agency concerned (e.g., the 1981 'Report of the Management Review of the Department of Correctional Services' commissioned by the Public Service Board). Regrettably, documents such as these are not always available for public perusal, though where this has been possible copies have been acquired by the South Australian Archives and placed in the relevant agency's administrative history file.

Unpublished agency histories also invariably contain much pertinent information, some of it not always obtainable from other sources (for

instance, the collection of historical notes contained among the records of the Minister of Works Department GRG23/127). Sometimes agency prepared histories are accompanied by collections of newspaper cuttings which can also be helpful in following past developments in that agency's structure (e.g., the volume of press cuttings relating to the activities of the Town Planning Department from 1921 to 1928 GRG73/18).

(vii) *University theses*

In the case of South Australia, there appear to be precious few theses dealing specifically with the history of government administrative practices. There are, however, two studies which touch upon the subject — K. O'Donoghue's 'The Constitutional and Administrative Development of South Australia from Responsible Government to the Strangways Act of 1868' discusses the establishment and early political history of government institutions in South Australia, while G.N. Hawker 'The Development of the South Australian Civil Service 1886-1916' examines the organisation and growth of new public agencies created to deal with the expansion of government activity during the late nineteenth century.²²

Published sources

(i) *Government Gazettes*

These contain references to official appointments, regulations, proclamations and notices relating to the day to day administration of the Public Service. This is not to say though, that all changes in the administrative infrastructure of all government agencies are automatically recorded in the *Gazette*. While the practice of proclaiming new departments in the *Gazette* was generally adopted after 1916, the same cannot be said to have been applied to the non-departmental agencies where inconsistencies and omissions concerning their creation and variations in their administrative status seem to be all too prevalent.

(ii) *Blue Books*

The official Public Service Lists — commonly referred to before 1917 as the government *Blue Books* — were published as Parliamentary Paper No. 2 from 1866. They are perhaps the single most comprehensive guide to the composition of the South Australian public administration at any one time, providing detailed listings of the names and positions held by officers of the Public Service in each of the ministerial departments and their component agencies. After 1970, however, the lists were not regularly included in the published volumes of Parliamentary Papers, while even before then some lists only contained the names of public servants without giving any detailed breakdown of the agencies in which they were employed.

Moreover, a certain measure of caution needs to be exercised when consulting the *Blue Books* as there are instances where the title of an agency does not accord with that shown elsewhere (e.g., the *Blue Book* for

1878 contains reference to the 'Department of the Minister of Agriculture and Education', whereas the correspondence files of the same agency are titled 'Office of the Minister of Agriculture and Education'). In cases where this type of discrepancy appears to exist, the file title should normally be regarded as the more authoritative source.

(iii) *Public Service Commissioner's reports*

Pursuant to the South Australian Public Service Act of 1916, the Public Service Commissioner was required to present to Parliament each year a report on the condition and efficiency of the Public Service in which he was 'to set forth any changes and measures ... for improving the working of the Service'. From 1921 to 1928 the Commissioner's report was published as Parliamentary Paper No. 5 and thereafter as Paper No. 8. For the most part, these reports indicate major changes in the structure of departments and the larger statutory authorities. The report for 1921 is notable in that it lists all departments created and abolished since the passage of the 1916 Act.

(iv) *Agency annual reports*

The annual reports of public agencies, together with the reports of any special official committees of enquiry, can generally throw some light on the operational structure and functions of these bodies (to cite just one example, the Report of the South Australian Health Commission, 1980-81, published as Parliamentary Paper No. 121 of 1981, gives a composite overview of the organisation and operations of the Commission since its inception in 1977). Although nearly all government agencies are required to prepare annual reports of their activities, only a small selection of these are printed as Parliamentary Papers; copies of reports not included in Parliamentary Papers can usually be obtained from the relevant agency or from the State Government Information Centre.²³

The Report of the Auditor-General, normally published as Parliamentary Paper No. 4 each year, can be useful in that it includes a brief account of the main functions and administration of each agency shown in the report (some 250 agencies were covered in the 1980-81 report).

The Annual Estimates of Government Expenditure, published annually by the State Treasury from 1851 (usually as Parliamentary Paper No. 3), can also be of limited use in determining where an agency stands in relation to a controlling department or ministerial portfolio.

(v) *Official statutes*

The published volumes of Acts of Parliament, which date back to 1837, can be used to document the establishment and subsequent changes in the administration of some agencies. To illustrate this, the Town Planning and Development Act No. 1452 of 1920 created the Town Planning Department of the Office of the Commissioner of Crown Lands and Immigration, defining the nature and extent of its powers and

responsibilities; later this same department was abolished by another piece of legislation — the Town Planning Act No. 1945 of 1929 — and its functions were transferred to the Department of the Registrar General of Deeds.

(vi) *Yearbooks and directories*

Published annually since 1964, the official government *Yearbooks* contain some basic information about the current organisation and functions of the principal departments of state, sometimes prefaced by a brief account of their historical emergence (thus the entry on public health in the 1968 *Yearbook* comprises an informative survey of the administration of the State's health services since the Health Act of 1873).

From 1865 the Sands and McDougall *Directory of South Australia* (first known as the *Adelaide Almanac and Directory*) included an extensive 'Government and Official' section which listed all government agencies and public instrumentalities under the control of the various ministerial portfolios. In general, these lists are nowhere near as comprehensive or accurate as the Civil Lists printed in the *Blue Books*. They do, however, indicate where an agency has been instituted by a special parliamentary statute. After 1942 the official section of the *Directory* was substantially reduced in size and content, thus limiting its value as a source of administrative history.

More recently, a South Australian *Government Services Directory* (1981) has been compiled and this lists all government departments and statutory authorities under the minister whose portfolios cover their activities. At the front of the directory is a comprehensive index based on organisation, functions and services; each entry provides detailed information about the agency's objectives, divisions, services, office locations and legislation administered by the agency. Similarly, the South Australian section of the *Australian Governments Directory* (International Public Relations, Melbourne, 1983) offers a short guide to the chief functions, permanent heads, major controlled agencies and controlling portfolios of the various State Government departments. A State Government section which lists the major public agencies has also been included in the Adelaide Telephone Directory since 1918.

(vii) *Agency guides and manuals*

Many government agencies have from time to time produced their own operational handbooks and procedural manuals, and in most instances these can be of assistance in understanding how and in what capacity these organisations carry out their responsibilities. One early example of this is the S.A. *Marine Board Handbook*, published in 1894, which specifies the daily duties and other business of the Board's officers in exercising that agency's authority; a more recent example is the *Manual of the Administrative History of the Lands Department* (1948), which contains a notable outline of the historical development of that department together

with a description of its contemporary administrative practices.²⁴

(viii) *Official histories*

Essentially, there are two categories of official or institutional histories. First, there are the short commemorative agency-produced works such as the Electricity Trust of South Australia's *Jubilee of Public Electricity Supply*, published by that organisation in 1949. While the quality of such works can vary greatly, they nevertheless invariably shed some light on certain aspects of the agency's administrative background.

Secondly, there are the commissioned 'professional' histories which generally provide a scholarly and authoritative account of the sponsoring agency's administrative development (e.g., Colin Thiele's narrative outline of the history of the South Australian Education Department from 1875, *Grains of Mustard Seed*, published under the auspices of the department in 1975).

(ix) *Other published works*

Some of the more general earlier works need to be treated with some caution since they can be misleading or oversimplified in their treatment of the subject. An exception is H.T. Burgess' *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, published in Adelaide in 1907, which contains a useful description of the foundation and activities of many of the more prominent public agencies existing in South Australia at the turn of the century.

There are, of course, a number of more recent general reference works which can be worthwhile consulting; Dean Jaensch's *The Government of South Australia* (University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1977), and Colin Hughes and B.D. Graham's *Handbook of Australian Government and Portfolios 1890-1964* (A.N.U. Press, Canberra, 1968) are two prime examples of this type of reference.

Then there are the more specific non-official monographs, most of which can be of major use in preparing administrative histories: for example, R.J. Jennings' *W.A. Webb, South Australian Railway Commissioner, 1922-30* (Nesfield Press, Adelaide, 1973) presents a detailed assessment of a formative period in the administration of the State's Railways Department. Also included here should be the shorter specialised articles relating to aspects of the history of public administration in South Australia (two purposeful studies being A.S. Martin's 'The Land Board of South Australia: Its History, Functions and Responsibilities', *Valuer*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, January 1956, pp 27-30; and G.L. Fischer's 'A Note on the South Australian Chief Secretary's Office', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. III, No. 7, November 1968, pp 13-17).²⁵

Finally, mention needs to be made of the *Australian Journal of Public Administration* which for many years has served as a scholarly forum for examining issues relating to the administration of government services throughout Australia (e.g., the recent article on the changing environment

of transport administration by Derek Scafton, 'New Demands on Transport Administration in South Australia', Vol. XLIII, No. 1, March 1984, pp 44-57). In addition, this journal has for some years included a periodic review of administrative developments at the state level; these 'Administrative Chronicles' as they are called, indicate and analyse current legislative and other changes responsible for reforming and re-shaping the structure, organisation and practices within the central administration.

There is therefore a sizeable array of source material relevant to the study of administrative history in South Australia. As we have seen, much has already been done by archivists towards identifying and interpreting this material and in actively producing meaningful administrative histories of government record-keeping agencies. Clearly, many gaps remain and there is ample scope for further work. It is significant, though, that in South Australia, at least, the most notable advances in the field of administrative history have been made by archivists; whereas the study of administrative history now seems to hold little serious appeal for the local historians, on the other hand it promises to become a principal focus of interest for archivists seeking to develop a clearer appreciation of the nature and value of the public records committed to their custody.

FOOTNOTES

1. S. Muller, J.A. Feith and R. Fruin, *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, New York, Wilson, 1940, p.147.
2. Hilary Jenkinson, *The English Archivist: a new profession*, London, 1948, p.23; and 'Roots', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 2, No. 4, October 1961, pp.131-38.
3. T.R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives*, New York, 1965, p.134.
4. Michael Roper, 'Modern departmental records and the Record Office', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 4, No. 5, April 1972, p.410.
5. See P.J. Scott, C.D. Smith and G. Finlay, 'Archives and Administrative Change. Some Methods and Approaches', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Part I, Vol. 7, No. 3, August 1978, pp.115-27; Part II, Vol. 7, No. 4, April 1979, pp.151-65; Part III, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 1980, pp.41-54; and Part IV, Vol. 8, No. 2, December 1980, pp.51-69.
6. This is not to say, however, that interest in administrative history in Australia has been muted. In fact, there have been two recent national conferences devoted solely to administrative history themes (the first was held at Macquarie University in 1978 and the second at the Australian National University in November 1983). Almost without exception, though, the papers presented at these conferences were primarily concerned with assessing the performance of particular administrators or institutions and did not deal with the broader methodological or conceptual issues inherent in the study of administrative history generally.
7. H. Jenkinson, 'Archives and the Science and Study of Diplomatic' *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol. 1, No. 6, October 1958, p.209. Works dealing specifically with the study of administrative history in Australia are few and far between; among the most useful are S.R. Parker, *Public Administration in Australia*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1959; R.L. Wettenhall, 'History and Public Administration', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 16, No. 3, December 1968, pp.56-117;

- and L.J. Hume, 'Administrative History', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 39, No. 3, September 1980, pp.422-36.
8. R.N. Spann, *Government Administration in Australia*, Sydney, George Allen and Unwin, 1979, p.49.
 9. Ibid. See also T.M. Kewley, 'The Statutory Corporation', in Spann, *Public Administration in Australia*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1959, pp.102-25.
 10. S.R. Davis, *The Government of the Australian States*, London, Longmans, 1960, p.395.
 11. As Hume has observed, during this period 'the kinds and volume of services that governments were expected to provide grew substantially ... The administration of existing functions, such as police, postal services, lands administration and education had to be undertaken more extensively and became more complex'. *Op. cit.*, p.425.
 12. See G.N. Hawker, 'An Investigation of the Civil Service: The South Australian Royal Commission of 1888-1889', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 55, No. 1, June 1979, pp.46-58.
 13. For details of these developments see Neal Blewett and Dean Jaensch, *Playford to Dunstan. The Politics of Transition*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1971.
 14. Quoted in R.F.I. Smith and Patrick Weller (eds), *Public Service Inquiries in Australia*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p.71.
 15. For details see Andrew Parkin and Allan Patience (eds), *The Dunstan Decade*, Melbourne, Cheshire, 1981.
 16. South Australia Parliamentary Paper, No. 5, 1981.
 17. See B.S. Baldwin, 'The Administration of Public Lands and Survey in South Australia', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1973, pp.34-7.
 18. Scott, Smith and Finlay, *op. cit.*, especially Part 2.
 19. Scott defines an administrative agency from the viewpoint of the archivist as being any 'part of an organisation that has its own independent record keeping system'. Scott, 'The Record Group Concept: A Case for Abandonment', *American Archivist*, Vol. 29, No. 4, October 1966, p.501.
 20. Relevant sections of these histories have also been incorporated in the Archives' agency administrative history files.
 21. Unfortunately there is no consolidated index to these P.S.B. references.
 22. A copy of the Hawker thesis is held by the S.A. Archives (D4957T).
 23. A consolidated index to the S.A. Parliamentary Papers exists to 1961; see also Elmar Zalums, *Bibliography of South Australian Royal Commissions, Select Committees of Parliament and Boards of Enquiry 1857-1970*, Adelaide, Flinders University, 1972.
 24. The S.A. Archives holds copies of these and several other agency manuals (e.g., guide to the *Functions of the Department of Labour and Industry* (GRG56/35)).
 25. See also 'Bibliography of Australian Public Administrative History', *Public Administration*, Sydney, Vol. 23, No. 2, June 1964, pp.181-82. Regrettably, this has not been updated.