

Book Reviews

Edited by Paul Brunton

Future Trends: *Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists*. Adelaide 20-23rd May 1983, A.S.A., 1984

The overall theme of the conference was "Future Trends". The thirteen papers printed here (two papers were not included) considered the future of the ASA, the future trends in historical research, the type of records we will receive in the future and how future technology will help us cope, how we will manage our future, the problems of terminology to overcome in the future and that archival biennial perennial, how to decide future priorities and resource allocation.

The exception to pondering an archival future was, strangely enough, the opening address delivered by the Hon. Mr Justice Robin Millhouse. He chose rather to look back to his own experience with archives and growing awareness of their value. Although Mr Justice Millhouse confesses no particular knowledge of archives, a legal training has given him an idea of their value as evidence — "what has gone to the Archives was not made for future reference. They have been working documents. They are not self-conscious attempts to influence the view of me in the future."

The picture would be fuller if only his family papers had survived the ravages of white ants, and he goes on to ponder if this was the fate of the papers of Sir Thomas Playford. The reference to Playford Family papers is poignant as during the "Ash Wednesday" fires of 1983, a unique collection of "Playfordiana" went up in smoke in the home of Dr John Playford in the Adelaide Hills. If only Dr Playford had read Millhouse's paper. "All we still have is worth keeping as a quarry for historical research. Where better than in proper archives?"

Professor Eric Richards from Flinders University took on the role of futurologist to give us some insight into historical research trends. He started by painting a gloomy picture of academic historical research. The decline in funding had meant fewer new appointments, the average age of university staff rising and a growing number of Ph.D graduates unable to continue an academic career. The lack of stimulus of new ideas, new methods and new research threaten heavy intellectual costs to historical research. "History at the universities is a declining cottage industry."

Outside the universities, however, history is booming and the public demand for nostalgia, family history, genealogy, local history and pictorial

history is insatiable. The cassette recorder and the video system will ensure that no old person goes untaped. The only bright note in all this for Professor Richards is the growth of public history and televisual history which augurs well for

employment for history graduates ... It may also help, eventually, to raise the standard of local council history, business history, and so on. It may help further to de-sentimentalise the public past, to divert attention from the curiosity value of history towards a better informed response to historical change in the community.

Professor Richards feels that the legacy of the Bicentennial will be a more comparative approach to the history of Australian States, more Aboriginal history, more research on immigration and more systematic collection of statistical, biographical and nominal data. Increasingly history would become more socially scientific and further influenced by the methods of other disciplines such as anthropology. There would be more "history from below" and new areas of interest would include old age, children, unemployment, war and diplomacy.

At this stage of the catalogue I decided that archivists faced a future of more demands for more of everything.

Somehow decisions on appraisal and the future planning of finding aids were going to be no easier. My suspicions were confirmed when Professor Richards ended somewhat apologetically: "I find the whole field lacking in unity and impossibly heterogeneous and unrepentantly volatile ... I really cannot imagine how you predict what historians will want next."

Two features distinguished this conference in Adelaide: discussion groups after some of the papers and a debate. I remember at the conference that there never seemed enough time for discussion (the groups were large) but in reading the discussion group reports I realise that the time restrictions obviously kept us to the point. Although individual group discussions often went off on different tacks the comments on the papers are always relevant and insightful.

The debate topic was "The Growth of Interest in Genealogy has Improved the Lot of Archives in Australia". Only the first two papers have been printed here as the second speeches were spontaneous and not recorded. Christine Yeats, speaking in favour, argued that an effective force interested in archives had been created in the community. This increased awareness of the existence of archives had led to raising the status of archives (no longer the poor relations of libraries). What had followed was an increase in resources and employment opportunities for archivists.

Marjorie Morgan, speaking against, enumerated the many problems genealogists have caused archivists such as the amount of time and money required to deal with genealogical inquiries and consequent lack of resources for other archival functions and the deterioration of records due

to frequent handling. The result is a demoralised staff and frustrated users. Although a wave of sympathy swept the audience as Ms Morgan listed these woes, Mathew Mitchell, President of the South Australian Debating Association, awarded the debate to the Government. The debate was a most entertaining interlude and, even better, provided a precise list of the advantages and disadvantages of genealogy for archivists either to capitalise on or to overcome in future planning of archival activities.

Colin Pitson had been asked by the organisers of the conference to present a paper that would “stimulate thought and discussion in this important and controversial matter” and in this he was an outstanding success. In what was easily the most hotly debated paper of the conference Mr Pitson discussed the factors to be considered when deciding the level of staff specialisation or generalisation. Mr Pitson favours more generalist staff and especially favours the employment of generalists (in this case non-archivists) to manage an archives. The paper was quite general in terms as Mr Pitson hoped that his paper could be applied to other institutions. However, in discussion his paper was interpreted in the light of administrative changes at Australian Archives. I suspect that staff specialisation is not a great issue in other archival institutions where only professional archivists are employed and there is general agreement that staff rotation is beneficial and that it is necessary for archivists to develop management skills.

The main problem of Mr Pitson’s paper was one of definition. It was hard to see why someone who specialises in archives is a specialist while someone who specialises in management is a generalist. Also, as was pointed out in discussion,

the view of an archivist as a generalist or as a specialist was dependant upon the external perception of an archivist’s role — a point illustrated by the example of a single archivist working within a structure whose corporate goal was quite distinct from archives — therefore the archivist is a specialist within the corporate structure; but that sole archivist performs all skills of an archivist from transfer to reference to disposal; therefore, the archivist is a generalist within the individual archives; however, the archivist may be exercising those skills within an organisation creating specific types of records — e.g. a university — and therefore the archivist might be called a specialist within the profession.

The image of the archivist obviously troubles Mr Pitson but it is debatable whether employing non-archivists or changing “Archivist” to “Records Services Officer” will provide archivists with the resources they require. Unlike his audience Mr Pitson did not choose to be an archivist. For those of us who did, the problem is not to reassure the administrators by just looking and sounding familiar but to reassure by persuading the administrators of the nature and value of all archival activities.

The problem of words and their definitions was also aired in the papers on terminology by Pat Quinn, Ken Smith and Nancy Lutton. In an attempt

to define such basic terms as "item", "series", "register", "file", "archives", "provenance" and "record group" a wealth of diverse experience between archivists past and present, between Australian and overseas archivists and amongst Australian archivists themselves was revealed. The search for a standardised terminology is not new and whether the difference in practice and experience can overcome this remains to be seen. Perhaps the increased use of computers with their demand for consistency will enforce a standardised terminology. Or perhaps it will create new definitions altogether?

No conference on future trends would be complete without sessions on technology. Paul Mullins' paper provided a cost-benefit analysis of microfilming one's entire collection as opposed to storage in a purpose-built building. Microfilming turns out to be an expensive process useful only in the preservation of heavily used records, security and publication. The paper provided a ready answer to that oft-asked question: "Why don't you microfilm and throw out all this paper?" Unfortunately the analysis does not cover the cost of access and retrieval, the importance of which is indicated in the paper of Alan Tyson from the South Australian Department of Lands.

In his paper he mentions that the five million documents in the Land Title Office were being microfilmed to alleviate the problem of storage and retrieval. The possibility of destroying the originals had been raised. Perhaps Mr Mullins and Mr Tyson could get together? Mr Tyson also described how the documentation of the activities in his department was slowly but surely being automated and suggested a need for greater consultation between archivists and computer specialists.

This consultation is perhaps being demonstrated in Australian Archives. Ed Dobson's paper "Electronic Devices as Tools of the Archives" (presented by Pat Ward) gave a wonderfully clear and precise account of the advantages and problems of automating an archives. However, the main message was that to automate an archives you really need commitment, especially, it seems, commitment of resources. Unfortunately, lack of funds will stop the rest of us from following Australian Archives' grand example.

The conference ended with an old favourite that has appeared at each conference in various guises: "Priorities and Allocation of Resources". Decisions in these matters are dependent on the responsibilities of the archives and this conference only confirmed the conclusions of the previous conference in Melbourne where representatives from government, private and collecting archives demonstrated that responsibilities were a balancing act between duty to employers, duty to researchers and duty to professional integrity with the aims of the employing organisation dictating where the emphasis should lie. John Cross confirmed that the demand for accountability was not just a passing phase

and that archives were going to have to manage with less. Unfortunately he could not offer a simple, infallible solution but did make some suggestions and stressed a need for archival measurement. It was a good topic to end with as all the issues of the previous papers and discussions were again aired — research, genealogy, management and automation — either as part of the problem or part of a possible solution.

This brief account unfortunately cannot do justice to the wealth of information and food for thought that the conference papers provided. The papers gave us an insight into the future demands archivists will face and the future skills and new knowledge that archivists must develop. The future for archivists is, like our present, challenging.

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Winston Maiké and Leo J. Ansell *The small archive: a handbook for church, order and school archivists and historical societies*. Toowoomba, Church Archivists' Society, 1984. P.O. Box 756, Toowoomba, Qld. 4350.

David B. Gracy, II *An introduction to archives and manuscripts*, New York, Special Libraries Association, 1981.

There are very few archivists who can say that they have been around at a time when something new is introduced into the musty cellars of archival science.

However, a new archival term has been invented by the authors of *The small archive* 'specially for this book'. The term is 'Soothing'. 'Soothing' is the process the 'Small Archivist' (or a big one for that matter) should undertake as one of the initial steps when a group of records is received into custody. It refers to the general tidying up process one undertakes: removing rusty pins, paper clips and any odd stray tarantulas. The new term is a very useful addition to our terminology and will forever alter my feelings as I approach any new box of unlisted and undescribed archives. There is more.

One cannot go past Figure 2 in the introduction to this book, 'The "Conceptual Tree" used in planning this book' (which inexplicably appears before Figure 1), without wondering what sort of roller coaster ride the authors have in store. Medusa has a neat little perm and curl when compared to the "Conceptual Tree". Actually a tree is an incorrect analogy, labyrinth is more appropriate, one has to be very wary of the Minotaur at every turn. A variety of oval jellybean shapes containing words such as 'Users', 'Genealogists', 'Opening Hours', 'Destruction', 'Mould, pests', etc., float at various levels on the page with lines running off in all directions from one jellybean to another. If the authors are attempting to entice the

prospective reader further the introduction is no place for such a confusing diagram. (Figure 1 page 29 'The Nexus of Provenance' is also worth an honourable mention in this regard.)

The following quote from the preface illustrates some of the problems *The small archive* fails to overcome and also stands as an object lesson to any intending author — Never admit your mistakes (at least not until late into the book when the reader is either converted or asleep on his pillow).

Sometimes it seems that our attempt to touch on everything has led us to touch on *nothing* thoroughly. This book grew to twice its projected length (155 pages); possibly due in part to our circumlocution and verbosity but possibly also due to the difficulty of capturing this broad field in a single small book.

Unfortunately, the circumlocution and verbosity tend to obscure the central elements Maike and Ansell wish to convey. The long and tortuous definitions complete with etymology, which are randomly thrust into the heart of the text only exacerbate the process. I would suggest if the authors have had some difficulties with brevity and clarity they should take note of David B. Gracy II's *An introduction to archives and manuscripts*, (weighing in at 35 pages) which is reviewed further on, before attempting a revision of *The small archive*.

In case you haven't picked up the thread already, I believe *The small archive* leaves a lot to be desired. I appreciate the difficulties that any task of this nature presents and Maike and Ansell should be commended for having made the attempt. Resources available in this country will obviously affect the final product and lack of precedent is daunting to the pioneer. Be that as it may, 'Publish and be damned' is not always the wisest choice. If one is attempting to present a professional product one should not be satisfied until such a result is achieved.

It is obvious the authors were trying to do the job as cheaply as possible, and it shows. *The small archive* looks as if it were typed and photocopied, not printed. The three major typesets employed in producing the book are incompatible and not pleasing to the eye.

The chapters should follow some logical sequence and not be interspersed (e.g. Ch 6 'Users and Access', Ch 9 'Copyright, relations with other bodies', Ch 2 'Method for arranging and describing a collection', Ch 8 'Disposal and appraisal', etc).

A positive comment can be applied to the index which is well constructed and at least provides a degree of accessibility to all before it.

David B. Gracy, II's *An Introduction to Archives and Manuscripts*, was produced as part of the Professional Development Series, by the Special Libraries Association, New York. This is not the first time Gracy has

appeared in print (he was responsible for the SAA's Basic Manual Series volume on Arrangement and Description) and it clearly shows. While he acknowledges in his introduction the difficulties which can arise in writing something so short, he has managed to overcome them and fit into 35 pages all the important archival principles and processes necessary for the novice to gain a coherent understanding of the archival field. For those who wish to pursue the subject further there is a very useful list of suggestions for further reading at the back. (Europhiles be warned: they are exclusively American). It is a quality production in every sense.

The author assumes some knowledge on the part of the reader, but does not then proceed to confuse. Following the introduction there is a "Glossary of Selected Terms" which are defined in a brief and easily understood fashion. The manual is divided into two major units, 'The Principles' section begins each unit with a truism, e.g. 'There is a difference between Archives and Manuscripts', 'Archivists work with unique materials', 'Archivists leave trails', etc. This approach clearly establishes concepts in the reader's mind before further explanation.

The 'Process' section starts neatly by reducing the entire 'process' into one paragraph and then moving into greater detail as each unit is elaborated upon. Each unit is then simply headed: 'Acquisition', 'Appraisal', 'Accessioning', etc. A very straightforward, no nonsense approach. All extract examples used by Gracy are included full page and do not hamper the reader's progress. There is no index, but the book is constructed in such a way that the contents list provides the necessary access. The shortness of the book also aids in the process.

In this bout between the eagle and the kangaroo, I'm afraid the unanimous points decision goes to the eagle. I hope the next kangaroo into the ring is better prepared.

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James A. Fraser and Harold A. Averill, *Organising an Archives: The Canadian Gay Archives Experience*, Canadian Gay Archives Publication No. 8, Toronto 1983.

The late 1960's saw the rise and growth of numerous women's, black and gay liberation groups throughout the Western World. Most were transitory, being formed for a particular purpose or to pursue an ideology objective, and few lasted more than a couple years.

Yet the records which they created are important source material for the social history of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The problem is that often little survives either because of the haphazard nature of records creation, or because the records fall into the hands of an individual, who was an 'official' at the period of the demise of a group, and they may be

subsequently destroyed. Often too, the majority of the records consist of what we would, sometimes scornfully, call ephemera — manifestos, handbills and circular letters — but these records can often give important information to a researcher on, for example, the exact political nature of a group or its specific actions or activities. This material is also easily lost, and established archives or manuscript libraries are often reluctant to take it for preservation.

This is one reason why the 1970s saw the establishment of 'movement archives', particularly lesbian and gay archives. Now, while I may have a professional concern about the establishment of some of these archives, which it is not appropriate to address here, they nonetheless do exist. For example, there are a couple of gay archives in the United States, on the east and the west coast, there is the Hall-Carpenter Archives in England and in Melbourne, the Australian Gay Archives, which is a member of the Society.

The best known, the longest running and the most vigorous in its collection and publications programme, however, is the Canadian Gay Archives in Toronto. Begun in 1973, as an off-shoot of *The Body Politic*, the longest surviving and still the best gay liberation newspaper in the world, the Archives soon took on a life of its own and actively began collecting records from lesbian and gay groups throughout Canada. The Archives was lucky in that it attracted enthusiastic support, and not the least from professional archivists such as James Fraser of Toronto City Council (but at present engaged on an archival doctoral thesis) and Harold Averill of (if memory serves me correctly) the University of Toronto.

Though brief, at 65 pages, this is for a lay person, good introductory text to archival principles, procedures and practice. However, this was not the sole intention of the authors, as the sub-title states. An attraction is that each chapter, after discussing the treatment of records, periodicals, library material and procedures for arranging, filing, security, care and handling, concludes with statements on the practical difficulties encountered by the Canadian Gay Archives in the implementation of principles and practice, and an outline of the actual procedures finally adopted for the handling of material. It is this practical feature which makes this publication worthwhile. My major criticism is that more could have been said on simple conservation techniques. A useful appendix contains copies of deposit forms and documentation control sheets used at the Archives.

Specifically written to assist other lesbian and gay archives, this small publication nonetheless would be of practical benefit to other private archives, particularly those dependent upon the enthusiastic lay person, such as historical societies and church groups. It is available at a cost of \$10 (Can) plus postage, from the Canadian Gay Archives, Box 639 station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1G2 Canada.

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Guide to the Records Relating to Science and Technology in the British Public Record Office: A R.A.M.P. Study. *Prepared by Michael Jubb.* General Information Programme and UNISIST. U.N.E.S.C.O. Paris, 1984.

A Guide to Manuscripts Relating to Science in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. *Prepared by Margaret Henry and Michael E. Hoare.* The Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, 1982.

There are difficulties in reviewing any finding aid. Initially one has to deal with a precondition of tolerance and sympathy for any such publication, such sympathy being felt by all who have battled with consistency of format, standardisation of entries and the horror of cross referencing — particularly in that most difficult of all finding aids, one subject-based. The second problem is the unnatural burden a reviewer places on a finding aid by reading it, not using it as a tool to answer queries or to seek specific entries.

So, with a little sigh, I turn to the first publication, *Guide to the records relating to science and technology in the British Public Record Office*, a 310 page volume produced by Dr Michael Jubb under contract to the International Council on Archives. The scope of the volume is quite staggering, dealing as it does with British government records spanning the whole of the modern industrial society, from 1509 to 1982. Some personal papers are included with the official papers and names such as Newton, Keynes, Brunel and Kitchener occur.

The subject area has been divided up initially into civil, defence and overseas categories and within those large categories again refined. The section called civil is the largest with subsections dealing with science and industrial research; agriculture, fisheries and food; environmental, building, public health and medical services; transport and communications; trade and industry; fuel and power; and social and economic sciences. Each subsection contains a brief account of government involvement in the area and is further broken down, proceeding from the general to the more specific.

Each entry consists of the title of the record class, its P.R.O. group code and class number, the date range (contents, I think), the number of orderable pieces and a description. The descriptive element of this finding aid consists typically of a four to ten line precis of the records indicating what type of scientific or technical information is likely to be found in each class. The P.R.O. record class can cover something as specific as the Annual Reports of the Manpower Service Commission (LAB64) to something as general as Admiralty and Secretariat papers, 1660-1969 (ADM1). This short description also refers to any indexes or registers; notes access conditions distinct from the thirty year rule; indicates cross references; notes custody arrangements when not held in the P.R.O; and refers to published lists or handbooks to the class.

This volume is held up by the I.C.A., presumably to the international archival community, "to serve as a model and example for other countries which are still unaware of the unique information resource represented by their governments' archives". It is unfortunate then that the volume bears a typographical error on its cover in letters half a centimetre high (records ... in the British Public Records Officer!) and disappointing that its physical presentation is not of a higher standard. The volume is a photographic reproduction of the author's typescript with patchy density and stapled together in a manner which in some cases makes the P.R.O. reference number difficult to read. Many editorial faults proliferate through the volume, errors in typing, errors in format and general inconsistency. The one that irritated me the most and will detract most from the usefulness of the volume is the total absence of consistency in the cross referencing. Earlier classes of records are sometimes related to later classes, sometimes reciprocally. Classes not in the same section sometimes have references to the section in which the class referred to will be found, but more often not. Herein lies the value of reading a finding aid — I was able to annotate these entries on the review copy.

Although the author of this *Guide* modestly puts his work forward "with some diffidence", an elevated position is decreed for it by the I.C.A. A good editorial eye and a decent quality production would obviate many criticisms. But deep down I think that I am slightly outraged that the British Public Record Office, of all institutions, is having its guides produced by the I.C.A.

So to the second of the publications, *A Guide to Manuscripts Relating to Science in the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington*. The *Guide*, an attractive 30 page publication, was produced in conjunction with an exhibition on scientific collections at the Library and an international conference on the history of science in New Zealand, both held in February 1983. The *Guide* is selective and aims to be representative in order to alert potential users to the range of materials held.

The material consists mainly of personal papers of individuals involved in many branches of science in New Zealand or relating to New Zealand. It is arranged alphabetically and contains some cross references, mainly from individuals to papers contained in larger groups and vice versa. Complementary matter held in other sections of the Library is noted in individual entries where relevant.

Each entry consists of the name of the individual or organisation, the life span of the individual where available, a brief indication of the particular activity of the individual or organisation relating to the papers — e.g. "explorer", "first Surveyor-General to the New Zealand Company" etc. — and a description and date range of the papers. The description is followed by the Manuscript Library's identification number and an indication of existence of a listing or inventory. Access restrictions are also noted. Only

some entries contain an indication of quantity.

Some of the material included in this *Guide* is to be found in original form in private hands or in other institutions worldwide. This is indicated at the end of the description within the relevant entries. Material has been brought together from the Archives Nationales, France (entered under the heading France), from America, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

The range of scientific interests represented is broad with perhaps greatest emphasis on exploration, particularly relating to Antarctica, and botany. Other disciplines covered include medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, meteorology, ornithology, astronomy, physics and computer science.

This *Guide* serves as a fine example of an archival finding aid produced for a one-off event, ensuring both maximum publicity to a specific and specialised audience and serving continuing reference needs.

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Patrick O'Farrell *Letters From Irish Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 1984.

Patrick O'Farrell believes that "the Irish are *the* galvanising force in Australian history". *Letters from Irish Australia* indicates that he has not diverged from his thesis. On the other hand, Timothy Coghlan (the lively Irish historian of the Irish Franciscans in Australia, not the late colonial statistician) responded to Professor O'Farrell's dictum, saying that it amounted, as historical synthesis, to "neither me (sic) arse nor me (sic) elbow".² What shall we antipodean archivists make of the professor's latest offering, itself the penultimate *opus* before his great work on the Irish in Australia appears next year?

Letters is not one of those source books which presents archival material in the dullest, driest fashion, nor is it wholly the original composition of its author. The main body of text consists of substantial extracts from the letters which immigrants from Ireland sent to their relatives back home. The letters are linked by explanatory and interpretative historical analysis, by O'Farrell himself, of the historical context and significance of the information expressed in them. The selection of the letters and O'Farrell's commentaries upon them illuminate aspects of the immigrant experience as well as giving us a pithy "good read". A splendid introduction explains the book's admitted limitations.

The contributions made by archivists are acknowledged in a way that does honour to the author; never were "without whoms" more appropriate, and they are accorded generously. Archivists copied and proof-read the

items selected by O'Farrell. They also provided the means by which O'Farrell found them. Mander-Jones' *Guide* (1972) devoted fifteen pages to brief notes on the various holdings which contain the majority of items cited here. And Mander-Jones' researchers found them because the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and National Library of Ireland manuscript collections had classified them under "Emigrant Letters".

One real problem is the nature of archival survivorship. O'Farrell admits as much: "Obviously the selection has been limited by the randomness of what has been preserved ...". That is true of all archival usage. But other factors played their obfuscatory part. The "requirements of a manageable book" introduce the economics of publishing. The choice of "six major focal points" injects the spectre of subject-based constraints.

For example, survivorship of emigrant letters has dictated a geographical bias. The Ireland of this book is principally Northern Ireland, six out of the nine counties in the country's north and east which form the Province of Ulster. About two-thirds of the letters cited in the book were sent by expatriates of the six counties to their relatives who had remained behind. The majority of the Irish whom O'Farrell quotes were Protestants and Dissenters of relatively recent and Scots "planter" origin. Yet the vast majority of Irish immigrants to Australia have been the poorer, less skilled, Gaelic Catholics from the three southern Provinces. Ireland's contribution to Australian history is to be found in the attitudes of the "southern" Irish whose opposition to draconian laws and government by outsiders has had such an impact here. Yet their very poverty and disadvantaged lifestyle prevented them being included in this book; they were not letter-writers — especially the women who constituted the majority among Irish arrivals.

Similarly, the Australia with which O'Farrell treats is confined to what is today Sydney's conurban zone, the Melbourne metropolitan area, together with some input from East Gippsland and a pocket of southern Western Australia. Each region was settled at different times, in different patterns, and with widely divergent social and economic mixes. The Irish impact in any one of them varied according to whether the region was urban or rural, predominantly Irish or not, and whether the Irish were suited to the area and *vice versa*, and not merely according to their relative literacy.

Unrepresentative geography at both ends of the postal route corresponds with unrepresentative religious, ethnic, occupational and political allegiances and preconceptions among the book's scribes. O'Farrell is scrupulous in his explanation of these problems but nevertheless extrapolates some very broad generalisations indeed about the Irish immigrant experience. This will probably worry some historians.

There is room for concern for archivists, too. The point at stake is our fundamental tenet: veracity through completeness — archivists would probably prefer to see all the letters, with all their faults and features, to tell

all of the story. The historian's selectivity detracts from the ability the letters themselves have of revealing their own truth to our generation. Although it is the norm with archival usage that only the historian's sense of what is the truth is revealed, in the case of compilations the dangers are more evident. O'Farrell pointed out a couple of collections which he omitted, for good reasons, but the implication of quoting so much material, in the manner of a source book, is that the reader has been told all that is necessary to document the subject at hand. Our archival sense of what is documentably true would seem to demand more than this. AJCP filming of all the cited collections might be a satisfactory solution.

Letters from Irish Australia fills an important gap in sources for Irish-Australian studies, an area which is fast becoming an historical growth industry. The Irish Australian History Conference in Kilkenny brought historians together from several countries in 1983. A visit during 1984 from the two-hatted Deputy Keeper of Public Records and Keeper of State Papers focussed our attention on his Croesian holdings relating to convict transportation and free emigration from Ireland during the nineteenth century. The publication of extracts from these records has already been mooted. If *Letters* is any indication, we would probably prefer that the publication of academic treatises based on selective portions of archival collections be postponed until there are readily available, comprehensive guides to those collections.

FOOTNOTES

1. My emphasis. The quotation comes from an article he wrote in *Quadrant* in (I think) 1978.
2. Overheard during 1978 over a pint of Guinness in the University College Dublin bar after a session of the Irish Australian History Honours Seminar chaired by Dr N.D. McLachlan. Professor of Australian History at U.C.D.

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