

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Glenda Acland

Ann Pederson (Editor-in-chief) *Keeping Archives*. Sydney, Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1987. 374pp. \$29.00 (\$24.00 to members of ASA and MAA).

If the maturity of a profession is demonstrated by its ability to formulate and apply a comprehensive set of principles and practices, the publication of *Keeping Archives* is evidence that the archival profession in Australia has reached that status. The Australian Society of Archivists is to be commended for its enterprise in conceiving and publishing this Manual.

The text is written by a team of thirteen authors working to an Editor-in-chief assisted by an Editorial Board. Individually and jointly they represent a wide range of experience. All have associations with and undoubtedly have responded to the stimulus of the course in Archives Administration at the University of NSW.

Keeping Archives is intended to be an introductory manual for those interested in or with responsibility for keeping records. In general it is directed at smaller 'collecting archives', which collect and maintain material generated by other individuals and organisations, as distinct from 'in house' archives, which exist to service a government or other organisation on whose behalf they act as purveyors of archives to the public.

The Manual begins by introducing archives and the institutions and professions associated with them in Australia. It might also have referred to the international archives community with which, in spite of geographical isolation, Australian archivists have significant links and to which they contribute.

The next chapter *Getting organised: the basics* lives up to its title. It discusses development of policy, plans and procedures, the management of staff, finance and equipment and operating and environmental requirements, with some sample layouts for small archives. Because of increasing concerns with fumigants as health hazards, it is disturbing that one layout shows a fumigation chamber opening into the Processing area.

Appraisal and acquisition are treated together, which makes sense particularly for collecting institutions working with potential donors on an ad hoc rather than a continuing basis. Preparation of disposal schedules

is handled well, with emphasis on consistency in analysis. Implicit in this is the fact that the disposal schedule, as well as authorising destruction or transfer, is an instrument of accountability to present owners and future users of the records. Little guidance is given on the complexities of appraisal of correspondence — for example, based on identification of recurrent transaction classes. Mention could have been made of general disposal schedules for routine administrative records, used with good effect in government archives, and of the excellent RAMP studies by Leary (1985) and Naugler (1984) on appraisal of photographs and machine readable records respectively.

The importance of analysis to determine provenance during accessioning is stressed, other procedural aspects being illustrated by case studies. The problem of administrative change which besets archives of government and other large organisations, and to which the Australian Archives has developed an innovative solution, is however, not touched on.

Case studies are also effectively used to illustrate arrangement and description, concluding with a salutary statement of the importance of this task, which leads logically into explanation of the network of finding aids, supported by an appendix on indexing.

Reference services are treated from the viewpoint of both users and archivists, the latter being well advised on the development and administration of an access policy and on standards for services.

In dealing with conservation, a healthy emphasis is placed on the physical wellbeing of the records and ways in which the archivist and conservator can plan to achieve this, assessing the needs of the records themselves and the special commitments of the archives institution. Attention is also given to preventive conservation, disaster preparedness and copying as a preservation measure. Employment of commercial conservators or volunteers is discussed, another possible source of help being the consulting service of the State Conservation Centre in Adelaide.

A chapter on computers and micrographics encourages the archivist to consider ADP applications for archival management and offers guidance on selection of a suitable system. Use and production of micrographics is also discussed. In relation to 'Technology of the Future' optical disc is hailed as the ideal format for both original records and copies, and as a solution to long-term preservation problems.

In fact, although it has excellent retrieval capabilities, the lasting qualities of optical disc are unproven, manufacturers claiming a life of 10-20, or at most 50 years. A continuous and expensive re-copying programme would therefore be inevitable. Even more intimidating is the extremely high rate of change in equipment. Institutions alone or jointly could not hope to maintain in useable condition all the generations of equipment

that have been used over time. Recopying would therefore need to include technology updating, involving further costs.

It is interesting that the United States National Academy of Sciences, commissioned by NARA to recommend on the advisability of transferring information from paper records to media such as magnetic tape and optical disc, concluded in 1986 that the media appropriate for archival preservation are paper and photographic film. It also recommended development of archival standards for magnetic tape and optical disc.

In relation to documentation programs the archivist is encouraged to be creator as well as a custodian. Sound advice is provided on what can successfully be attempted and how, and is well illustrated with sample forms and guidelines. Similarly, user education and public relations is presented as a challenge to the archivist to involve the public with the archives by planning education programmes. Exhibitions are treated comprehensively, with a useful list of tips for planners.

It is unfortunate that the two chief references to copyright are misleading. In relation to microfilming, Chapter 9 states that no item, published or unpublished can be copied for a period of time following its creation without the permission of the Copyright owner. This overlooks provisions of the Copyright Act relating to fair dealing for research or study (s40), copying by libraries or archives for users (s49), and making a copy of a work (including a microfilm copy) in order to preserve the original work (s51A).

The reference in Chapter 7 to making copies by or for researchers indicates only that the fair dealing provisions allow readers to make their own copies, and does not mention the provisions of s49. It might be noted that few archives would allow researchers to make their own photocopies, although they might permit other types of photographic copying. Further Reading Lists could usefully have included the very clear introductory leaflet *Copyright Law in Australia* produced by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, reprinted in 1983.

Enthusiasm pervades the text of the Manual, which is practical, explanatory and at times cautionary, with constant emphasis on a managerial approach. The writing is clear and simple, but makes no concessions as regards operational standards and comprehensiveness. Tables and 'boxes' are used to present tabulated information, summaries and sample forms. While its effect is almost prescriptive, this guidance will be very helpful to new archivists.

All chapters have useful short reading lists, there is a glossary and illustrations are used effectively, although they could have shown a wider range of archives institutions.

The Manual will undoubtedly be a continuing source of guidance to a variety of users.

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Ann Pederson (Editor-in-chief), *Keeping Archives*. Sydney, Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1987. 374pp. \$29.00 (\$24.00 to members of ASA and MAA).

As an outsider reviewing this work I leave it to others to assess how far it is representative of Australian standards. I see my task primarily as assessing how far the practices and procedures which it advocates and describes converge with or diverge from generally accepted international archival standards. From this point of view I can see many areas of convergence. Much of the text could be taken from its present context and with only minor adaptation to local circumstances be absorbed into any national or international manual of archival administration. There are, however, three areas where *Keeping Archives* might be considered to have diverged from the conventional archival wisdom: in its treatment of records management, arrangement and created documentation programmes.

Of these I found the first the most worrying. In the introduction a rather hard line is drawn between archivists and records managers with the differences between the two being put on a par with those between archivists and librarians or museum curators. Elsewhere it is assumed there is a nice tidy line in the life of a record at which it ceases to be active and the province of the records manager and becomes the responsibility of the archivist who decides whether it is suitable for archival preservation or should be destroyed. Certainly archivists are encouraged to develop an active acquisition strategy and are given useful advice on how to conduct records surveys and draw up disposal schedules, but I should have liked to see more stress on the life-cycle concept, which sees a three-stage continuum in the handling of records from the current or active stage which follows their creation or receipt by an organisation, through the semi-current or intermediate stage of less frequent use to the non-current stage of disposal by transfer to the archives or destruction. It is mentioned on page 84, but as if it were relevant only to the products of high technology. *Keeping Archives* appears to neglect the second, semi-current, stage, which might be seen as one of overlap and co-operation between records manager and archivist. At this stage records which still need to be preserved for the organisation's own purposes but which are not in constant use should not be occupying prime office accommodation; nor, since most will be

scheduled for eventual destruction, should they be occupying prime archival accommodation. The common solution, at least in North America, the United Kingdom and France, is to establish a low-cost records centre or intermediate repository as a half-way house between the office and the archives. There are passing references in *Keeping Archives* to low-cost intermediate storage, but that is all. I know from my own visit to Australia that the Australian Archives (and perhaps other Australian archives) holds both 'temporary' and 'permanent' records in the same repository. This is a practice which I have met elsewhere only at local levels in China and Japan.

The second area of divergence is the concept of the series rather than the record group as the primary level of arrangement and control. This might seem heterodox, even anarchic, to archivists for whom the record group is the physical embodiment of the principle of provenance. I do not find the concept so startling or worrying. For some time the Public Record Office, partly under the influence of Peter Scott's seminal article in *The American Archivist* and partly independently in response to the same pressures as those which led him to formulate his views, has, while retaining the record group as a convenient way of identifying blocks of related records, abandoned it as a formal structural element in its scheme of classification. The integrity of the series (or class), irrespective of how many departments had a share in its creation, maintenance and use prior to its transfer to the PRO, is now regarded as the basis of our classification system. Provenance is dealt with separately in an administrative history section of the *Current Guide*. However, as readers of Colin Smith's recent articles in this journal will be aware, many archivists are still reluctant to abandon the record group concept.

The third area of divergence, created documentation programmes, is more a divergence from my own view of the role of the archivist than from that which is necessarily generally accepted. Many archives, especially those in Third World countries with limited documentary archives, have embarked upon oral history programmes, and I do not deny the value of such programmes, but I still feel that creating them is not a primary function of the archivist. By all means let archivists co-operate with historians, anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists, architects, etc, by providing access to and copies of primary archival documentation and even by accepting physical custody of the end products, but let them not be seduced into embarking along this road solely because it seems more exciting and creative than routine archival work. I was pleased to see the caveat in *Keeping Archives* that documentation programmes should be seen "as supplements to the existing core of archival functions, to be considered only after the essential archival work is progressing well".

Elsewhere *Keeping Archives* breaks new ground, not by diverging from conventional archival wisdom, but by being somewhat ahead of it, dealing

with areas which previous manuals of archival administration have largely taken for granted or been unaware of: its constant focus on the archivist working in the small non-governmental institution and especially its chapter on "Getting Organised"; the appendix on constructing an index; the section on disaster containment; and the final chapter on user education and public relations. This breaking of new ground is to be applauded.

Keeping Archives is well produced, though I wonder how long its paperback format will stand up to the heavy usage to which it is certain to be subjected. It is lavishly illustrated by photographs, case studies, forms and tables. If I have a criticism about the way in which it presents information, it is of the proliferation of boxes, tables, case studies and appendices: it is by no means clear what the distinction in terminology denotes; they sometimes interrupt by their positioning the flow of the basic text; and while it is useful to have the main points of the text reiterated in easy to consult summary form, there is occasionally excessive duplication (eg Tables One and Three in Chapter Six).

I spotted only one serious error. On page 274 the storage temperature for microfilm is given as "40°C for black and white film". This must be a slip of the pen, influenced by the 40% relative humidity which is (correctly) also recommended there. Strangely elsewhere, on page 235, the correct storage temperature of 20°C is given, but in conjunction with a recommended relative humidity of 45-55%, which is too high. The recommended international standards for storing silver halide microfilm are not more than 20°C and not more than 40% RH.

These quibbles should not detract from my general welcome for *Keeping Archives*. The Australian Society of Archivists, the Editor-in-Chief, her editorial board and the contributors are to be congratulated on the production of a comprehensive, informative and stimulating manual, worthy to take its place alongside those of Jenkinson and Schellenberg.

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Tamara Lavrencic, *Protective Treatments and Repair of Paper Records*. Library Board of Queensland, 1987. 38pp. \$5
Storage and Preservation of Paper Records. Library Board of Queensland, 1987. 60pp. \$5 (from Queensland State Archives).

The aim of the publications is to provide an understanding of the nature of deterioration of paper and a guide to the more basic methods available to preserve paper records. This is ambitious, to put it mildly, but generally,

the author succeeds. However, it raises a rather contentious issue. Is it best to encourage unskilled people to dabble in conservation by providing them with basic information and instructions, or should they remain in blissful ignorance and leave it all to the experts? There are valid arguments for both sides of the coin, not the least being the lack of funds set aside for professional conservation which necessitates records staff and others doing what they can on the assumption that something is better than the nothing. Conservators will argue, however, that often the "something" will cause more damage (or even destroy the object concerned) than if it had been left alone. Other conservators will opt for setting a limit on the type of treatment non-conservators are encouraged to perform — perhaps dry work only and avoid wet treatments. Whatever the inclination it is clear that the author is tackling a difficult area and this is evident within the texts.

The information contained in both these publications is very basic which is as it should be considering the audience the author had in mind. However there are fluctuations, when the reader longs for a little more detail or skips ahead because of excessive data. For example, it would be informative to have a brief explanation of the structure of paper at the beginning of the text to increase understanding of the behaviour of paper; and on the other hand do we really need to know that when vacuum-drying water damaged material the vacuum should not exceed 745mm Hg? This is a pattern within both publications and I think the author would have done better to concentrate on the areas with which she is most familiar. Areas such as building design, air-conditioning, fumigation to name a few should be left to the professionals of those areas, as there is not enough information in these sections to enable decision-making. Although the major areas of paper conservation are all covered there are times when more information is necessary. For example, in the section on paper relaxation there is no discussion of treatment possibilities for paper with soluble media and the ultrasonic humidifier, a now common paper conservator's tool, is not even mentioned. In a few areas, but only a few, the information given is a little outdated.

The layout in both publications is clear and easy to follow. It is particularly good in *Protective Treatments and Repair of Paper Records* with the treatment sections running in logical order from *Problem*, through *Treatment*, *Precautions*, *Materials and Equipment* to *Method*. It is a very good idea to have the Method section last, after the discussion and warnings. Both texts deal comprehensively with the subject matter and are valuable as introductory reading. *Storage and Preservation of Paper Records* leaves the reader with a clear all-round picture of the major causes of deterioration of paper and deals realistically with the options available to records staff to prevent further deterioration. *Protective Treatments and Repair of Paper Records* covers basic paper conservation techniques in both remedial and protective treatment areas. Included is an entire

section devoted to salvage of water damaged material and a general introduction to the principles and ethics of conservation.

A conservator is always concerned when inexperienced people begin hands-on conservation work—the risk of damage is great. But when an institution is short of funds there is often no alternative to the archivist's doing the conservator's work and vice versa. The author has seen a need and attempted to fill it and on the whole has met with some success. The area covered is large and the texts suffer a little because of this, but at least when the information is lacking the reader has a fair idea of where to go find it. It may have been wiser to attempt smaller, more detailed publications on specific areas of paper conservation. These texts should not be expected to provide the answers to every problem encountered in maintaining records. However, they do equip the reader with a general introduction into paper conservation and a basis upon which to build.

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Tamara Lavrencic, *Protective Treatments and Repair of Paper Records*. Library Board of Queensland, 1987. 38pp. \$5

Tamara Lavrencic, *Storage and Preservation of Paper Records*. Library Board of Queensland, 1987. 60pp. \$5 (from Queensland State Archives).

Both of these publications have been written specifically for records staff in state government departments, state courts, and local government authorities in Queensland, but they are also intended to be of use to anyone who works with a paper-based collection of records. The author is the conservator with the Queensland State Archives.

The aim of the first publication is to “outline ways in which damaged records may be protected and repaired by those without professional qualifications in paper conservation” and also to warn records staff what not to do. The Introduction gives an outline of the general principles of conservation, including the importance of reversibility and of recording the materials and treatment applied to each item. The rest of the booklet is divided into three chapters, *Remedial treatment*, *Protective treatments and enclosures*, *Salvage of water damaged material*.

In each section, the author details the problem, the treatment, precautions that should be taken, materials and equipment that are needed, and the method that should be employed. The sections are well set out and easy to understand, with practical step-by-step instructions and good illustrations by Jane Jacoby. This is an excellent introduction to paper conservation but I have a few reservations, especially with the chapter on

remedial treatment. From my experience in this area, I am not sure that it is desirable for non-conservators to attempt treatments such as washing and deacidification. It could be a case of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing.

Chapter Three has a good section on encapsulation, although it describes the method using double-sided tape, which is now out of favour with many conservators because of the possibility of the document slipping and coming into contact with the adhesive. There are useful illustrations of designs for making envelopes and boxes.

A helpful feature is the appendix that lists the names and addresses of suppliers of conservation materials and equipment. Although many of the addresses are Queensland based, most of the suppliers listed have branches in other states that could be contacted.

This publication is aimed more at the treatment of individual items than at the bulk with which many records staff would be faced. However this aspect is covered in *Storage and Preservation of Paper Records*, which aims to “provide a basic understanding of the physical, biological and chemical processes that affect paper, and to outline ways to achieve a storage environment which will preserve paper-based records for as long as possible”.

Chapter One is a clear, simple explanation of the effects of the environment – temperature and relative humidity, light, dust, and air pollution, insects, fungi, acidity, and storage materials – on paper-based materials. The second chapter deals with preservation practices, including the materials that should be used in records creation. A section on the storage environment is especially good, detailing the design and construction of a building, air conditioning, fire safety precautions, fumigation and insecticides, shelving and boxes. It is full of sensible advice and where the ideal solution is too expensive or dangerous (as in the case of fumigants), an alternative is given. There is also a small section on the precautions that should be taken in handling and displaying items, a good list of names and suppliers of materials and a comprehensive bibliography.

Both of these publications will be very helpful to those who need to undertake basic conservation. They will also be a useful tool for people working in small institutions, or on their own, who need advice in this area. There is a possibility of permanent records being damaged by untrained staff attempting some of the treatments, but considering that many institutions do not employ conservators, there is often little alternative to records staff doing the work themselves.

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Colleen Pritchard (Editor), *Managing Business Archives: Papers from a seminar held on 24 July 1986*. Canberra, Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1987. 56pp. \$10.00 (\$8.00 members ASA).

This publication consists of papers delivered at a seminar sponsored jointly by the ASA and the LAA in July 1986, which aimed to give participants an "overview of information required for managing business archives".

Any manager turning to this slim volume for help, because an Archives department had just been added to his/her portfolio after an organisation re-shuffle, would be puzzled by a quick read.

How do you manage business archives? The manager in question would be seeking immediate answers to fundamental management questions, such as:

- what the main functions of an Archives are;
- what the objectives and goals should be;
- how archives serve the organisation;
- how the department should be staffed;
- what the appropriate budget should be;
- what the main problems are likely to be;
- what strategies could be put forward as options;
- what priorities should be and how these are selected;
- what would be feasible 5 Year and 2 Year plans;

The seminar papers as a whole do not directly address these questions, although Janet Howse and Roslyn McCormack touch many of the underlying issues.

Perhaps what we have here is a semantic problem. The use of the term "management" in relation to records and archives has been used for too long to cover activities and techniques associated with materials handling. This has prevented attention being given to the real management issues involved in an archival programme.

A growing body of literature exists on management theory and practice, which archivists must absorb and incorporate into their methodology. The techniques and processes of archival work should be developed into courses and textbooks, leaving seminars such as this one to concentrate on the management issues: justification; goals; plans; budget; staffing.

Archivists need to know how managers manage, in order to realistically assess how the decision-makers view the archival function. Janet Howse states that archivists need to put themselves in management shoes to win support for an archival programme. A management viewpoint is necessary, however, not just to make social and political allies, but also to understand the constraints under which management operates. How many archivists appreciate that there is some danger for any manager, unless head of a

legal department, in being concerned with precedent and history?

Archivists, in particular business archivists, whose survival is constantly threatened by swift changes in the economic environment, must seek whatever common ground they can find with other sections of the organisation, to ensure that any policies developed will have an archival component.

For example, archivists could press for the development of an information policy, which would cover ownership, custodianship, access, permitted uses, retrieval, disposal. Such a policy affects not only the Archives department, Library, Research, Public Relations, EDP, Audit, but *all* managers. With such a policy in place, the archivist could demand budgetary recognition of resources required to carry out the provisions of the policy, without resorting to special pleading or historical-value justification.

The problem of justification is the major headache in business archives work, and does not appear to have been faced by the seminar participants, at least in the written papers. Justification needs to be addressed in the wider context of how one values an invisible asset, viz., information. The evidentiary value in archives is easier to put a dollar figure to, by matching it to opportunity costs in for example, court cases depending on documentary evidence. There is a real need to find a way of valuing information, and perhaps it is an idea whose time has come, as managing directors pay huge sums for consultants' fees and computer systems. A model should be developed, either cost benefit analysis or return on investment, which would give the case for archives' quantitative as well as qualitative validity.

Most of the papers described the need for archivists to understand the organisational structure. They saw how this could help their materials, but not how it could help themselves. The skills and training of archivists and records managers allow them to make important contributions to the work of other departments, e.g. Organisation & Methods, Audit, Research, EDP, Security, Risk Management. Professional literature concentrates on the uses of archival material for departments such as Finance, Engineering, Legal, Public Affairs. What about the contribution the archivist as a skilled professional can make to the Property Managers space/fittings requirements, to Corporate Planning work on corporate culture, to Security's proposals on disaster prevention, to EDP standards for data management? Archivists are uniquely placed to survey the whole organisation. That position can be used to the archivist's advantage in the practical politics of survival.

All of the papers have interesting things to say on archival matters from an operational point of view. I particularly liked Barbara Reed's appraisal checklist, Peter Moore's advice on the shaky legal grounds for retention,

Pennie Pemberton's numbering system, John Davies' comments on disaster planning, and Michael Saclier's honest evaluation of the pros and cons of not doing it yourself. Roslyn McCormack has a lot of sensible points to make on getting started, and Janet Howse has developed a project-oriented approach which should be highly effective.

What is needed now is an infusion of ideas from policy development, project management and general management disciplines, and more rigorous examination of cost justification methods. A certain creative tension exists between professionals and managers. Each is sure that the task of the other is more simple, less demanding than one's own. Archivists have both as clients, and therefore are well placed to learn the language of both groups. To date archivists have acted and thought as professionals, after a long fight to establish that identity. But if seminars with titles like *Managing Business Archives* are to live up to their names, then a management viewpoint must be substantiated.

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Griffin, R. H., *Bank of New Zealand Banknotes 1861-1934*. Wellington: Bank of New Zealand, 1987. 74pp. Illustrated. Paperback. \$NZ15.00 (\$NZ10.00 to ASA members, libraries etc.)

This book, according to the title page, was produced to celebrate the 125th year of the Bank of New Zealand. As such, it is quite a handsome production, with nice large clear print and copious coloured illustrations, all on nice glossy paper. Indeed, the design, typesetting and printing are a credit to the Bank's Stationery Department. My only reservation about the physical quality of the product is the binding: I doubt whether the glued binding will hold together if the book gets much use. Perhaps this doesn't matter for presentation copies (which usually end up in the recipient's archives or gathering dust on a coffee table or in a waiting room), but a book like this also has reference value and ought, therefore, be prepared to take some wear and tear.

For the bank archivist, a good representative collection of notes issued by her/his bank is almost essential, especially if other records relating to the note issue (such as the note registers) have not survived. The notes in a collection can be a point of reference for verifying the authenticity of other specimens, they can provide illustrations or display material, or they can be used to make facsimiles for use in films or plays. In these days of spiralling values for works of art and other collectables, coins and banknotes are becoming increasingly sought after. While a valuable

collection can be a useful asset to an archives, it can also be a source of frustration if it is so valuable that it has to be kept in a vault, almost inaccessible. This is where a publication like this has much to offer.

What, then, does an archivist look for in such a publication? To be a useful reference, it should be an illustrated catalogue of all the types or designs, denominations, and domiciles of notes issued. It should contain authoritative information about dates and serial numbers. It should also identify all the signatories. The inclusion of a good colour illustration of each type/design for each denomination would make it an excellent reference work, able to answer almost every query concerning notes while not putting the valuable collection at risk.

Unfortunately, this book is not such an authoritative reference tool. Let me hasten to add that this does not appear to be the fault of the author but the fault of those responsible for the gaps in the Bank's records. There are a number of references to "the incomplete nature of the records", "cannot be determined from such records as exist", "insufficient information survives".

I do, however, had some minor quibbles with the author. I find the descriptions of the various issues of notes confusing. Some of this was eased on finding the table on p.61 (after the text and before the appendices), but nevertheless I would have liked, at the appropriate place in the text, a table for each issue and denomination, with such dates and serial number ranges as could be ascertained from the records. I realise this would have entailed a lot more work, but I think it would certainly pay off in the long run.

Secondly, I don't think the photographic illustrations are quite as clear or as accurate in colour as they might be, especially for some of the photographs of unissued specimens. The problem of detail might be a result of using too small a photographic image. I was alerted to a possible colour problem only when I noticed the difference between the reproductions of the same note on the cover and p.15.

Thirdly, I think some of the information in the Introduction and in the Miscellaneous Information chapter would have been better combined in a chapter devoted to the history of bank note issue in New Zealand. This would be an opportunity to bring together the historical reasons for and against private banks and governments issuing notes for circulation.

However, I must take my hat off to an archivist who can devote the time and resources necessary to prepare such a publication. But then they aren't having a bicentenary in New Zealand.

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