

National Archival Forum

The second meeting of the National Archival Forum was held in Canberra, on Thursday 4 July. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following institutions Australian Archives, Archives Office of NSW, Public Record Office of Victoria, Archives Office of Tasmania, Library Board of WA, State Library of NSW, State Library of Victoria, Australian War Memorial, National Library of Australia, University of Sydney, University of NSW, University of Melbourne, Archives of Business and Labour, University of Adelaide, Flinders University of SA, University of Queensland, Riverina Murray IHE, Bendigo CAE, La Trobe University, Corporation of the City of Adelaide, Council of the City of Sydney, CSIRO, Westpac Banking Corporation, BHP Limited and the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated.

The prime object of the meeting was the adoption of the draft constitution prepared by the Forum's Drafting Committee. The amended constitution as adopted is printed below for your information.

The Forum also determined the annual subscription payable by members, discussed papers on uniform records control, copyright and the publication of an Australian archival and records management glossary.

The Forum is governed by an Executive Committee comprising a President, the President of the ASA Incorporated, the Director-General of the Australian Archives, two representatives of state and territorial archives and two representatives of other member institutions. The meeting elected Peter Crush as Provisional President. Doreen Wheeler (BHP Company Ltd) and Ken Smith (University of Sydney) were elected as the representatives of the other members.

The Executive Committee attained its full membership on the 16th August with the election of Don Brech (Northern Territory Archives Service) and Chris Hurley (Public Record Office Victoria) as representatives of the State and Territorial archival institutions.

Letters inviting Australian archival institutions to join the Forum were distributed in late August. They enclosed a copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July, 1985 and a copy of the constitution adopted on that date. Any institutions interested in joining the Forum or keeping in touch with its activities are invited to write to the President at the following

indeed that this particular idea is Australia's first original contribution to archival theory'.¹ The concept is central to the physical and intellectual control of archives, and is therefore of great significance for the theoretical foundations of the profession of archives.

The 'series control concept' or 'Commonwealth Record Series' (C.R.S.) system, as it is referred to in the Australian Archives, is a concept which is based on the *record series* as the level of physical arrangement and control, and on the *agency* or person as the level for intellectual classification of records, that is to say,

- (1) *record items* are kept in their original physical order, arrangement and provenance in the series to which they belong; and
- (2) *record series* are attributed, intellectually on paper, to their original provenance (that is, agency or person).

The genesis of the 'series control concept' may be traced to the problems encountered by Ian Maclean, the then Commonwealth Archives Officer, who, in 1953,² identified and acknowledged the need, in the process of accessioning records, to distinguish between departments of the Commonwealth government which *transferred* records to the Archives, and those which actually *created* them. The problems for the intellectual control of archives were essentially those resulting from the fluidity of government organisation and structure — that is to say, the frequency of administrative change. The problem, reduced to its simplest terms, was one of how to establish and maintain physical and intellectual control of a single, long-lived series of records which was originally *created or commenced* by a *predecessor agency, taken over*, either in whole or in part, by an *existing or continuing agency or agencies*, which *added* to it, and subsequently *transferred* to a *successor agency or agencies*, which did not add to, but merely *controlled* it, previous to its transfer to archival custody.

The concept of the *record or archive group*, as conceived by Muller, Feith and Fruin and Jenkinson, and refined by Schellenberg, does not adequately provide for the physical and intellectual control of such a record series. It is premised on the assumption that the physical and intellectual control of records, shall, for the purposes of archive management, be adequately accomplished by the attribution of those records, in accordance with the principle of provenance, to the agency in which they originated. But the concept of 'provenance', or indeed of 'originating agency', is not sufficiently precise to provide for the correct attribution of our 'multiple-provenance series'. The distinction needs to be made between the 'recording' or 'creating' agency, the 'controlling' agency and the 'transferring agency'. From the point of view of archival control, that is, for basic arrangement, description and reference, and in accordance with long-accepted archival principle, it is still generally acknowledged that the 'creating agency is pre-eminent'.³ Archivists, in

other words, are still pre-eminently concerned, as Jenkinson once declared, with the relations of records to each other, and to the administrative machinery which produced them.

The significance of the 'series control concept' for archives administration has been that it has enabled us to see more clearly the organic relationships — the articulation — of archives within their administrative context. For archivists confronted with frequent administrative change — and that includes most of us — within the administrative context of the records which they ultimately inherit, the record or archives group concept is rather too nebulous for the task which we now accept (indeed, have always accepted) to be the pivotal point on which all else depends for the proper understanding and treatment of our archives — the reconstruction of the administrative context and the administrative procedures within which they evolved. That is not to say, however, that the record or archive group concept no longer has any value for us in the form in which it has been conceived to date. It will continue to be a widely adopted concept of practical utility in the management and control of archives throughout the world. But we can no longer regard it as providing with sufficient clarity and precision, the kind of theoretical foundation necessary to give effect to the principle of provenance, which is, and ought to be, the cardinal principle which guides us in all that we do with our archives.

It is to Peter Scott that we are indebted for the sequence of scholarly papers which began with 'The Record Group Concept: A Case for Abandonment'⁴ published in the *American Archivist* in 1966; continued with 'Facing the Reality of Administrative Change'⁵ in 1974; and concluding with the valuable sequence of five papers, co-authored with Clive Smith and Gail Finlay, on 'Archives and Administrative Change', between 1978 and 1981⁶. These last five contain the clearest exposition of the 'series control concept' yet published, and incidentally, provide us with a rationale and justification for it. It is my earnest hope that the Council of the Society may see fit to publish these papers in a single volume for the benefit of students of Archives Administration and the profession generally in Australia. No single publication would be more germane to the study and understanding of administrative history in Australia, and no papers more deserving of serious consideration for publication as a monograph than Peter Scott's sequence on 'Archives and Administrative Change'.

Yet Peter's contribution to the archives profession in Australia is not to be measured solely by the range and calibre of his published writings. He has also contributed significantly to the work of the Australian Archives by his insistence on the highest standards of professionalism, and his many years of dedicated service to the mission of the Australian Archives of preserving the records of the nation.

Peter began his career in the Australian Archives — then the Common-

address:

Peter Crush, IN CONFIDENCE
National Archival Forum,
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ADELAIDE. S.A. 5001

At the time of writing the Executive Committee was making arrangements for its first meeting at which it is intended to determine what and how the Forum will work towards its objectives.

Interested institutions are invited to contact the following Committee Members to raise matters for consideration.

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|----------------|---------------|
| Don Brech | (089) 821 261 |
| Brian Cox | (062) 43 3633 |
| Peter Crush | (08) 218 7211 |
| Chris Hurley | (03) 651 3695 |
| Clive Smith | (02) 660 7979 |
| Ken Smith | (02) 692 2684 |
| Doreen Wheeler | (03) 60 0701 |

CONSTITUTION (Adopted 4 July 1985)

1. Constitution and Objects

- 1.1 There is hereby constituted a body known as the National Archival Forum (hereinafter referred to as the 'Forum').
- 1.2 The objects of the Forum are:
 - (a) to provide opportunities for members or groups of members of the Forum to meet and discuss matters of mutual concern;
 - (b) to represent members of the Forum in matters where members agree such representation is necessary or desirable; and
 - (c) to organise and co-ordinate activities and projects for the benefit of members or groups of members of the Forum.

2. Membership

- (a) archival institutions in Australia, and in this context 'archival institution' means and includes any institution, organisation, statutory body or corporation that collects and preserves archival material (whether produced by itself or by other agencies or persons) in accordance with accepted standards of archival practice;
 - (b) the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated; and
 - (c) such other institutions, organisations, statutory bodies and corporations as the Forum decides.
- 2.2 Members of the Forum cease to be members if:
 - (a) they resign their membership in writing; or
 - (b) they fail to pay by the due date the annual subscription set by the Forum.

3. **Meetings of the Forum**

- 3.1 The Forum holds an annual meeting which is to be held:
 (a) in years during which the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated is holding a biennial conference, in conjunction with that conference as far as is practicable and
 (b) in alternate years, at such place and time as the previous annual meeting determines, or failing such determination, or if the circumstances warrant at such place and time as the Executive Committee decides.
- 3.2 The business of the annual meeting includes:
 (a) the presentation by the Executive Committee of reports on the Forum's activities and finances during the previous financial year;
 (b) the election of the President of the Forum;
 (c) general business of which notice has been given in the notice of the meeting; and
 (d) such other general business as the meeting may decide.
- 3.3 The Forum also holds such other meetings as may be thought necessary.
- 3.4 At least twenty one days written notice of each meeting (including annual meetings) is to be given to each member of the Forum and such notice is to include notice of the business to be transacted at that meeting, provided that matters arising which could not be included in the agenda paper because of time constraints may be discussed at the meeting if the meeting so decides.
- 3.5 Each member of the Forum is entitled to send up to three voluntary representatives to meetings (including annual meetings) of the Forum but without the leave of the meeting no more than one representative is to speak on any item of business.
- 3.6 Each member of the Forum is entitled to one vote on matters requiring resolution.

4. **President of the Forum**

- 4.1 There is a President of the Forum who is elected annually by the annual meeting.
- 4.2 The President takes office at the conclusion of the annual meeting electing him/her and holds office until the conclusion of the next annual meeting, unless re-elected.
- 4.3 The President presides at all meetings of the Forum.
- 4.4 In the absence of the President, the Chairperson of the Executive Committee presides at meetings of the Forum.

5. **Executive Committee**

- 5.1 The Executive Committee consists of:
- (a) The President of the Forum;
 - (b) the Director-General of the Australian Archives; while the Australian Archives is a member of the Forum;
 - (c) two representatives elected by the State and Territory archival institutions which are members of the Forum;
 - (d) two representatives elected by the remaining members of the Forum; and
 - (e) the President of the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated while the Society is a member of the Forum.
- 5.2 The elections of the representatives referred to in paragraphs 5.1(c) and 5.1 (d) may be conducted at the annual meeting of the Forum or by postal ballot prior to the meeting.
- 5.3 The functions of the Executive Committee are:
- (a) to manage the business of the Forum between meetings of the Forum; and
 - (b) to represent the Forum in matters where such representation is necessary or desirable.
- 5.4 The Executive Committee meets at such times and in such manner as it may determine and at least fourteen days notice of such meetings is to be given to each member of the Executive Committee.
- 5.5 Each member of the Executive Committee unable to attend a meeting is entitled to appoint a delegate in his/her place.
- 5.6 Each member of the Executive Committee is entitled to one vote on matters requiring resolution.
- 5.7 The Executive Committee appoints the duties of a Chairperson and such other office-bearers as it thinks fit.

6. **Finance**

- 6.1 The financial year of the Forum is the period commencing on 1 April and concluding on the following 31 March.
- 6.2 The Forum may set annual and special subscriptions payable by members either equally or in accordance with a formula determined by a meeting of the Forum.
- 6.3 The Executive Committee has control of the funds of the Forum subject to any resolutions of a meeting of the Forum.

7. **Limitation**

- 7.1 No member of the Forum is bound to give effect to a resolution of a meeting of the Forum or of the Executive Committee.

- 7.2 No resolution of a meeting of the Forum or of the Executive Committee may reflect upon the internal administration of a member and any such motion is to be ruled out of order by the presiding officer.

8. **Winding Up**

- 8.1 In the event of the Forum being wound up, the records and any surplus assets are to be distributed in accordance with the terms of a resolution to that effect passed by at least two thirds of the members of the Forum, voting at a meeting or in a postal ballot conducted in such manner as the Executive Committee decides.

9. **Amendment of this Constitution**

- 9.1 This constitution may be amended by a motion, notice of which has been included in the notice of the meeting, carried by a two-thirds majority of the members of the forum attending and voting at a meeting of the Forum.