

Interregnum or Between Two Cities

Don Brech

In May 1981 two positions on Council, that of Editor and Council member, had still to be filled at the Society's Biennial General Meeting.

On leaving Wagga Wagga for the BGM in Melbourne, it had been my intention to put up for the editor's position. On learning of John Thompson's candidacy, I stood for the last position as Council member instead. John lived and worked in Canberra where the Society's Executive was located. That the editor should be there too was clearly desirable and more practicable.

It was therefore with some sense of *deja-vu* that at the Council meeting on 19 March 1982, following John's resignation, I found myself acting editor.

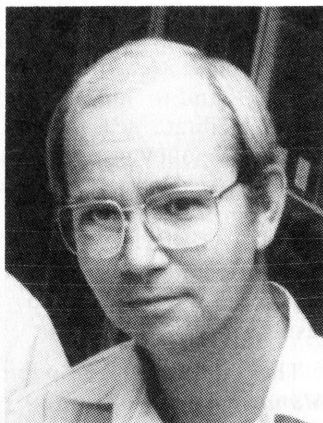
John tendered his resignation as editor early in March 1982. He had recently taken up a new and more responsible position at the National Library of Australia. In addition to some personal difficulties, he had found the heavy professional obligations placed on him in that position left little time to devote to the duties of editor. Concerned as he was for the best interests of the Society, he resigned to enable the position to be filled by another.

Faced with *Archives and Manuscripts* Volume 9, No. 2, originally due out in November 1981, still not printed, Volume 10, No. 1 due in May of that year and the *Bulletin* slipping behind schedule, Council appointed me 'to convene an Editorial Committee on an interim basis to produce the next *Archives and Manuscripts* and three *Bulletins*' while an election for the position of editor was called.

John Thompson had agreed to see his issue (Volume 9, No. 2) through the printers and I undertook to liaise with him on this and to keep Council informed. To avoid two issues going out at the same time required John's accepting a deadline for distribution at the end of May which he met.

The Editorial Committee convened after the Council meeting to make broad arrangements for the task ahead. The objective was straight forward: to get the publications program back on schedule before the next editor was elected in June.

Two factors affecting any course of action were the need for the *Bulletin*



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to be produced in close consultation with the Executive and the geographical location of the acting editor, some 260 kms away by road.

The strategy adopted, while in a sense inevitable, was nevertheless a significant decision in the light of previous experience. Production of the *Bulletin* was delegated to a team in Canberra headed by Peter Moore, who had been co-opted by Council, and Colleen Pritchard, with assistance from Elizabeth Nathan and Alan Ives. *Archives and Manuscripts* would be produced in Wagga by the acting editor.

The three hours driving back from Canberra after that meeting were spent planning for the next ten weeks. I carried with me the two articles already submitted for the next issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* and 'great expectations'.

The priorities for action were securing copy and organising printing facilities and, as for most editors, there was a need to determine editorial policy with regard to content. Whatever the limitations of a short time-frame and availability of material turned out to be, here was an opportunity to promote two issues that were of particular interest to me: college and university archives and international archival affairs.

On my return to Riverina College Archives in Wagga I despatched letters to colleagues covering both these subjects as well as others of general professional interest. The soliciting had started and finished. There was no time for protracted arm-twisting. The next issue would stand or fall on the initial approach and the commitment of the profession.

The Reviews section and Publication Notes were happily in the capable hands of Colleen Pritchard and Ann Pederson respectively. Only News Notes, lacking its own co-ordinator, remained with me, requiring reminders to be sent to correspondents.

Locating a printer with the capacity to print and bind to the Society's specification in a two week period at the end of May was next. There were in a number of good general printing companies in the Riverina but, as it turned out, none that could meet our criteria. This was a set-back as I had planned to oversee the production of *Archives and Manuscripts* on the spot thus maximising the time available for submission of articles and contributions. Now there would be no extra time.

A telephone call to the *Canberra Times* confirmed that the journal could be printed and delivered within budget by June. Detailed arrangements for page proofs, decisions on layout and binding would be made when I delivered the typescript copy in May. Time on the presses was booked. We were locked in. All I could do now was hope that everyone would play their part.

The importance of producing the Society's journal by the due date was made clear by a number of letters directed to me by subscribers both in Aus-

tralia and overseas. The continuing failure to publish *Archives and Manuscripts* on time was resulting in the cancellation of subscriptions. The Society's 'flag carrier' represented economic as well as professional viability.

The typescripts began to arrive from mid-April onwards. The variety of layouts and styles meant more time spent in editing and in preparation of copy for the printer. Guidelines for contributors and a defined house-style would have avoided many of the difficulties encountered and the retyping required. Despite this, on 19 May I was *en route* to Canberra with a 10cm thick folder of copy. The first phase was complete.

I discussed details with the production manager at the *Canberra Times*. Page proofs would be despatched to Wagga by courier. The personal contact with the printing staff and the insights gained into their operations later proved invaluable.

Later that day I reconvened the Editorial Committee to review progress. Two issues of the *Bulletin* had been got out and the May issue would follow within a matter of days. A print run of 700 for the journal was agreed to, based on current membership figures. All indications were that *Archives and Manuscripts*, Volume 10, No. 1 would be available in June.

During the last two weeks of May page proofs were corrected and returned from Wagga. Thanks to co-operation from the *Canberra Times* and my own familiarity with their printing department, minor, last minute problems were easily dealt with on the phone.

At the Council meeting on 4 June 1982, again in Canberra, I was able to report that the next issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* would be ready for distribution within a fortnight, that three issues of the *Bulletin* had been produced as required and that the publications program was back on schedule.

The success of the rescue operation was undoubtedly a source of satisfaction to all those who took part. I personally found the challenge stimulating and encouraging. It was also pleasing to see two of my recommendations concerning the journal subsequently picked up by my successor: the appointment of an assistant editor for News Notes and the issue of guidelines for authors.

In July 1982 I completed my final task as acting editor. In accordance with sound records principles and administrative practice, I transferred my file of Editorial Committee papers to Nancy Lutton, the new editor, for incorporation in the editor's records. 'Put out the light, and then put out the light'.