

International Notes

Edited by Don Brech

Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand

Correspondent: Diana Meads

In November 1985 the first phase of a programme to relocate the Alexander Turnbull Library in the new National Library Building was successfully completed when the Manuscripts Collection and staff moved into temporary accommodation. Other Collections will be moved to two further locations in the city by 31 March 1986 when the lease on the old building expires.

A public reading room for Manuscripts readers has been re-established and will remain open until 29 August 1986 when the Section will close to enable staff to check and pack the Collection for the final move to the new building where full public services should be restored by 1 April 1987. A written reference service will be maintained throughout the closure and shift.

The Manuscripts Section staff have continued their active involvement with the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand by participating in the annual conference in Auckland in September 1985 and assisting with preparations for the 1986 Wellington conference.

In January 1986 a new position for a librarian to take charge of the Library's Oral History Collection was filled, bringing the total number of staff in the Manuscripts Section to six.

Due to staff changes and preoccupation with the move there will be no 1986 instalment of the *National Register of Archives and Manuscripts*. The publication of a guide to nineteenth century manuscripts collections relating to women which is being compiled in the Manuscripts Section has been held over from 1985 and is now likely to be published in late 1986.

Hocken Library, University of Otago

Correspondent: Peter Miller

The Library recently received the papers of the late Dr L.E. Richdale, a noted New Zealand ornithologist whose particular interests were

albatrosses and penguins. Accessions during 1985 came to 168 linear metres.

Staff of the Library were involved in November in running a training course in disaster preparedness for University Library staff. A plan to cope with disasters is now operable and has already paid dividends as several minor leaks have been tackled. A one-day basic conservation workshop for 16 people from libraries, museums, art galleries and historical societies was held, also in November, by the Otago/Southland Branch of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand. It followed on from a training course in archives work held in 1983 by the Branch.

Stuart Strachan, Hocken Librarian and the current President of ARANZ, has been appointed to the Historical Records Committee of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

CORRECTION

The entry for the Hocken Library that appeared on p218 in the last issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* (November, 1985) is incorrect. The second sentence should read: 'He replaced Michael Hitchings who retired in June 1984. Margaret Morgan commenced duties in September 1984 as Archives Assistant, a position funded by National Archives.' The editor regrets this proofreading error.

National Archives, Republic of Kiribati

Correspondent: Richard Overy

The National Archives was opened in March 1979 and records previously held for safe keeping at the Western Pacific Archives in Fiji were returned and lodged in the repository on Tarawa. The total area of the building is 2880 sq.ft of which the repository has 1080 sq.ft. The repository is furnished with mobile shelving and is equipped with air conditioning and humidity control. Other facilities include photocopying, microfilming and conservation although there is no separate conservation room. Fumigation facilities have yet to be provided.

The Archives hold some 60,000 listed items, mostly official records. These are individually itemised by file title in 50 lists which serve as finding aids. There is a backlog of about 40,000 files and other records.

Other holdings include microfilm, historical manuscripts, sound recordings, films, philatelic and photographic items, local and overseas serials, government publications and a National Library book collection. There are also a number of small collections deposited through gift by private individuals. Most notable are the Richard Turpin collection, the P.D. Macdonald Western Pacific High Commission Papers collection and the Professor H.E. Maude collection of books, papers and off-prints.

Use of the Archives facilities has increased considerably since it began operations six years ago. In 1980 there were 460 requests for records or information and five hundred records were issued. In 1984 there were over 800 requests and some 3200 records were issued. The greatest user is government itself. The most common subject of enquiry by the public is land and land ownership, not unexpected in an island country with very little land and no room for expansion.

Staffing and finance are the two major constraints on the handling, development and exploitation of the archival resources. The Archives staff comprises the Archivist (who is also National Librarian) and a partly trained Technical Officer. On occasion the Assistant Librarian and other National Library staff are used to assist in the day-to-day work of the Archives. There is no separate financial provision from the local budget for the administration of the Archives.

The Australian Government's fund for the preservation of South Pacific cultures — the South Pacific Cultures Fund — has been a fairly constant and generous supporter of the Archives. Funds have been provided for the acquisition of National Library collection books and papers, for a substantial quantity of microfilm, much of which came from the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, and most recently for a plain paper type microfilm reader-printer.

National Archives of Malaysia

Correspondent: Rusnah Johare

31 August is a memorable day for the various races in Malaysia for it is on that day in 1957 that Malaysia procured its independence from the British. The National Day celebrations of 1985 will always be remembered for the official opening of the Independence Declaration Memorial by the first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra.

The National Archives has been charged with the administration and supervision of the Memorial which has been established to mark the declaration of Independence on 20 February 1956 in a field in the vicinity of the building in Bandar Hilir, Malacca. The Memorial is housed in the former building of the Malacca Club, erected in 1911. Renovation work on the building began in November 1984. The Memorial, set up by the Malacca State Government, was officially handed over to the Federal Government after the inaugural ceremony.

The basic function of the Independence Declaration Memorial is to acquire and preserve all materials relating to Independence and to inform the public about the history of the nation's path to Independence. The acquired materials are being made available for research and exhibition.

The scope of the exhibition at the Memorial covers the period between the beginning of the Malacca Sultanate in 1400 A.D. and the year Independence was achieved in 1957. Exhibits displayed include documents, photographs and artifacts. Among the exhibits are personal items belonging to the first Prime Minister such as the attire and 'Keris' (Malay dagger) worn during the Declaration of Independence and the pen used to sign the Independence Agreement.

Films showing the achievement of Independence and video presentations featuring interviews with freedom fighters are among the attractions of the Memorial. During the first four months of its establishment 190,182 visitors had visited the Memorial.

In conjunction with the National Day celebrations, the National Archives published a tabloid series called *Warta Melaka* (Malacca Gazette), featuring articles on historical events which occurred in the State of Malacca from 1436 to 1511.

The aim of publishing the *Warta Malaka* is to make available to the public historical information on Malacca. The publication contains excerpts from various reference sources such as the Malay Annals and the Portugese records. The excerpts are given journalistic treatment and re-reported in the *Warta Melaka* as though the tabloid were published in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Past events are given a fresh lease of life written in the style of that period. Such efforts succeed in popularising the nation's history among the larger public.

National Archives of New Zealand

Correspondent: Mark Stevens

The Williams Report on the accommodation needs of National Archives was released in March 1984. The working party that produced it included representatives from the State Services Commission and Department of Internal Affairs. No archivists were included. The report strongly backed the need for purpose built accommodation in Wellington and for greater resources to be allocated to National Archives in the main regional centres.

On the subject of local retention of public archives, the report showed less consistency. The thrust of the recommendations was for National Archives to take a greater leadership role in the regions, mainly through the establishment of professionally staffed regional archives centres. However, put forward as a suggestion only, was the bizarre idea that, in places where such a regional archives centre was unlikely ever to appear, the local branch of some other government agency should find space for archival material and extend the duties of its staff to providing public access to it.

The Auckland Regional Office has been the biggest growth area for National Archives since 1984. Staff now comprises three archivists and two support staff. The Christchurch branch is operational with two archivists. At head office, however, staff remain under heavy pressure.

The new Public Archives and Records Bill, designed to replace the Archives Act 1957 as the charter of National Archives, was one of the legislative measures to fall victim to the snap election called for July 1984. It remains to be seen if and when it will be re-introduced by the new government. The Minister of Internal Affairs, responsible for National Archives, ranks nineteenth in a Cabinet of twenty ministers.

National Archives, Singapore

Correspondent: Lisa Lim

In August 1985 the Archives and Oral History Department was split to form two separate organisations — the National Archives and the Oral History Department.

Three exhibitions were held by the National Archives from August to December 1985. The subjects included civil airport development in Singapore and the Decade for Women, 1975-1985.

The National Archives also jointly organised an exhibition entitled 'Office Productivity 1985' which focused on the use of automated equipment. The Archives has purchased a computer-aided file retrieval system designed for faster retrievals. A microfilm camera equipped with a microprocessor for the filming of archival documents has also been added to the Central Microfilming Unit. The equipment is linked to a computer which is used for the titling of microfilms.