

Computerisation in the New Guinea Collection

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Descriptions of archives and manuscripts held by the New Guinea Collection, in the University of Papua New Guinea Library, are now being entered into a data base using ADLIB, and recording the information formerly detailed on accession sheets.

The New Guinea Collection was established in 1966 as a research collection within the University Library. Besides endeavouring to acquire a copy of everything published in or about Papua New Guinea, the Collection aims to gather in all types of unpublished materials relating to the country including manuscripts, private papers and the archives of non-Government organisations. About 650 archives and manuscripts collections are currently held, of which 250 are microfilm copies of material held elsewhere. Amongst recent acquisitions are the archives of the Public Employees Association, PNG's first trade union and still the most influential. The largest holdings in the New Guinea Collection are the archives of the Anglican Church of PNG and the United Church in PNG and the Solomon Islands which contain the surviving records of two of the four major churches active in the country since the arrival of foreigners in the nineteenth century. Church records are an important source for the history of PNG. In the early years of contact with the peoples of Papua New Guinea, missionaries penetrated far beyond the reaches of government and district administration and were the only providers of education and medical services. In certain regions, the establishment of mission stations pre-dates the annexation of the country by colonial powers and the introduction of centralised government.

Until now, the means of access for users of the archives and manuscripts have been accession sheets, prepared for each new acquisition, which give a detailed description of the material, its quantity and provenance and other information. For the larger collections, more detailed lists and guides have been prepared to supplement the accession sheets.

The University of Papua New Guinea Library recently embarked on a programme to computerise several of its functions using the ADaptive LIBrary Management System (ADLIB) produced by Lipman Management Resources of Maidenhead, England. All new cataloguing in

the University Library is now done on-line and the old card catalogue is being converted. The new catalogue is in microfiche form produced direct from the computer record and updated regularly. Using ADLIB, a separate data base has been created for the archives and manuscripts in the New Guinea Collection. Edited versions of the accession sheets are being entered into the data base using an input screen format designed to include the following information: title, description of collection and any explanatory notes, covering dates, subject terms, quantity, media type, access conditions, and references to other finding aids and more detailed lists — lists themselves may be entered on continuation screens but there is a limit of 12,000 characters for a complete catalogue entry.

Several of the fields used in this format are index fields, that is, they can be searched rapidly by the computer for specific entries. In the 'subject term' field, for example, the computer can select and list all collections recorded as containing material relating to a particular person or subject — British New Guinea, Port Moresby, Education, Papua New Guinea Drama, Political Parties, Southern Highlands Province, Missions, Anglican Church, World War, 1939-1945, and so on. There is no limit to the number of subject terms entered for each collection; where possible, subject terms are compatible with those used in the University Library's general subject catalogue (Library of Congress subject headings), to make searching simpler for the user. Within the archives and manuscripts data base, searching can also be made for sub-divisions of subject terms.

'Media type' is another index field — all collections containing photographs or maps or plans can quickly be identified. A 'date' field can be used to select and list all material dated, for example, 1884 or 1945-1951: this refinement is suitable perhaps only for a relatively small and heterogeneous collection of manuscripts and archives as in the New Guinea Collection. A further facility is the free text search: the occurrence of a word or truncated word in any field in the data base (eg, MISSION for Missions, Missionaries, London Missionary Society, Anglican New Guinea Mission, etc) can be searched for and all the catalogue entries within which the 'key word' occurs can be listed automatically.

The flexibility of the ADLIB package allows for a wide range of print-out formats. For example, print-outs can be made of all or selected subject terms entered in the data base, arranged alphabetically (in effect a subject index), giving either full catalogue entries or abbreviated entries. An abbreviated entry can be, for instance, the collection title and call number only, or the first two lines of the collection title and call number, or the call number only. Print-outs can also be made by media type or any of the other fields used.

The archives and manuscripts data base is not yet on-line to users of the New Guinea Collection but, with the introduction of on-line access in the Library in mind, an experimental programme has been written which

allows user access by subject, date or 'key word'. Typescript accession sheets will continue to be prepared for new acquisitions and current sheets maintained. They will be available for consultation in the New Guinea Collection but will no longer be used as the principal finding aid to the archives and manuscripts.

It is expected that all the archives and manuscripts collections will be entered in the data base during 1985 and a microfiche catalogue produced. More details can be obtained from Roland Kaser (programmer) or Andrew Griffin (archivist), New Guinea Collection, The Library, Box 319, University P.O., University of Papua New Guinea, Papua New Guinea.