

# AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVAL STATISTICS — AN IMPORTANT IF NOT GLAMOROUS TASK

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*The gathering of statistics for a single entity is often seen as a time consuming nuisance requiring first the definition of what it is that is to be counted and then ensuring that the counting and recording is done as accurately and consistently as possible. Prepared 'for the published record', the following is a narrative of the action taken by the Australian Council of Archives to gather, record and publish statistics of the Australian archival community, in recognition of the value of this type of information. The author's 'insider' account also tells of the challenges in establishing and refining an Australian statistical model, and the not entirely happy links with work on broader statistical categories such as the culture and leisure industries.*

In response to a request from the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services (AACOBS) directed to the Australian Libraries and Information Council (ALIC) to collect library and related information service statistics for Australia, ALIC established, on 18 February 1986, a Committee on Library and Information Statistics for Australia. The membership of the Committee consisted of Bob Sharman and Euan Miller and was extended to include Jim Dwyer, representing AACOBS and myself representing the Australian Council of Archives (ACA).

The Committee met once in Adelaide in September 1986 and, among other things, considered a report I prepared on an investigation into sources of statistical information available on archives in Australia. This report included a schedule (see Appendix One) that detailed which of eleven types of statistics were recorded by thirteen Australian archival institutions and which were published. The types

of statistics indicated in the schedule were derived from a statistical model distributed to Australian archival institutions on behalf of the International Council on Archives (ICA) by the Australian Archives during 1982.

In a letter to the ACA Executive written prior to its meeting in September 1986, I reported on the meeting of the ALIC committee emphasising particularly (a) the acknowledged difficulty in collecting statistical data and in (b) establishing consistency in responses; (c) the committee's recognition of the desirability of sectors of the information services industry acting separately to establish common statistics for each sector and to arrange their collection, and (d) acceptance of the recommendation that the Australian archival community be asked to comment on the ICA statistical model with a view to adopting it as the Australian standard.

Subsequent to the ACA Executive deciding that the ICA model should be considered for adoption as the Australian model, letters inviting comment on the ICA model were posted to thirty-three ACA member institutions in February 1987. Twenty responded in sufficient time for their comments to be incorporated in a detailed report to the second annual meeting of the ACA held in April 1987. The report indicated that numerous changes would be desirable to render the model suitable for Australian use. The annual meeting decided that a committee of the ACA Executive should be formed to develop an Australian model from the ICA model. The meeting also decided that a copy of the report be sent to the ICA. This was done and a response was received in June from Michael Roper in his capacity as the ICA Secretary for Standardisation in which he advised that he would make note of the ACA's comments on the ICA model during the process of its revision with the UNESCO Office of Statistics.

During that second ACA annual meeting Colin Smith passed to me a note from an officer of the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment (DAHE) asking for 'Help please ... *Cultural stats Archives*: Data are urgently required for a submission to the ABS [Australian Bureau of Statistics] for a new *class* for Archives in the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC)' ... This approach was responded to with a phone call shortly afterwards but because the officer was on leave it came to nothing. However, in November 1987 the Australian Archives wrote to the ACA advising that it had been contacted by the Department of Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories (DASETT) (the department which had earlier in 1987 inherited all DAHE responsibilities excluding the Australian Archives) seeking information to support a review of ASIC. The Australian Archives advised that it had suggested that DASETT contact the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and the ACA for 'industry information' needed to support a case for a new

class of 'Archives' separate from the then existing class of 'Libraries', a proposal which the Australian Archives would support.

The report of the ALIC Committee on Library and Information Services Statistics for Australia was submitted to the October 1987 meeting of ALIC. It included the recommendation . . .

5. The Australian Council of Archives should be encouraged to proceed with its work as outlined in Section 3.4 of this report. The Council should be asked if it would agree to keep ALIC and AACOBS informed of progress.

Accordingly, ALIC wrote to the ACA on 21 December expressing its wish 'to encourage the Australian Council of Archives to continue with the work it is doing on archival statistics.' The ALIC report also included a section on the Statistical Advisory Group (SAG) of the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC), the relevance of which was not apparent to the author at that time.

Following the ACA's annual meeting in April 1987, I had worked on preparing a first draft of an Australian Model for Archival Statistics and submitted it to the November meeting of the ACA Executive. The Executive suggested that comments be sought from a cross-section of archives to ensure that a reasonable range of opinion was obtained. Reactions were received from the Australian Archives, the Archives Office of NSW, the University of Sydney Archives, BHP Archives, and the ANU Archives of Business and Labour. The subsequent revised draft was resubmitted to the ACA Executive and, in turn, to the third ACA annual meeting in June 1988. The meeting accepted the revised model with some minor amendments and directed that it be printed and distributed to ACA members.

When the Executive of the ACA met in July 1988 the agenda included items relating to both the newly adopted Australian Model for Archival Statistics and the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC). With regard to the latter it resolved that as no communication had been received from DASETT following the Australian Archives' suggestion of late 1987, 'direct contact be made with the DASETT to indicate ACA interest in this matter and seek continuing information'. With regard to the Model it resolved that up to \$2000 could be spent on printing 1000 copies after the advice of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) had been sought on final layout.

Subsequently the Secretary wrote to DASETT in early August expressing the ACA's interest in any changes to ASIC and enclosing a copy of the Model. In early September DASETT sent to the Secretary a set of 'self-explanatory papers for the Archives Workshop to be held in Sydney at a time, place and location of your choosing.' The enclosing letter was signed 'for Statistical Advisory Group', establishing for the first time for the ACA a link between DASETT, the CMC Statistical Advisory Group, and ASIC. The first of the self-explanatory papers

was a memo to workshop invitees which established the relevance of SAG's activities to the ACA in the following paragraph.

The Statistical Advisory Group (SAG) was established by the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC) to improve the definition, range and quality of statistics needed by the culture-leisure industry. A key element of this task is to consult on specific topics with representative groups of the industry. Archives have a central role in the cultural and educational life of the nation but there is evidence to suggest that this is not reflected in all policy and financial decisions made on archives. The development of timely statistical information is essential to make improved directional and growth decisions.

The agenda for the proposed workshop was detailed in that same memo as 'the archival aspects of the following:

1. work program of Statistical Advisory Group.
2. revision to first edition of National Culture-Leisure Industry Statistical Framework (copy enclosed).
3. identification of user needs for statistical information in archive sector of Australian economy, available data and deficiencies (in priority order).
4. likely outcome of SAG submission to ABS review of the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC) (copy of SAG publication, ABS as a Source of Culture-Leisure Industry Statistics enclosed).
5. draft SAG submission to ABS review of Australian Standard Commodity Classification (ASCC).
6. draft SAG submission to ABS review of Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO).
7. draft SAG submission to ABS review of Government Purpose Classification (GPC).'

The workshop took place in Sydney on 8 December 1988 attended by Ian Smith from DASETT, George Carrington from ABS, Peter Brokensha from the management consulting firm, *Corporate Concern*, and five representatives from archives, namely David Roberts — Australian Archives, Richard Gore — Archives Office of NSW, Paul Brunton — State Library of NSW, Ken Smith — University of Sydney, and Clive Smith — Westpac Banking Corporation. 'Participants discussed and agreed upon a definition of archives and their primary activities. Discussion then centred upon categories of statistical data that was, would, or could be collected by the ABS.'

Concurrent with this ASIC/DASETT/SAG activity I met with ABS staff in Adelaide and obtained useful advice from them primarily on the numbering and layout of the questions. The suggestions were included, and 1000 copies of the Model were collected from the printer in September 1988. Three copies were circulated to all ACA members (a total of forty-five archives) in late October with a request that completed questionnaires be returned, with any comments, within three months. A total of twenty-three completed returns were received

by mid-April when an abstract of them (included in Appendix Two) was prepared for inclusion in a report to the ACA's fourth annual meeting held on 1 June 1989. A copy of the abstract of statistics was passed on to SAG and was used extensively in the 1990 edition of *The Australian Cultural Industry Available Data and Sources*.

The ICA had maintained contact with the ACA during 1988 with the Secretary-General, Michael Roper, sending a final draft of the revised UNESCO/ICA questionnaire for information in September and the Executive Director, Charles Kecskemeti, sending a copy of the final printed questionnaire in December.

A report of the December SAG Archives Workshop by ACA Secretary, Clive Smith, was considered at the February 1989 ACA Executive Committee meeting and further suggestions for inclusion in the SAG publications<sup>2,3</sup> being prepared for the May meeting of the Cultural Ministers Council meeting were sent to Ian Smith.

By mid-1989 ACA had decided to draw together its activities associated with both the Model and what had started as involvement with a review of ASIC but now proved to be participation in a national program aimed at improving the definition, range and quality of statistics needed by the culture-leisure industry. These combined activities were passed to me in August 1989.

SAG continued its program by advising in August of its intention to conduct another workshop in Sydney in November 1989 to review the two publications<sup>2,3</sup> endorsed by the CMC earlier in the year and to obtain the best current statistics possible for inclusion in revised editions of both for 1990. Representatives of six archives attended the workshop at which significant changes were made to data definitions. The opportunity was given after the workshop for the descriptive test concerning archives to be amended and a response was made in February 1990.

March 1990 saw the second call to ACA members for statistical information for yearly periods ending in 1989. Although all the returns likely to be completed were received by October 1990 it was not until March 1991 that an abstract of the same types of data previously compiled was submitted to the ACA Secretary (see Appendix Two). A copy of the abstract was sent to SAG which responded with advice that it had been passed on to the ABS for inclusion in a study to . . .

- assess the quality of industry sourced data for the cultural industry; and
- publish such data as meets ABS quality standards.

The appointment of a salaried Executive Officer to the ACA during 1991 has provided the resources to administer the distribution and collection of questionnaires and Baiba Berzins has undertaken this work pursuing returns for years ended in 1990 since August 1991.

Comments made by ACA members in the course of completing Model questionnaires, and the work done with the Statistical Advisory Group both emphasised the desirability of reviewing the Model. I submitted a first draft of a revision to ACA in September 1991 as a first step towards the development of a Model which will provide the appropriate definition, range and quality of statistics for the Australian archival industry. I also met with the Manager of the National Culture/Leisure Statistics Unit of the ABS, Roger Mableson, in early October to discuss the revised Model. That meeting also revealed that the review of ASIC was continuing and a further bid was made to create a separate Archives sector. Earlier arguments had not met with success because so many archival institutions are part of a parent organisation and it is not easy to distinguish the archives as a separate entity.

ACA members' response to calls for 1990 data has shown an increase on the previous two collections with thirty-one returns having been received at the time of writing.

All but the first report on statistical matters made to ACA Annual Meetings have included the objectives of (a) creating a computer data base to hold and manipulate the data collected and of (b) asking the balance of the 181 archival institutions listed in the ASA 1983 directory *Our Heritage* to complete questionnaires. These objectives continue to await fulfilment. The first requires the preparation of a system specification as a first step and the second might be advanced by discussions with the compilers of the ASA's new edition of a directory of Australian archival institutions to appear later this year.

It can be seen from the above that a start has been made with an important if not glamorous task. The benefits accrue over time and are dependent on the contributions of all Australian institutions concerned with the care and custody of archival materials. Any such institutions interested in participating in this process are urged to contact the

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#### ENDNOTES

1. C. Smith, *Report on 'National Culture-Leisure Industry Statistical Framework — Archives Sector'*, Agenda Item 4.1 for the meeting of the Australian Council of Archives Executive Committee on 24 February 1989.
2. Statistical Advisory Group, Cultural Ministers Council. *The National Culture-Leisure Industry Statistical Framework*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989.
3. Statistical Advisory Group, Cultural Ministers Council. *The Australian Cultural Industry Available Data Sources*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989.

TOTAL NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS	(11)	(1)	(17)	(5)	(7)	(2)	(21)	(13)	(8)	(13)	(19)	(14)	(50)	(181)
NO. OF REPORTING INSTITUTIONS	(4) 4	(NIL) 1	(6) 6	(NIL) NIL	(3) 3	(NIL) NIL	(5) 7	(1) 1	(2) 2	(NIL) NIL	(NIL) NIL	(NIL) NIL	(2) 2	(23) 26

C A T E G O R I E S

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	TOTALS
C1. Total Holdings	(453,543)  461,304	(...)  7,799	(71,111)*  157,566		(9,573)*  10,060 *		(16,470) (4 inst. only) 11,664 (See Note 2)	(3,007)  ...	(11,323)*  10,823				(582)  767	(565,609)*  659,983 * (25 insts. only)
C2. Total Archives	(185,071)  191,159	(...)  ...	(57,099)  92,542		(5,729)*  6,131 *		(9,007) (3 inst. only) 11,604	(1,176)  ...	(3,550)* (1 inst. only) 5,450 (1 inst. only)				(52)  119	261,684 *  307,005 * (24 inst. only)
F3. Proportion of holdings included in finding aids accessible to researchers	(71%) 75% majors (38%) 63% minors	(...)  85%	(91%) * (3 inst. only) 92% (4 inst. only)		(67%) *  65%		(80%) *  79% *	(85%)  ...	(80%)  88%				(40%) (1 inst. only) 60%	(75%) *  76% * (23 insts. only)
G4. Number of visitors to search rooms during reporting year	(13,185)*  12,944	(...)  3,163	(72,052) (1 figure from G2) 38,583		(10,393)  8,436		(1,556) (2 insts. only) 1,488 (5 insts.)	(87)  ...	(113)*  63				(98)*  117 (1 inst.)	(97,484)*  64,794 (23 insts.)
G6. Number of items made available in search room	(65,484)*  49,560	(...)  8,094	(254,243)*  242,052		(2,096) (2 insts. only) 2,394		(1,590) (2 insts. only) 7,291 (4 insts. only)	(630)  ...	(313)*  351				(45)  202 (1 inst. only)	(324,401)* (16 insts. only) 309,944 (21 insts. only)

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NO. OF REPORTING INSTITUTIONS	(4) 4	(NIL) 1	(6) 6	(NIL) NIL	(3) 3	(NIL) NIL	(5) 7	(1) 1	(2) 2	(NIL) NIL	(NIL) NIL	(NIL) NIL	(2) 2	(23) 26

## C A T E G O R I E S

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	TOTALS
<b>G8.</b> Total number of recorded enquiries	(18,831) 38,243	(...) 3,599	(36,775) (5 insts. only) 23,753 (4 insts. only)		(12,082) (2 insts. only) 10,974		(1,266) (3 insts. only) 3,948 (5 insts. only)	(930) 640 *	(640)* 457				(140)* 164 (1 inst. only)	(70,684)* (18 insts. only) 81,778 * (21 insts. only)
<b>G11.</b> Number of items lent to creators	(212,537)* 194,059	(...) 3	(43,137) (5 insts. only) 19,730 (5 insts. only)		(7,542) 6,283		(130) (3 insts. only) 968	930 ...	(185) 170				(132) ...	(264,593)* 221,213 (24 insts. only)
<b>J3.</b> Repository storage area (in square metres)	(57,798) 63,598	(...) ...	(23,020) (5 insts. only) 23,420 (5 insts. only)		(2,565) 2,485		(3,399)* (3 insts. only) 3,542 * (6 insts. only)	(1,199) 1,199	(1,602) 1,387				(120) 114	(89,643) 95,745 (23 insts. only)
<b>J11.</b> Total shelving capacity (in shelf metres)	(526,328) 565,561	(...) ...	(208,346)* 209,722 (5 insts. only)		(14,552)* 14,552		(12,076) (2 insts. only) 14,176 * (6 insts. only)	(5,335) ...	(11,385) 11,937				(859) 859	(778,881)* 816,807 * (22 insts. only)
<b>L11.</b> Permanent staff positions filled	(587.5) 597	(...) 10	(137.4) 129.4 (1 figure from L1)		(11.2) 11.9		(12.8) 13.4 (6 insts. only)	(5) 4	(12.8) 17				(2) 2	(768.7) 784.7 (25 insts. only)



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## C A T E G O R I E S

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	TOTALS
M1. Total annual funds expended (in \$A.)	(30,985,000) (3 insts. only)	(...)	(4,413,923)* (1 figure is Budget, 1 is sum of M5 and M6)		(744,000)		(526,656)	(325,705)	(609,000)				(97,000)	(37,701,284)*
	28,345,800 (4 insts. only)	(239,000)*	(4,635,243)* (4 insts. only)		719,312		558,495 (5 insts. only)	404,242	2,172,333				139,500	37,213,925 (22 insts. only)

- NOTES: (1) \* indicates "approximate", but it needs only one figure to be "\*" for the aggregate to be "\*".
- (2) Item G.C.1. Woollongong University which in 1988 figures recorded holdings of 7,200 sh. ms. did not submit a return for 1989.
- (3) Figures in brackets, "()", refer to 1988.

## APPENDIX TWO

**ABSTRACT OF AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVAL STATISTICS FOR PERIOD ENDED 1989**

Until such time as a universal collection of Australian archival statistics or the identification of a suitable sample is achieved, data collected will be presented within the context of the archival institutions listed in the Australian Society of Archivists' directory of archives and manuscript repositories in Australia titled *Our Heritage* (1983 edition).

The Australian model for Archival Statistics established thirteen categories (categories 'a' to 'm') of archival institution. Archives have been allocated to these categories in accordance with direct interpretation of the category names and the following conventions:

Each Federal Government Archive or Library is counted once only, with its branches' details being aggregated into one national figure for that institution.

Any statutory body is to be allowed to the appropriate one of categories 'a' to 'd'.

All tertiary educational institutions except universities are included in category 'm', as are museums.

The following are the numbers of archival institutions in each of the thirteen categories as at 1983 and the number of these institutions which have completed questionnaires as at October 1990.

		<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>
(a) Federal Government Archives	11	4	4
(b) Federal Government Libraries	1	NIL	1
(c) State Government Archives	17	6	6
(d) State Government Libraries	5	NIL	NIL
(e) Local Government Archives	7	3	3
(f) Local Government Libraries	2	NIL	NIL
(g) University	21	5	7
(h) Business	13	1	1
(i) Bank	8	2	2
(j) School	13	NIL	NIL
(k) Church	19	NIL	NIL
(l) Historical Societies	14	NIL	NIL
(m) Other	50	2	2

Attached is a schedule of data reflecting that collected from the above categories. Eleven of 116 questions asked have been selected for inclusion in this abstract.

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1 February, 1991