

# International Notes

Edited by  
**Don Brech**

## 10th International Congress on Archives, Bonn 1984

*Editor's Note: In preparing this report on the Congress I have been assisted by information provided by Lindsay Cleland and Alan Ives.*

The 10th International Congress on Archives was held in Bonn from 17-21 September 1984. Most countries were represented including, for the first time the Peoples Republic of China. European delegates were, naturally, in the majority. Ten delegates attended from Australia: Don Brech, Bruce Burne, Lindsay Cleland, Thea Exley, Gail Finlay, Susan Healy, Alan Ives, Guna Kinne, Elizabeth Nathan and Colin Pitson. There was good attendance too from our neighbours in the Pacific and S.E. Asia.

The Congress was held in the Beethoven Halle on the banks of the Rhine. An attractive setting and convenient for those staying in the city centre but those living further out found transport a problem. The need to rely on public transport, with which foreigners were not at ease, also affected attendance at meetings arranged in remote locations. Generally, however, the Congress was well organised.

The Congress theme was 'The Challenge to Archives: Growing Responsibilities and Limited Resources'. Papers had been prepared in one's preferred official language — there are five altogether — and distributed to registered delegates well before the Congress. For those who wished to add to the challenge spare copies in all languages were available from the ICA Secretariat in Bonn but only in complete sets. The rapid accumulation of 'Congress records' made early disposal scheduling a priority. Among the Australian delegates plans were well in hand for mailing packets home on day one.

The Congress was opened by the Federal Minister of the Interior with additional addresses from local and international dignitaries. Heightened interest in the opening session was provided by the presence of Mr Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, the Director General of UNESCO, rekindling speculation and comment among delegates on the then threatened withdrawal of the USA from that organisation.

There were four Plenary Sessions on the Congress theme. The Challenge (Session 1); Management and Technical Resources (Session 2); Manage-

ment and Human Resources (Session 3); and a Special Plenary Session — International joint ventures for exchange of archival materials through reprography.

At each Session, keynote and subsidiary speakers in most cases spoke to their papers. A list of these was published in the February 1985 issue of the *ASA Bulletin*. The political polemic and propaganda which had been a regular feature of past Congresses was generally absent on this occasion, apart from the First Session, with Albania, the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria being notable offenders. At the Second Session, Colin Pitson delivered a subsidiary paper on 'The application of business management techniques to archives' which was well received, generating several comments from other speakers.

The two meetings of the General Assembly were attended by Category A and B members. Other delegates were able to attend as observers. These were the business sessions of ICA although, as usual, most of the work had been undertaken beforehand or between sessions by the Executive and the various bodies of ICA. The agenda covered reports on activities for 1980-84, the Third Medium Term Plan, adoption of resolutions and election of officers. Voting was essentially a formality, ratifying the on-going activities of ICA during the previous four years and supporting the Executive's recommendations.

The following were elected to office by the General Assembly: President, Dr Hans Booms, Bundesarchiv, Federal Republic of Germany; Vice-Presidents, M. Jean Favier, Archives Nationales, France and Mrs Angelina Kamba, National Archives, Zimbabwe.

The Executive Committee includes Dr Geoffrey Martin, Public Record Office, UK and Robert Warner, National Archives and Records Service, USA. Dr Charles Kecskemeti remains Executive Secretary based in Paris where the next Congress is to be held in 1988.

While the Plenary and General Assembly sessions were undoubtedly the high profile events of the Congress, pre-Congress workshops, concurrent meetings of Regional Branches, Committees, Sections and professional associations and the post-Congress senior archivists course on 'Archives Management and Administration' at The Hague all added significantly to the value of the Congress for delegates.

Gail Finlay and Colin Pitson addressed a pre-Congress workshop held by the Committee on Automation at Koblenz and Thea Exley attended the pre-Congress meeting of the Committee on Conservation as an observer. Lindsay Cleland attended meetings of PARBICA in his official capacity as Secretary-General, together with Bruce Burne and Alan Ives. PARBICA's meetings were particularly successful, having present representatives from six Pacific countries, in addition to Australia, among whom were the President, Vice-President and Treasurer.

Don Brech represented the Australian Society of Archivists at two meetings of the Section of Professional Archival Associations. The Section recognised its very real potential to contribute to ICA through its member associations, the organisations that are in touch at grass roots level with archivists worldwide. The successful launch of *Janus* was noted and member associations urged to contribute on a regular basis to the journal.

The five official days of the Congress contained a full and active programme. While its value and impact on archives can never be properly assessed, yet there is no doubt that participation in the Congress will, in some way, at some time, influence those who attended from archives in Australia and around the world.

### **Congress in Bonn**

*Correspondent: Guna Kinne*

*Impressions and reaction to the Xth International Congress on Archives.*

Bonn itself was a surprise. More was expected of a capital city than an old and average German town with a yawning tempo. The modern buildings for government offices, although located in a separate area, did not seem to fit in and gave an impression of artificiality. Naturally, there was the Rhine, a mighty river indeed, full of river-traffic and a sight to be remembered.

The Congress was well organised; the venue at Beethoven Hall was the best in Bonn for such scale of gathering and the conveniences included a restaurant and bar. An exhibition of materials, aids and facilities of interest to archivists was located in the same building and one had to pass the stands every time when attending a plenary session. The exhibitors, all from Germany, were able to converse in many other languages and were prepared to forward additional information to the far ends of the world.

It was very impressive to see more than a thousand archivists from some ninety countries attending the Congress. A great proportion used French or Spanish as their main language. Overall, no one would have been able to follow all without the translator services as papers were read and comments made in five different languages. However, the quality of translation varied and it was appreciated when the speaker used a familiar language and the earphones could be removed.

Third World countries were strongly represented including some archivists in national dress. Mainland China was attending for the first time and its representative was greeted with applause. The Congress provided many opportunities to meet other archivists. Conversations opened new lines of thought and much was gained by discussing practices, systems and attitudes with representatives from countries as far away as

Sweden, Norway, Japan and Canada.

The listed activities for every day were overwhelming by their number and diversity. Besides the plenary sessions many international, national and group gatherings took place. The Congress Secretariat was consulted as to which sessions, workshops or meetings could be attended and we were told that all were open. However, this was not so at least in one particular instance when architectural drawings were to be dealt with in a workshop. After consulting the street directory and a long walk we were told that the workshop was exclusive to five French archivists. By the time we were able to return to the main venue another meeting, which we also would have liked to attend, was missed. Generally, it should have helped if more detailed information had been provided about possible additional activities for archivists attending a Congress for the first time.

As some other author is expected to provide a formal report on the Congress proceedings the following portrays only the most notable impressions.

The plenary sessions were well attended and provided interesting topics. Obviously, some were more interesting to Australians than others. The same can be said about the papers. A few were flavoured with politics to such a degree that the subject submerged in the propaganda. Some papers dealt with problems faced mainly by Third World countries e.g. how to initiate an archival programme or how to store records in tropical countries where atmospheric control facilities are unavailable. Fortunately, most discussed problems were of common interest to all archivists but, then again, the level of the speaker's knowledge played an important role.

In the first plenary session the key speaker from Switzerland produced statistics obtained from questionnaires which he had issued world-wide. Thus he was able to note the trend as regards the Congress theme itself. (The challenge to Archives: growing responsibilities and limited resources.) His findings showed this to be a common problem. A very interesting and challenging question was raised by an archivist from Singapore: should archives institutions become involved in the creation of records? The paper dealt with the handling of oral sources.

According to the papers presented at the second plenary session some archivists seem to be, at least in a few countries, well versed in the importance of new management techniques and technology tools. The Australian paper, presented by Colin Pitson, gave the impression that Australian Archives is very progressive in this area. The author first explained the management techniques now used by this institution which include communications and people issues. And what other countries are only

talking about or using on a small, restricted scale i.e. an ADP system, is going to be introduced in an all-covering plan in Australia. Our ambitious ideas were, in later responses, encouraged by some archivists and criticised by others. The critics described the ADP Plan as a path full of stumbling stones.

In further notes regarding this paper a panelist from Norway expressed surprise that Australian Archives is using the title Records Services Officer for archivists. Generally, doubts were voiced by some commentators as regards the ability to measure and evaluate archivists' work results which is essential for successful management planning.

The papers presented at the third plenary session dealt mainly with staff training. First, the key speaker from the German Democratic Republic pointed out the necessity for an archivist to be responsible for the whole life-cycle of records. Further, he acknowledged the need for a set of general requirements for the qualification of archivists. This should be fulfilled regardless of variations from country to country. Moreover, he said, a full and comprehensive course of study of several years should provide a uniform basic instruction for archivists together with the adaptability and suitability for all kinds of archives. Ours was one of the oldest professions but now a single archivist cannot know all anymore. Specialisation is unavoidable.

Another speaker carried the education aspect further by saying that refresher courses are essential to keep up with new developments. It should be the duty of professional associations to provide the link between training and practical skills needed in the field. One paper emphasised the need for archivists to see their job as a profession which requires life-long learning. It is, therefore, important for archivists not only to attend professional meetings but also symposia and seminars associated with research to be aware of academic interests. Employers ought to support such activities if at all possible. The opinion that archivists need to show greater dedication and not look for greener pastures was expressed several times.

The special plenary session was the least interesting to Australians. It dealt with the sharing of records, joint microfilming projects, exchange of microfilms, return of original records to the creating nation and associated problems.

It was encouraging to note the excellent press coverage of the Congress. Many lengthy articles appeared in local as well as in several national papers. Not only the official functions were described but actual archival problems discussed. The tone of reporting was reverential.

The official receptions associated with the Congress were impressive. The one given by the Federal Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Culture of the State of Northrhine-Westphalia took place at the Castle Augustus (Augustsburg) at Bruhl. The Castle was closed to tourists for

the day and a special train provided for Congress participants and their spouses. We were allowed to roam in the exquisitely decorated rooms at will. The supply of champagne never ran out and the savouries were of an exhibition standard. The weather was nice and gave us the opportunity to admire the beautiful gardens and meet other archivists on the terrace as well as inside the Castle. The next day all Congress participants, this time without spouses, were divided into small groups and responded to personal invitations by attending receptions given by parliamentarians and senators. The same grade of hospitality was offered.

Other semi-official activities covered a symphony concert presenting a first class piano soloist and a visit to the new Federal Archives building at Koblenz. The latter was combined with a cruise on the Rhine. The new archives building is impressive, providing space for 190 staff and 100 researchers as well as laboratories and stacks. It is located on a plateau with a beautiful view, however, no windows are provided to enjoy this view. Only the shell is completed at this stage. The visitors were divided into language groups and the guide for each was an archivist with a title of doctor. However, in some cases a better command of the group's language would have been preferred to a title. We also received a detailed plan of the building which was a great help as, at this stage, the building seemed to consist of an unending maze of cubicles, halls and corridors. The following cruise on the Rhine lasting five hours was wonderful. A special boat had been hired and while we wined and dined the fairyland castles seemed to float by. We went as far as the Lorelei which was a disappointment because it is a very ordinary rock.

Many other subsidised side tours had been organised for sightseeing and the German Government had even offered concession tickets for rail travel before and after the Congress. To our regret some ordered tickets were not mailed to Australia and thus had to be returned as the intention was to use them before the Congress while the weather was still pleasant.

The Cologne tour was rather limited as it included only the cathedral and a visit to a small medieval church outside Cologne. The latter has a famous organ and in honour of our visit the local organist gave a short concert which was memorable because of the excellent sound of the organ. Returning from Cologne a traffic jam made us miss the special train for the Castle reception and the opportunity to change our attire as we were taken directly from Cologne to Bruhl.

Having arrived a day early for the Congress we were also able to take a tour to the Konrad Adenauer Museum. Our guide was Adenauer's previous secretary who is now the Director of the Museum and Adenauer's House. The latter has been bequeathed to the nation by his children. The Museum contains Adenauer's personal papers and they were interestingly displayed, reflecting his whole life in a sequence. All the usual tourist barriers were lifted for our benefit and we were treated as honoured guests,

even offered coffee in Adenauer's porcelain while resting our feet on the silk carpets — gifts from the Shah of Persia.

Concluding the description of impressions one has to note the special archival and historic publications for the Congress which were issued free to all participants. Several were only in German but others were in English or multi-language. One was particularly valuable, containing colour photographs of records and memorabilia from the ninth century and up to the closed period.

Looking back it is noted with regret that to the question as to when Australia will be the venue of an International Congress (and very many archivists would like to come) the answer had to be — not in the foreseeable future. Our Government does not seem to be willing to expend any funds for such activity. The archivist's prestige is too low here.

On the other hand, it gave one a proud feeling to see Australia leading the world in ADP application for archives control. Even if it is a path full of stumbling stones, we are facing this challenge with determination and vigour. We may also face problems with the evaluation and measurement of archival work for efficient management.

But one of the most important aspects dealt with by the Congress related to the education of archivists. Recruitment and training were recognised as being of paramount importance. International minimum standards were called for and the need for specialisation acknowledged. Australian employers have to become aware of the fact that just any clerk cannot be placed in an archivist's position and be expected to be functional according to world standards without long and comprehensive training followed by experience in practical work. Ours *is* a life-time profession.

To attend an International Congress for the first time is a memorable experience which can be recommended to every archivist, specially from Australia. Because the profession is represented by so few people here a sub-conscious feeling of isolation is in every archivist's mind. A Congress shows our profession in a new perspective. The number of nations represented on such occasions is impressive, the number of archivists present even more so. The efforts made by the host government to make the Congress successful and the attention paid by the media are remarkable. The profession is held in such high esteem overseas that the spirit of the Australian archivist is lifted and all seems worthwhile again — the daily major and minor worries, the efforts to convince the employer and public of the importance of archives work, working without sufficient funds and staff, the ever increasing backlogs, the new technology problems and so on ...

## **Commonwealth Archivists Association**

The Commonwealth Archivists Association held its Inaugural General Meeting in Bonn on 16 September 1984. Among the 40 or so archivists from British Commonwealth countries who attended were Gail Finlay, Susan Healy, Lindsay Cleland and Don Brech from Australia.

The Association had its origins in a Consultative Conference held in London in April 1984 and funded by the Commonwealth Foundation. The Conference proposed an association to promote the development of professional archival standards, training and associations in Commonwealth countries and the dissemination of information, including copies of archival sources, amongst member institutions.

The heads of national government archives institutions in Australia and the Pacific were invited to attend this Conference but, in view of the brief lead-time, cost and other commitments, were not represented.

The Conference resolved to proceed with the formation of the Association and an Organising Committee was established to make necessary arrangements for an inaugural meeting and to prepare a draft Constitution.

At the General Meeting in Bonn the Constitution, which provides for institutional and individual membership and an Executive Committee, was eventually adopted after some pointed discussion on the voting rights of members, to which the Australian contingent contributed a democratic shaft or two, and the role of the Executive Committee.

Dr Geoffrey Martin, Keeper of the Public Records, London was elected Chairman. Mr Brian Cox, Director-General, Australian Archives and Ms Zakiah Hanum Nor, Director-General, National Archives of Malaysia are among the ten members of the elected Executive Committee. The Association will hold its first full General Meeting in October 1985.

Any institution or person wishing to join the Association or requiring further information should write to Mr A.J. Farrington, Secretary, Commonwealth Archivists Association, c/- The Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1LR, UK.

## **National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea**

*Correspondent: Judith Hornabrook*

A new staffing structure for the National Archives has been approved and is in process of implementation. The establishment now includes a position for a conservation officer with the incorporation of the NPEP conservation project into the organisation. Five sections are provided for: Administration, Record Services, Archives Services, Microfilm Unit and Conservation.



It is good news that the Papua New Guinea Government is making available K530,000 for a new archives building over the next two years. This is urgently required but insufficient to meet all needs.

Work on manuals for departmental records officers and Provincial records keepers are in process and a leaflet about the National Archives is also being prepared.

International Archives Week was held at the end of October 1984. The fact that Centennial observances followed immediately afterwards somewhat overshadowed the Week and some activity was diverted to what was a larger scale venture. Archives Week was thus confined to a series of times in the press and over the radio and exhibitions, with a pleasant function during which the Minister for Education, Hon Sir Barry Holloway, formally opened the Week.

### **New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea Library**

*Correspondent: Andrew Griffen*

Since the publication in 1980 of Nancy Lutton's *Guide to Manuscripts held in the New Guinea Collection* there have been a large number of new acquisitions. Accession sheets have now been completed for all archives and manuscript collections (approximately 500 in January 1985) except for a small backlog which will be cleared this year. The accession sheets, which are in loose leaf form in ring binders, give brief descriptions of collections and details about quantity, provenance, access conditions, etc. These are supplemented by lists and guides for the larger collections. Indexes will be prepared shortly. Copies of the sheets are available in the New Guinea Collection reading room and now form the basic finding aid for researchers using the archives and manuscripts. During 1985 it is hoped to include the information contained in the accession sheets in one of the New Guinea data bases now being created at UPNG Library.

Several exhibitions of archives and manuscripts were held in the University Library during 1984, the most notable of which was a large joint International Archives Week/PNG Centenary exhibition during October and November. Various themes were illustrated: the work of the London Missionary Society; the early years of the Anglican Church and the first Papuan priest; the opening up of the Southern Highlands by the Methodist Mission; techniques in conservation; and 'Colonial intrusion', the British and German flag-raising in Papua New Guinea in November 1884.

A book, *Colonial Intrusion: Papua New Guinea ... 1884* was published in November 1984 to mark the centenary of the flag-raising and the beginning of Papua New Guinea's development as a nation state. The book includes a brief account of foreign contact with Papua New Guinea up to the time of the British and German annexations, a chronology and 100

illustrations taken from sources in the New Guinea Collection. A copy of the book has been distributed free to all schools, tertiary institutions and libraries in Papua New Guinea. Also distributed were 20 posters depicting scenes and events from early colonial times, again selected from New Guinea Collection sources. Both the books and posters, which were projects sponsored by the Papua New Guinea Centennial Committee, can still be purchased from the University Bookshop, Box 114, University Post Office, University of Papua New Guinea.

The most important development during the latter half of 1984 was the provisional appointment of Mr Sam Kaima as future archivist in the New Guinea Collection. Mr Kaima, a graduate of the University of Papua New Guinea and a qualified librarian, will spend the whole of 1985 in Hawaii under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Development Program. In Hawaii Mr Kaima will gain work experience in archives and will attend archives related courses at the Graduate School of Library Studies, University of Hawaii. It is currently envisaged that he will take over as archivist, New Guinea Collection in August 1986.

During 1984 *The Times of Papua New Guinea* weekly newspaper ran a full page series called 'Eye Witness' featuring extracts from archives and manuscripts in the National Archives of Papua New Guinea and the New Guinea Collection. The series received favourable comment but demonstrated once again the lack of documentary source material produced by Papua New Guinea in the past.

A project which has just begun and which will be completed in 1985 is the reboxing of the whole of the archives and manuscripts collection in archive quality boxes. Also planned for 1985 is the completion of a guide to the Anglican Archives in the New Guinea Collection.