

# News Notes

## Edited by Maggie Shapley

**Adolph Basser Library, Australian Academy of Science**

*Correspondent: Rosanne Clayton*

For some years severe staff shortages caused a huge backlog of unprocessed material in the Basser Library. However, during the past year the library has begun to function on a sound footing. An additional 85 metres of shelving has been installed, and all the manuscript material is now shelved in labelled boxes. About 85% of the collection has been listed down to the file level.

A library policy document has been drafted and is to be presented to the Council of the Academy in October. Attention has also focussed on the developmental aspects of the collection. Letters have been sent to all Foundation Fellows and former executive officers of the Academy's Council asking them to consider depositing their papers in the Basser Library. Widows of recently deceased Fellows are sent a letter of condolence which includes a query on the future of their husbands' papers and a suggestion that the library would be interested in them. A routine approach to Fellows nearing retirement age is about to be implemented. In order to avoid annoying or confusing a potential donor by more than one such approach, we keep the Australian Science Archives Project informed of what we are doing in this area.

The number of researchers using the library is still very low, with only about twelve people visiting us each year. Some mail requests are also received, but more attention must be directed towards raising the library's profile among potential users.

## **Archives Office of New South Wales**

*Correspondent: Michael Allen*

This year marks an important milestone in the history of the administration of public archives in Australia. 1 June 1986 was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Archives Authority of New South Wales following the passing of the Archives Act in 1960. A function was held in the Archives Office on 10 July to commemorate this occasion.

A commemorative colour poster has also been produced and may be purchased from the Archives Office.

The Archives Office has had three internal projects accepted for bicentennial fundings. The first, the *Genealogical Research Kit*, was initiated in 1984 and was to have been produced in three stages over as many years. It has been, however, hampered in its progress by staff shortages. The injection of bicentennial funding has given this project a welcome boost and will not only allow us to accelerate its production but will also permit the expansion of Stage III and the addition of a fourth stage.

The second and perhaps most significant project is the publication of the Colonial Secretary's papers, 1788-1825. These unique records constitute the largest and most extensive collection of public records relating to the formative years of the settlement in New South Wales and reflect all facets of colonial life. An exciting aspect of this undertaking is the preparation and publication, in printed form, of an index to the papers.

The third project for which bicentennial funding has been approved is the mounting of an exhibition with the theme 'Government and the People'. The aim of the exhibition will be to meet the increasing interest in Australian administrative history and to show, by displaying appropriate items, how government has impinged on the lives of ordinary people over the past 200 years. Subjects likely to be examined include the convict system, immigration, law and order, ethnic minorities, Aborigines, and the celebration of anniversaries.

In addition to the above projects, the Archives Office on behalf of the New South Wales Bicentennial Council will administer the New South Wales Bicentennial Archives Program. This comprises three distinct archival projects: Archives of the Labour Movement, Archives of St. Mary's Cathedral, and Archives of Local Government. A grant of \$300,000 will be made to allow for the appointment of archivists, conservation, and the publishing of guides.

Construction of the new Services Building at the Government Records Repository, Kingswood, is underway, and completion is scheduled for late 1986. This development will provide facilities to handle large scale reference services and the storage of non-paper records. The Premier has approved the Repository extending its ambit to include records of local councils and public hospitals on the basis that costs are recouped.

## **Australian Archives**

*Correspondent: A.L. Pearlman*

A Counter-Emergency Manual has been prepared, setting out precautions to be taken against disasters and actions to be carried out in

case of disaster. There is considerable emphasis on practical immediate salvage requirements for different record formats.

A survey of the condition of a selected sample of holdings in all repositories has commenced. This is the first time that it has been possible to conduct a detailed examination of a sample of records on a national basis. As well as the condition of items, storage, packaging, and environmental conditions are being assessed. Records in Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia have been examined, and holdings in other regions are being progressively surveyed. The data obtained is to be analysed to provide the basis of the planning of future conservation programs.

A review has been carried out of the suitability of modern reprographic techniques for archival purposes. This will lead to a co-ordinated programme of copying records for preservation and other purposes. A Reprography Manual has also been produced. At the Western Australian Regional Office, microfilming of inward passenger lists for the port of Fremantle has now been completed for the years 1898 to 1921. It is hoped that the lists will soon be available to the public in microfilm form.

On 3 March 1986, records submitted to and created by the Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia were released under the accelerated access provisions of the Archives Act. Over one hundred metres of records, including departmental files of the 1950's and 1960's and printout of the Commission's own computerised control records, are now available for public access at the Australian Capital Territory Regional Office. A considerable quantity of Lord Casey's personal papers, arranged by his former personal secretary, were recently transferred to the Victorian Regional Office. A consignment of meteorological records, including journals and field books of Alice Springs, Darwin, Daly Waters and Charlotte Waters, has recently been transferred from the South Australian to the Northern Territory Regional Office. The records span the period 1876 to 1907 and should be of interest and value to many of our users. Records of the Australian Egg Board were recently transferred to the Australian Capital Territory Regional Office from the New South Wales Regional Office.

The New South Wales Regional Office recently added one unit of computer tape racking to its facilities, bringing its capacity of this type to 5,664 shelf metres, and two units of standard compactus shelving, bringing its capacity to 124,000 shelf metres of standard.

The Victorian Regional Office has participated for the first time in the training of a second year student enrolled in the Information Management (Archives and Records) Graduate Diploma course at the Melbourne College of Advanced Education. The student worked in the Disposal Section preparing archival documentation and also attended a Records

Workshop held for agencies to familiarise participants with the provision of and their responsibilities under the Archives Act.

### **Australian Joint Copying Project**

*Correspondent: Mary-Anne Burchfield*

Due to a ten per cent increase in the cost of commercially reproducing silver halide microfilm we have been forced to increase our charges for silver halide copies of Australian Joint Copying Project microfilm. A 35mm silver halide AJCP reel now costs \$28.50 and 16mm silver halide reels are \$22.50. Prices for diazo copies remain at \$17.00 for 35mm reels and \$14.00 for 16mm reels.

Continuing the process of updating the eight AJCP handbooks, a new edition of the Part 4 War Office handbook has been prepared and is due for publication in the second half of 1986. This handbook is a guide to all the material filmed by the AJCP in the War Office section of the Public Record Office, London.

Usage statistics for the AJCP microfilm were boosted by the 4th Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry held in Canberra from 8-11 May 1986. A paper detailing the groups of records filmed by the AJCP which would assist genealogists in their research was given to the Congress and later published in its proceedings.

### **Australian National University Archives of Business and Labour**

*Correspondent: Maureen Purtell*

For some time we have been working out a management plan to improve the operations of the Archives. Committees have considered the areas of Collecting, Processing, User Services, Public Relations, Publishing, Technical Services (conservation, computers, and disaster planning) and General Services (buildings and equipment). To date some decisions have been made by the first three committees which define particular areas of responsibility and identify long and short term goals. The uninformed outsider may not notice any difference but those of us who work within anticipate unprecedented efficiency or lateral pipelining, depending on your viewpoint, which will be all to the general good.

Since December last year, a review of archivists' salaries has been in progress. One of our aims is to obtain a classification for professional archivists and to break away from the unacceptable Research Officer and Research Assistant grades.

An important publication, *Pure Merinos and Others: The Shipping Lists of the Australian Agricultural Company*, was published last month by the Archives. The work of Pennie Pemberton, it is particularly designed to

assist the large number of enquirers for family and local history information from the records of the Australian Agricultural Company. In the wider context, the book offers an introduction to an excellent set of records of one of Australia's oldest and most significant companies. The book is available from ANUTECH Pty Ltd, GPO Box 4, Canberra 2601, for \$9.50 plus postage.

### **Australian War Memorial**

*Correspondent: Paul Macpherson*

A major task of the Written Records section this year has been a series of meetings with the Australian Archives to determine under what conditions the Memorial will continue to have custody of Commonwealth records. These meetings are continuing, however changes in procedures have already commenced to ensure that applications for access to Commonwealth records are treated in accordance with the Archives Act 1983.

*Roll Call! A Guide to Genealogical Sources in the Australian War Memorial*, compiled by staff of the Written Records and Printed and Special Collections sections, was published in May.

A major program to microfilm vulnerable First World War records commenced early in the year and will proceed for at least the next two years. The program will result not only in the preservation of fragile records but will also eventually see microfiche copies of important material in the Memorial available for purchase by other institutions and individuals.

Important accessions to the Private Records collections over the last six months include the papers of Wing Commander Hobson recording the involvement of Australian troops with the Multi-national Force and Observers in the Sinai, 1982-1986; Dr Jeffrey Grey's correspondence and transcripts of interviews relating to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and Korea; Dr R. Mills' collection of medical records from the Burma/Thailand railway; an important diary of Petty Officer E.W. Newman kept on *HMAS Sydney*, 1914-1918; and a collection of papers pertaining to Mrs E. Calvert's service with the Red Cross in the Middle East and New Guinea, 1942-1945.

### **The Council of the City of Sydney Archives**

*Correspondent: Janet Howse*

1985 and 1986 have been busy years. During 1985, a secondary storage area comprising 1400 square metres was set up with new shelving. This consolidated four secondary storage areas into one area. This is in addition to four archives vaults within the Town Hall complex.

The Council was successful in August 1985 in gaining approval for the employment of three clerks for 12 months under the Community Employment Program. The initial scheme was a success, with approval given for the temporary employment for an additional six months for one of these clerks. Jobs completed by these staff included reboxing, labelling of all records, location lists, and basic listing. Their employment clearly demonstrated the need for permanent clerical support, and this will be addressed in 1987. In July 1986, six clerks commenced for six months under the same scheme and are employed on the Conservation of Building Plans Project. An Archivist has also been employed in a supervisory capacity for twelve months; the number of archivists has now risen to an all-time high of six. Approval was also given for the engagement of a Consultant Conservator for the Conservation of Building Plans Project. This represents the first time that the Council has engaged professional conservation services.

Other happenings at the Council include the advertising for registrations of interest for a computerised records management system, which will also be adapted for achival documentation purposes. The Council has also approved advertising for an historian and research assistant to work on a history of the Council for its sesquicentenary in 1992.

In late 1985 and early 1986, over a period of ten weeks, Archives staff were commissioned to draw up a disposal schedule for the current centralised filing system and to appraise approximately 67,000 files. About 30,000 files were transferred to archival custody, whilst the remainder were transferred to non-current storage whilst the schedule is being monitored for twelve months.

In February 1985, the Archives Section of the Administration Department was transferred as the Archives and Documentation Services Branch to the newly-created Information Systems Department. This represented the third administrative change in four years. Other functions in the department include central records, computer services, professional services, and policy and research.

### **Geelong Historical Records Centre**

*Correspondent: Norman Houghton*

Patronage by family historians, secondary and tertiary students, and local government continues at the record level of up to 120 enquiries per week. Several major name indexing programs have been completed as part of the Centre's policy to index any record series of genealogical interest. The largest project to date has been the creation of a 7000 entry index to a collection of solicitor's records, 1846-1900. Volunteer labour is employed for these tasks. Records from local sporting and service clubs, private welfare agencies, and cultural bodies represent the major acquisitions in recent months.

A microwave oven has been acquired for use in conservation, and cautious experiments have begun to determine if the present chemical methods of record fumigation can be replaced by microwave. A new telephone system has been installed as well as a recorded answering service in order to overcome a public communication difficulty, caused by limited staff resources trying to cover a five and a half day spread of hours.

Eleven local governments in the Geelong region have completed a joint feasibility study into upgrading and expanding the Centre's existing facilities and services with the aim of using the Centre as a regional depository for local government. The \$125,000 project has received backing in principle from all potential users and is awaiting budgetary approval.

### **La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria**

*Correspondent: Tony Marshall*

Much time and energy has been devoted to planning for the proposed new State Library of Victoria/ Museum of Victoria building. Following the selection of the firm of Ancher Mortlock and Woolley as architects, the work of all nine entrants in the competition to select an architect was exhibited in the Library and published in Tony Lee (editor), *Building on tradition: nine designs for the Victorian State Library and Museum architectural competition* (Melbourne, Emery Vincent Associates, 1986), available from the Library for \$25.

A draft brief has been prepared, several consultations have been held with interested members of the public (including one meeting specifically to discuss the future role of the La Trobe Library) and the State Librarian and Ken Woolley, the principal architect, have undertaken a study tour of European and American libraries.

Recent acquisitions include records of the Melbourne match manufacturer Bryant and May, Ruyton's Girls' School and the Volunteer Action Centre; a collection of visitors' log-books from huts in Victoria's alpine area; and papers of the businessman Hans Irvine (relating mainly to his Great Western Vineyards), of the historian John Ormond Randall, the scientist and administrator Geoffrey Douglas and the Labor parliamentarian and party official J.M. Tripovich. Several series of diaries have recently been acquired, including those of Frederick Josselyn, a fruit-grower of Shepparton (1892-1906), Ida Osborne, an operetta and concert singer of Melbourne (1881-1924), and Francis Charles Grossman, a farmer of Wangaratta (1914-1917).

The air-conditioning work in the Australian Manuscripts and Picture Collections has been completed and the area refurbished. The Collections closed to the public for several weeks in October and November to re-occupy their premises.

## **National Library of Australia, Manuscripts Section**

*Correspondent: Pam Ray*

Satisfactory progress has been made with two microfilming projects in the past few months. Filming was completed of the Henry Handel Richardson collection, and a further ninety-three volumes of church registers of the Church of England diocese of Canberra-Goulburn were filmed. Use of the originals will be restricted once the microfilm is fully checked and accessioned.

Two exhibitions were mounted in the Library drawing on material from the Manuscript Collection. The first was an exhibition of books, photographs, manuscripts, and realia entitled 'Bridging the generations' to mark the holding in Canberra of the 4th Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry in May 1986. The Congress drew a record 600 participants, nearly half of whom visited the Library individually or as members of special tours run for the Congress. The second exhibition was 'Australian Woman and the Humanities', prepared to coincide with the conference on 'Feminism and the Humanities: enrichment, expansion or challenge?' convened by the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University in July 1986.

Notable acquisitions in past months have included diaries of the poet Kenneth Slessor, papers of the writers Rodney Hall and Betty Roland, of politicians Senator Alan Missen, A.S. Luchetti, and E.G. Theodore, journalist Alan Reid and feminist Ruby Rich. Some of these collections will not be available for use for some time, either because of restrictions on access or because of their unsorted state. Collections ready for use include those of ballet personalities Dame Peggy van Praagh and Sir Robert Helpmann, actor Bert Bailey, and records of the Canberra Philharmonic Society. Illustrated journals were purchased of Captain Alexander Weynton, a ship's captain in the mid-1850s, and these are a fine addition to our holdings relating to voyages and immigration in that period.

Accommodation continues to be a pressing problem, to the point where nearly all new collections have to be stored outside the Library. This is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

## **Northern Territory Archives Service**

*Correspondent: Don Brech*

The Archives again mounted an exhibition during Heritage Week featuring records and artefacts relating to the Chinese in the Northern Territory. The exhibition was advertised on television (Channel 8, Darwin), possibly a first for archives in Australia, and attracted considerable public support.



Fitting out of the Winnellie repository has been completed. This provides storage for non-standard records using static shelving and plan cabinets, and bulk storage on pallets for records with low retrieval rates.

### **Queensland State Archives**

*Correspondent: L. McGregor*

A Jacknau SB IU microfilm camera was purchased and installed in June. Testing and adjustment of the camera is now taking place to ensure that it operates at optimum efficiency. The camera is specifically designed to cope with the kind of records found in archives and libraries. It is fitted with a bookholder capable of taking bound volumes up to 51 x 36 x 20cm thick. One problem currently being experienced is that the camera is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in the power supply.

Work on the microfilming of heavily used records is continuing. A major project to film Lands Department registers of the sale of Crown lands at auction, 1859 to 1960, has just been completed.

Shortage of accommodation and inadequate staffing levels continue to pose serious difficulties for the Queensland State Archives. Negotiations are proceeding with the Works Department for the provision of a small intermediate records repository with about 12,000 linear metres of shelving at a remote site.

### **Reserve Bank of Australia**

*Correspondent: Allan Seymour*

The Bank's archives have recently assisted authors with research and provided records for a volume entitled *Australian Financiers: Some Biographical Essays*. This work, to be edited by Professors Appleyard and Schedvin, is intended to cover approximately twenty financiers ranging from some of the Colonial Commissaries to Sir Keith Campbell.

Items from the archives are now being regularly displayed in the staff lounge area of the Bank's Head Office building in Sydney and have proved to be of great interest. The themes of the displays vary dramatically, from the 20th Anniversary of Decimal Currency to the King George V Silver Jubilee Commemorative Stamp of 1935. The Bank was also involved in Heritage Week and had a display of photographs of Martin Place on the ground floor. We are also filming various events and staff activities, such as Branch Managers' Conferences, art competitions, and interviews with retiring officers, and these films are being regularly transferred to archival custody.

The Bank has also recently completed the National Records Return for the Australian Archives and this disclosed some interesting statistics: Head

Office, for example, contains over 4.2 shelf kilometres of records, 94% of which are paper, and only 41% being located in the repository; Melbourne branch is nearly as voluminous with some 3.3 shelf kilometres of records. At the time of writing, we are still unaware as to whether the Director-General of the Australian Archives will permit the Bank to retain custody of our archives under section 64 of the Archives Act 1983.

### **Western Australian College of Advanced Education Archives**

*Correspondent: Mark Brogan*

The Western Australian College of Advanced Education Archives came into existence in 1983, with the appointment of Mr Brian O'Sullivan as inaugural College Archivist. The College comprises six separate campuses located at Churchlands, Joondalup, Mt Lawley, Nedlands, Claremont and Bunbury. In addition to arranging, preserving and describing the College's archives and those of its predecessor agencies, the archivist provides records management advice and is responsible for ensuring that the distribution of College publications conforms with legal requirements. In the performance of these duties the archivist is responsible to the Principal Librarian and the Head, Management Systems. There are currently no other members of staff employed on archives-related duties.

The archives of WACAE date from the establishment of the Claremont Teachers' College in 1902. Teachers' Colleges were subsequently established at Graylands, Mt Lawley, Nedlands and Churchlands. They are not autonomous bodies, but administered by the Western Australian Education Department through its Teacher Training Division. In 1973 a measure of autonomy was granted to the Colleges which became responsible to the Western Australian Teacher Education Authority. As a consequence of the Western Australian Post-Secondary Education Commission's report in 1978, the Colleges were established as independent self-governing institutions with functional responsibilities embracing tertiary education in a broader sense, and not just teacher education. In 1982, under pressure from the Tertiary Education Commission, the Colleges amalgamated to form the WACAE.

A quality area measuring 176 square metres will become available to the Archives with completion of a new College Library Building at the Churchlands Campus in mid-1987. Current archival holdings total 774 shelf metres.

### **Westpac Banking Corporation Archives**

*Correspondent: Clive Smith*

April 1986 saw the installation of four compactus units, increasing our storage space by some 2300 shelf metres. This is the first part of a continuing programme to replace all our static shelving with compactus.

The same month also saw the transfer from Melbourne of the last large consignment of Commercial Bank of Australia Limited records. This consignment included significant records relating to the 1893 economic crisis; these will be invaluable for the CBA History Project which is making steady progress.

We have had a pleasing increase in the number of readers using our archival holdings, including several writing biographies for the Reserve Bank's bicentennial publication.

The second stage of the renovations to the conservation laboratory has now been completed, and the conservation staff of three are well settled into their programmes of deacidification and repair. A microfilm camera is expected to arrive shortly and a copying programme will commence.