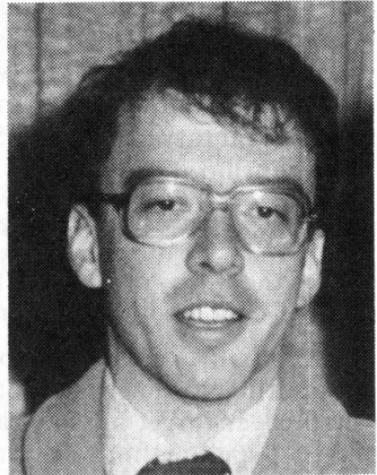


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8. Graeme Powell. 'The origins of the Australian Joint Copying Project.' *Ibid* Vol 4 No 5, November 1971, pp 9-24. 'The operation of the Australian Joint Copying Project.' *Ibid* Vol 4 No 7, May 1972, pp 4-16.
9. G. Lindsay Lockley. 'Congregational Archival material in Australia.' *Ibid* Vol 3 No 7, November 1968, pp 8-13.
10. J.F. Atchison. 'Archives of a Joint-Stock Company; the Australian Agricultural Company; its system of administration and its records.' *Ibid* Vol 4 No 3, November 1970, pp 21-32. Geoffrey Sawyer, op cit. J. Hagan. 'W.E. Murphy's manuscripts as sources for Australian Social History.' Vol 4 No 5, November 1971, pp 4-8. Michael Piggott. 'At the drawing board; problems in the professional education of the archivist.' *Ibid* Vol 4 No 5 November 1971, pp 25-32.
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Into the Great Unknown

Andrew Lemon

It is not easy to communicate within a small profession scattered across Australia. Conferences have their virtues but only some members can attend. Those who do will sleep through a proportion of the illuminating addresses. Everyone ultimately depends on the professional literature, though not even this is a guarantee that the message will get across. The most well-intentioned reader can put aside a journal to be read at a later day that never comes. Wisdom, waiting to be shared, is lost again. The only way to be sure of getting the information is by becoming editor of *Archives and Manuscripts*.



Andrew Lemon

While the articles I have read more recently merge into a blur, the articles of my three-year reign as editor remain part of my mental furniture, in the second-hand warehouse of my mind. I feel stupidly fond of them all — Peter Orlovich's old man river of assumptions on which a course designed for the professional education of archivists should be based; Bill Russell's essay on archival ethics illustrated by tales of the Gulargumbone Archives and the conservation equipment which turned out to be a lamington machine; Tom Nielsen's articles (translated by the editor from the original Technical) on patching disintegrating archives; and all the rest that

followed. In reading and working on an article endlessly during the editorial process, one comes to see how wise, witty and original so many archivists in Australia seem to be.

I know that my fellow ex-editors would share my pride in having done something to encourage this creativity, and to have nurtured a journal which today, under Nancy Lutton's editorship and backed by the resources of a strong Australian Society of Archivists, has secured a respected place among professional journals. It is the Society's most tangible success.

When I was elected as the Society's inaugural editor in May 1975 there was no journal to edit. *Archives and Manuscripts*, then twenty years old, was the property of the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia. Although Bob Sharman was keen to pass editorship of the journal into new hands, there was no guarantee that the Archives Section would agree to disband or to hand the journal to the A.S.A. This had to wait until the Biennial Conference of the L.A.A. in Melbourne the following August. But there were no difficulties. Bob Sharman had a November issue in hand, so the first issue under my hand for the Australian Society of Archivists appeared a few weeks after its cover date of February 1976.

Unlike Sharman, who had worked in a variety of archival institutions and who was respected throughout the profession, I was unknown and my experience was modest — three and a bit years as an archivist in the former Archives Section of the State Library of Victoria which had recently become the Public Record Office. I was untrained, for the official line eschewed the post-graduate diploma course in New South Wales, and there was no Victorian equivalent. We hardly knew of the existence of *Archives and Manuscripts* — it was discouraged as a 'library' organ, for libraries were meant to be our black beast in a struggle for independence. Only slowly did we see that this journal was speaking to us. I had surreptitiously posted my \$2 (non-members) subscription to Mr R.C. Sharman, Snows Road, Stirling.

Why, then, did I seek to take on the new Society's publications? To we archivists in the Public Record Office, starved of the company of fellow professionals, the creation of the A.S.A. was a godsend. We were keen to contribute to its success and to make it a vital body. We came to that first General Meeting in Canberra with our specific grievances, but convinced that these would be best remedied by developing a strong archival profession insisting on certain standards in archival institutions. With an interest in writing and editing, and some student-day expertise, I nominated as editor.

In some ways the Society disappointed our early hopes. It was no fiery dragon. It was nervous about taking an industrial role, believing it needed the co-operation and goodwill of archival institutions. As there was no change on the home front either, my colleagues left for jobs elsewhere. I had recently won a promotion to so-called 'Senior Archivist' against the

wishes of my immediate superiors, and judged it a good moment to bail out too. I became an historian. Ironically, during the whole time I edited *Archives and Manuscripts*, I barely worked as an archivist at all, apart from a couple of minor consultancies. But the journal had to go on, and I still saw a role for it in working, ever so slowly, for that much wanted rise in standards.

In all I edited seven issues, and made some small changes. I tidied up the format and made a few trendy margin adjustments. Hyde Park Press in Adelaide had printed Bob Sharman's last few issues, and I persevered with them despite the inconvenience of long distance, for they were efficient, accurate and cheap. After concluding Volume 6 in February 1977 I introduced a glossy white cover (crying out for attractive graphics, which had to wait for Baiba Berzins's day). We moved from four issues a year to two, because we now had our two-monthly *Bulletin* newsletter to communicate the daily doings. This meant that the journal could (usually) be fatter and so, as gentlemen of the Victorian era had discovered for themselves, appear to be more important. These seemed to be sufficient changes to show that a transition had been made. *Archives and Manuscripts* was now truly the journal of the Australian Society of Archivists.

How fortunate we were that we did not have to begin this journal from nothing. We had an existing circulation including good distribution overseas, and an invaluable goodwill built through the editorship of Bob Sharman. It also meant that the journal continued to find its way to interested librarians who might otherwise have been put off by the appearance of a ruggedly independent archives profession. We ran the risk faced by many emerging professions, of falling for our own importance and exclusivity. This is one reason why *Archives and Manuscripts* carried traces of my editorial personality. This was not too intrusive and did not extend much beyond a few inventive titles to articles — 'Not All Tasmanians were Convicts', for instance, or 'Preventative Medicine and the Treatment of Socially Deprived Records', or 'Cloth and Blotter Sandwiches' for a Nielsen conservation recipe. It was my way of trying to guard the profession of archives from its own pomposity. I encouraged the glimmers of humanity. That is why I so much enjoyed publishing Colin Smith's poem in Volume 7 No. 3, or John Burke and Christine Shergold's piece on 'What Are Archives?' in my first issue, or the more outspoken of the book reviews.

It was always a battle to get sufficient material and to extract it from writers in time, though the flow improved a little as time went on. The creation of the Society unearthed a number of new contributors, and I exploited my own network unmercifully. I was eternally grateful to Doug Bishop, Judy Cordingley and Bill Russell for their sparkling contributions. Slowly there came to be a few more unsolicited articles in the mail. I remember receiving Graeme Powell's contribution on 'Archival Principles

and the Treatment of Private Papers' for the August 1976 issue — and the excitement of receiving an actual unsolicited response from Chris Hurley. He provided his own inventive title, too — 'Personal Papers and the Treatment of Archival Principles'.

Under these circumstances there was a limit to how selective one could be, though I did adhere to standards on literacy and presentation. I encouraged articles on conservation, and felt that this became a minor strength of the journal, though it was an area where I had no expertise. I also recruited articles in areas where I did have a special interest, notably in discussing the relationship between archivists and users, and in reminding archivists of the cultural importance of the records in their care.

By the end of my second term as editor it was time to move on. No-one should occupy such a position for too long in the formative years of an organisation. There were other voices to be heard, and I was aware that I was no longer practising as an archivist. More to the point, delegation was not my strength. I was doing too much of the work of producing and distributing *Archives and Manuscripts* and the Society's *Bulletin*, though I had wonderful support from the A.S.A.'s first Secretary, Pat Quinn, and her successor Doreen Wheeler. Mailing lists wended their way to Melbourne from Michael Saclier's Canberra computer. But, working on my own from home, I had no institutional back-up. So there were great sighs of relief when Baiba Berzins agreed to take up the burden. The sense of satisfaction came later as she took the journal to new heights.

And time has moved on since then. I am still an historian heading an office of one, and still spend some of my time reminding archivists how important the records in their care really are. As for the motives that impelled me to edit the journal: Chris Hurley now runs the Public Record Office, which has helped matters greatly. By the latest turn of fate Bill Russell heads the government department responsible for the P.R.O. Whatever else he may do, I will always be grateful for his *Archives and Manuscripts* comment on the American court case on food additives when the jury ate the caramels offered in evidence. He said it showed a lack of *respect pour les fondants*.