REVIEWS

Edited by Glenda Acland

Review Article

Australian Bicentennial Historic Records Search, *Australian Historic Records Register*. Canberra. National Library of Australia, 1989. 10 microfiche including index and list of subject terms. ISBN 0 642 10473 5. $30 (available from the Historic Records Office, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600).

The *Australian Historic Records Register* is the finished product of the Historic Records Search (HRS), the main archivally-oriented project of the Australian Bicentennial Authority. The *Register* is the result of a year-long, Australia-wide $1.3 million search for records in private hands. The model for this search and register effort was the long-established Historic Manuscripts Commission in Britain. Among the archival community the HRS gained notoriety at the time, because many doubted that finding scattered collections in private hands was the most important task facing the preservation of our paper records. Archivists around the country were split between those with some involvement at state and local levels and those protesting at the exclusion of the archival profession from the real decision-making of the HRS. The nature of the HRS as a 1988-only project without the prospect of future funds raised questions about a long-term role for the product as an on-going finding aid for Australian records in private hands.

This review will consider both the product as a finding aid and the circumstances surrounding its creation, as I think to omit the latter is to ignore important factors shaping the former. Also, it is now four years since the HRS itself finished and we need to explain the *Register's* genesis to those who have entered the profession since then.

The *Australian Historic Records Register's* 3415 entries maintain a consistency in the presentation of information about records and in indexing entries. Some of the *Register's* faults are found in other guides which cover very different types of collections and attempt the same degree of completeness of description for all entries regardless of their quantity or complexity. Here, this means whole local historical society collections and record groups of one or two series can receive entries of similar length and depth. Other problems for the user stem from the intrinsic discomforts of microfiche.

It seems that of the production of the microfiche was not given the lavish design of other publications of the HRS, such as the invitation to take part in the Search and the leaflet *Caring for your historic records.* There are eight fiche for the 3415 entries, with a maximum of around 400 frames of text per fiche.

This arrangement was presumably for cost and packaging reasons — making the most of the advantages of compactness offered by microfiche as a medium. One supposes it would have been considerably more expensive to produce a fiche finding aid with fewer entries per fiche, but which had a more generous layout, for example not having entries split into two parts in different columns.

The *Register* is well edited, the entries are consistent and provide what is required from a good finding aid. That is, they provide sufficient information about each collection or record group to enable the user to determine what type of material is being registered, its date range and the persons or families or organisations to which it relates. It is not as strong on the extent of each collection or part of it, but there is editorial consistency in the attempt to give something better than 'two boxes' or 'three volumes'.

The *Register* distinguishes between collections and record groups — the former denoting heterogeneous accumulations of archival and finding aid material and the latter covering what might be considered more 'true' archives, that is, the records of a person, family or organisation. Into the first category fall the local history collections and individual collections of records relating to a place or theme or of a particular medium. In the second will be found records of individuals or whole families and records of businesses and community organisations, where these have been presented for registration by the owner concerned.

This point about the custody and integrity of the records is reasonable to make, but is probably irrelevant for the research value of the material. Many users would probably not notice and I doubt that it will convince those sceptical about the *Register's* archival credentials. The descriptive information about both kinds of entries follows the same structure — title of collection or record group; date range; series (a list of series titles with precis of their content, date ranges and quantities); historical context (brief details of the town, family, or organisation's history); descriptors (names, places, subjects, the last as per the thesaurus) and access. There are a few headings used only occasionally — such as references (for published information about people mentioned in the text) and notes (additional information including other languages appearing in the records).

The *Register* also has the advantages of a good index and a comprehensive thesaurus of subject terms. This is important for a single, all-encompassing finding aid for a large number of disparate

entities. In fact, the thesaurus is in some ways the most impressive thing about the *Register* — it is better than most similar tools for wide-ranging collections. I would support John Thompson's hopes, expressed in his presentation to the 1989 ASA Conference (see *Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, Inc.* Hobart, ASA, 1991, p. 119) that the wider potential of the thesaurus be acknowledged. But to be of more than historic interest, it must be updated as required, as a thesaurus to be useful should be a guide to living, rather than discarded terms.

It is interesting that the production of an exemplary thesaurus was not heralded as an expected result of the HRS: the emphasis of the pre-release publicity was always on the discovery of new and exciting material rather than on the more practical aspect of retrieving the details once recorded.

Looking for collections which might be relevant for a family history or trying to follow through a specific topic, such as locality, profession, activity, event or record type, is likely to prove disheartening for the researcher, despite the help of the thesaurus and index. You are very quickly reminded that this a selective, and not an exhaustive, guide to 'Australia's history'. For example, there are entries covering various ethnic groups, but Vietnamese migrants are not included: this means that none of the material located by the HRS relates to the experience of the Vietnamese in Australia, not that no records of or about this group of people exist. The *Register* is probably richer in entries relating to the idealised Australian rural past than the reality of the urban present. (This is my impression, not the result of any statistical analysis of its coverage.)

The *Register* cannot and was not ever likely to document exhaustively or uniformly records held in private hands across Australia. The question of the representativeness of records entered in the *Register* is, however, relevant when trying to evaluate the contribution of the HRS to the preservation of privately-held paper-based records. This is at least partly because the publicity for the HRS promised that it would be 'as wide-ranging as possible' and that it '. . . would record materials which document important events and places in Australia's history', without forgetting the records of 'small businesses, community organisations and families'. It is also because the amount spent on the project was so large and because established institutions, with existing field networks and finding aid structures, were denied access to this source of funds.

About 3000 collections/record groups, almost as many as the 3415 finally registered, were excluded from publication. Whether this because they did not meet the criteria for 'significance' or whether they did not relate to the geographical area in which they were uncovered or were unsuitable for other reasons can only be surmised, unless the records of the HRS itself are to be available for research.

Some clue to the reasons for exclusion in one centre of the HRS is given in H. J. Gibbney's account of his experiences as a field officer for the search in Canberra (see *Canberra Historical Journal* number 22, September 1988, pp. 11-15). Many of the collections he located did not relate to Canberra, so that they were excluded, although they were inherently just as valuable as those which did. His account also underlines the two roles required of the HRS field officer — archival judge and publicity officer. Field officers could be required to create interest in the HRS as well to respond to applications for inclusion. It should also be noted that Gibbney felt that the most worthwhile result of his participation was the publication of a guide to historic records in the Australian Capital Territory which covered institutional holdings as well as the material in private hands located during 1987-1988.

In an arbitrary sample of about one per cent of the *Register* entries, I found the following: that family records predominated — they were easily the largest category. Local history collections based in the town or district historical society were almost matched by collections of material about a locality maintained by an individual (it seems that one criterion for these to belong to the collection rather than the record group category is for them not to contain anything about their collector or that person's family). Records of community organisations outnumbered business records as a category. I also found entries for records in every state and in two territories.

Around ten per cent of the collections/record groups in this sample were access restricted. Only a couple of the entries were reported by their owners rather than by HRS staff. Records groups were more numerous than collections and there were some non-paper collections. On the other hand, the treasure-troves of courting letters, much-beloved of publicity for the HRS, do not seem to have materialised. One may care to muse: was this for reasons of their non-existence or destruction or perhaps because the writers' or their descendants' concern for privacy presented their inclusion in such a publication?

One entry I noticed seemed to consist of estrays from the records of a long-established Australian business, another was a copy of a personal record series which I know was already available in a public collection and some of the business records could hardly have been previously unknown within their own communities. One record group did not belong to either the 'normal' (contact the owner at the address given) or 'restricted' (contact the National Library of Australia (NLA), as the owner's address is not published) access categories, but was instead recorded as 'special access'. This category involves more work for the NLA, as the user has to meet owner-imposed conditions before the request is forwarded by the NLA to the owner. Using the same term as Australian Archives but with a different meaning could confuse some potential users.

There is also the issue of the records which may no longer be found at all: either because of destruction, change of location or possibly because the owners or their heirs no longer wish them to be included. The onus to notify changes of status was left with the owners and the National Library of Australia only has limited resources to maintain the *Register*. One update was issued in 1990 (because of access changes), but how often will they appear and will all holders of the fiche be meticulous about maintaining their copies? Also, how many owners have decided to transfer their records to public collections or have already done so? The *Register* will be a guide to a diminishing totality if this happens even on a modest scale or to a changing one if some of the formerly excluded material is now entered.

The family records included in the *Register* often look somewhat uneven in content and date range, as if they were the only surviving series or the only ones those families who wished to be part of the Search wished to register. These records may well prove to be useful sources for students and both professional and amateur historians. I felt that they differed little in character from collections of the records of ordinary families which can be found in public collections in local and state libraries. Except that those in the latter locations should have a better chance of long-term preservation.

The companion volume to the *Register,* intended for publication in 1990, has not appeared, presumably for reasons of lack of resources in the National Library. This book was to be an illustrated introduction to the *Register*. It could well have served to provide a publicity boost for the *Register* and to introduce potential new users to the records listed. It could also have prompted archivists and librarians with copies of the fiche to delve into it themselves and to recommend it to their clients. Without it, there is little encouragement for custodians to promote a finding aid to records they cannot guarantee still exist and about which they can impart so little information.

To return to two of the main types of material registered: local history collections and family records. What does the *Register* signify for these? For the former, it could bring more users and a higher profile with city-based academics who could forage for that stray letter by their favourite famous person. It could bring improved networks or just simple contact with sister organisations for their mutual benefit. For the latter, it could bring their owners rewarding contacts with interested researchers and the discovery or rekindling of family ties and friendships.

More needs to be reported about such possible results and the continuing life of the records documented by the Search before we can obtain an authentic picture of its impact. For example, how many of the owners have recorded their experiences of research visits to their own houses? Perhaps it would help the NLA to promote the *Register* if

they were to publicise examples of 'happy ending' stories from owners and users.

It is hard to avoid concluding that there seems to be a general lack of interest in the *Register*. In preparing this review, I searched the literature in vain to find published reactions to the *Register*. Marian Aveling's report to last year's ASA Conference on the value of the search to historians was the only reference I found. Her address, with a comment by Glen Schwinghamer of the NLA, was published in the November 1991 issue of *Archives and Manuscripts.* It is hard to measure the *Register's* contribution to archival description and historical scholarship in Australia when the only real source of information about it is the NLA, the sole minder/distributor/vendor of the product. One would have expected that nearly four years after the Search and nearly three years after the publication of the results, there would have been some discussion about its use and usefulness.

It is a pity that the *Register* was not available by late 1988 when some of the other products of bicentennial historical labour were subjected to critical analysis. It could then at least have been reviewed in the context of the other 1988 projects involving the historical community. Not all of these were received with unqualified praise. For example, Jenny Lee's review of the reference volumes of *Australians: A Historical Library* in *Australian Historical Studies* (volume 23 number 91, October 1988, pp. 141-152) rigorously examines those texts, their methodology and their assumptions and finds them generally wanting.

The *Guide to Sources* volume in the series, apart from Liz Nathan's necessarily broad chapter on archives, might as well have been entitled 'a guide to selected secondary sources on the history of Australia'. Although I think there is a need for reference material to assist in-house archivists to get to know the secondary material in their sector, I do not think this volume is the answer — it is too patchy and, by now, somewhat dated. The volumes comprising *Australians: A Historical Library* were published by a private consortium, although public funds went into supporting the editorial process over some years. They were only available as a set for $695, a price beyond the reach of poorer institutions (I would not lament this too much — try the reference section of your public library if you wish to look at them). In comparison, the $30 for the *Register* seems reasonable if you see that it could have a place on your reference shelves.

Without doing a major survey of university history departments to see how many student theses and other major essays have based on research using records brought to light by the HRS, it is hard to guess at the *Register*'s usefulness for future academic and public historians. It is probably reasonable to assume that some students who have used it have been directed there by academics who had some part in the Search or were connected with other bicentennial history projects.

Once again, it is difficult to assess the impact of the *Register* on local and family historians. Suppose that interest in and use of records documented by the HRS in a particular district has been considerable: how is this likely to have been beneficial to the preservation of publicly- and privately-funded collections in that district? Is inclusion in the *Register* an effective weapon in the fight to secure extra funds for local studies collections in nearby public libraries or for fund-raising appeals for the local historical society or family history group?

Perhaps the HRS would have been more effective if it had been more rather than less selective in defining its targets. For example, it might have been to attempt a comprehensive listing of local history collections in their host societies or to have concentrated on non-metropolitan holdings of records in private hands. If a model from overseas had to be used for Australia's major bicentennial archives project, how much better it would have been to have used the National Historic Publications and Research Commission. This body in the United States runs a grant program for archival and related projects, including providing seed money for new archives and for specific projects in established institutions which would otherwise remain in the backlog.

The main conclusion I have reached about the *Register* is that it is likely to remain marginal to efforts to document and preserve the written heritage of our society. This is partly because of the closed nature of the project, the limited number of entries it produced and the unevenness of its coverage. It is also because the *Register* is unlikely to attract strong interest and support as a research tool from archivists and librarians. Putting the *Register* on the Australian Bibliographical Network (ABN) may well result in increased demand for records located by the HRS, but will this lead to increased resources for the Historic Records Office within the NLA's own budget?

I think there would be few in-house archivists who would find it essential to have a copy of the *Register*. After all, their services for public users are concentrated on providing access to the records of their parent institution, or to directing users to known related sources held in other archives or libraries. Some archivists working in collecting institutions must already use the *Register* themselves or find it useful for referring users to sources outside their own collections.

The archival community in Australia has learned from the experience of the HRS. It is unlikely that any future projects will be funded to the same extent either directly by governments or through their agencies. The *Register* is a modest result for a major project, even if it has also lead to some individuals, families and organisations appreciating the potential of their own records and having those records used and appreciated by researchers. Present indications are

that there is hope for real inter-institutional co-operation for a range of archival projects for the centenary of Federation in 2001.

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Publications

Barbara Reed and David Roberts, editors, *Keeping Data: Papers from a Workshop on Appraising Computer-based Records, 10-12 October 1990.* Australian Council of Archives and Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1991. 122 pp. ISBN 0 947219 03 x. $18 ($14.50 for ASA and ACA members) (available from Australian Society of Archivists, PO Box 83, O'Connor, ACT 2601).

The computer, be it mainframe or PC, has become a dominant feature of business and governmental recordkeeping. For much of the world, it is a necessary tool for creating, conveying, and storing information in the workplace. As its dominance increases, the computer has demanded that archivists and records managers at minimum re-assess and at maximum re-invent the methods, assumptions, and objectives defining their profession. Like no other medium, the computer literally forces us to analyse what we do in relation to what it does, because what it does revolutionises the structure, accessibility and stability of information.

Keeping Data is an Australian reflection of archival perspectives on computer-based records in late 1990. The date and country are of note because this reviewer is American, and inevitably will view the papers from a US archival perspective of late 1991 and early 1992. While such comparisons may not be fair, the reader should not worry. *Keeping Data* shows us Yankees to be a bit slow. It is a useful, highly readable collection of papers and comments which on occasion presage the most current theories in the United States.

The volume divides into four sections: *Computer Systems in Context*; *Gathering Information About Computer Systems*; *Appraising Computer-based Records*; and *Reflections*. Each section has three to four articles, totalling fourteen authors in 120 pages. The average paper, then, is brief, generally averaging less than ten pages.

Computer Systems in Context is a primer on basic terminology, systems documentation, and the process of applications development. Michael Hoy did the yeoman service of preparing two papers in this section, although one suspects that their 'textbook' orientation emerged in the process of editing the papers for publication. It is difficult to imagine one orally presenting so many definitions of

computer terms and processes. Olivia Simons described the evolving chain of staff and skills needed to process data or design systems. Her explanation of the relationships between business systems plans, information strategy plans, and systems development provides a foundation for subsequent papers as well as an understanding of the players in the design/development process.

Gathering Information About Computer Systems contains four papers, two of which offer differing methodological approaches and two of which present case studies. While the case studies by Judith Ellis and Stephen Bedford are interesting, major professional issues emerge in the papers by Anne Picot and Lindy Saul.

Picot focuses on the survey as the instrument to use when appraising computer records, and generally finds the techniques applied to paper records appropriate for the electronic medium. Saul, on the other hand, eschews traditional methodology and uses instead the techniques of information systems planning. In so doing, she establishes a 'top down' approach to appraisal, ignores obsolete records, focuses on organisational functions rather than administrative hierarchy, and views appraisal as a 'management' rather than 'records management' tool.

Saul's article, which mentions that she first gave the paper in 1987, came as a surprise to this reader. The techniques she uses are now much in vogue among electronic records archivists in the United States, but are too new for final products to be available for analysis and comparison. Given the availability in Australia of several years of Ms. Saul's products, archivists and records managers there are in a far better position to evaluate the results and implications of this methodology for archival appraisal purposes.

Appraising Computer-based Records begins with Greg O'Shea's overview of the Australian Archives' procedures for appraising electronic records. In addition to setting out clearly the Archives' methods and practice, O'Shea provides a basis for comparing the approaches of subsequent authors. Michael Hoyle, for instance, determined that the systems overview approach was too detailed for his particular project while Sue McKemmish took a whole system approach to appraising the records in her two case studies. Steve Stuckey's paper on the Australian Archives' massive collection of tapes produced during oil exploration is fascinating. It is full of intriguing commentary, and offers an excellent case study in the problems of large data archives and industry/government inter-reliability. However, it offers little for debate in the area of appraisal.

The final section, *Reflections*, is a series of commentaries on the conference proceedings as a whole. Posed against the papers themselves, the comments raise questions and issues of major proportion. Frank Upward's view of the archival record as a social

document links to a popular concept in the United States, that of the documentation strategy. Upward and Saul, however, are surely at odds regarding appraisal, just as the notion of archivists creating documentation strategies in the United States contradicts the assumption that institutional appraisal should reflect only the needs of the institution itself.

Equally provocative are the commentaries of Michael Saclier and Glenda Acland. Saclier raises several excellent points regarding the nature of information in computerized form and the changes in control systems that the computer has wrought. His discussion of the evidential values of records in particular contains food for thought. Glenda Acland has the last word, and uses it well. Stating that 'we need to publicly redefine our perceived role as keepers', Acland argues for intellectual rather than physical control of records. Like some presenters, she also argues for archival involvement in systems design. Finally, she discusses the handling of multiple provenance records that modern bureaucracies and computer systems tend to spawn.

Overall, *Keeping Data* is well worth the read. The final section in particular raises a number of significant points, and provides a basis for continuing discussion. Indeed, the issues deserve a second conference, one that explores more fully areas only hinted at on this occasion, and perhaps also expands the debate to text. For data, alas, is but the beginning of the challenge. What will we do about keeping text?

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Barbara Reed and David Roberts, editors, *Keeping Data: Papers from a Workshop on Appraising Computer-based Records, 10-12 October 1990*. Australian Council of Archives and Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1991. 122 pp. $18 ($14.50 for ASA and ACA members). ISBN 0 947219 03 X (available from Australian Society of Archivists, PO Box 83, O'Connor, ACT 2601, Australia).

Keeping Data is the published outcome of a workshop on the appraisal of computer-based records, which was conducted by the ASA and the ACA in October 1990, in Sydney. In the words of the editors, Barbara Reed and David Roberts, the workshop

> did not seek to present definite answers — our aims were to break down some of the barriers, to share existing experience and to address some concerns that archivists and records managers feel when confronted with the need to manage computer-based records.

The publication is divided into an introduction and four basic sections, following the program for the workshop. There were papers

from three to four speakers to address the various issues within each section.

The introduction, by the then President of the ASA, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, gives the background to the seminars and highlights some of the problems archivists have encountered while appraising electronic records.

Computer systems in context

The first paper, *Introduction to the Computing Environment* is by Michael Hoy, the designer of the Australian Archives' RINSE and ANGAM systems. The paper takes the form of a series of definitions and explanations of the features and characteristics of most computer systems without resorting to jargon, and introduces anyone not familiar with these definitions to their correct meaning.

Delivered in the context of a workshop, the paper may have been a more effective communication. Its bald written format seems to have little integration or explanation of the author's approach to the topic, and appears to be little more than a list of definitions, historical timeframes and rather confusing examples.

Olivia Simons wrote the second paper *Concepts for Communications with Computer Specialists* which focuses on ways of involving the archivist in all stages of the development of a computer system, communications with the personnel involved in the system development life cycle, the benefits of an archivist's participation in the early aspects of this life cycle and stresses the importance of the retention of the support documentation. A question from Peter Crush regarding the virtual maintenance of 'computer museums' in order to run some systems was responded to by discussing the possibility of the continual transfer of data by codes from one system to another.

Michael Hoy's second paper — *Understanding Systems Documentation* not only attempts to explain the role of the systems documentation but also its content. The steps that are followed to create systems documentation are defined, followed by an explanation of its content. The main sections are explained and are emphasised by a hypothetical example, based on a centralised registry system. This example may be more meaningful for those with working experience of such documentation. However, those with no technical knowledge of these systems, such as myself, may find such an example more of a hindrance than an encouragement.

Gathering information about computer systems

Anne Picot's paper *The Computer System in its Context* begins the second section of the seminar, and emphasises the appraisal of current and 'live systems . . . not on archaeologically reconstructing superseded

systems' (p. 35) nor on the databases of the future. The benefits of selection of an appropriate system to survey, the types of information that must be collected for complete appraisal, the survey, its consequential data analysis and Retention/Disposal schedule are discussed as well as some of the issues the author discovered during her appraisal experiences.

The topic of *Gathering Information About Computer Systems* is further expanded by Lindy Saul in her paper entitled *Methodology: A Private Industry Approach* which purports to give a different perspective to disposal selection. After describing current theories and problems existing in records appraisal and disposal, the main thrust of the paper is revealed — the appraisal of records by definition of an organisation's vital functions and their resulting records at the time of creation, as compared to at the end of their administrative use. The methodology used in this appraisal method is then described and explained in great detail, as well as its benefits. The final section of the paper is the only section that specifically deals with electronic records and suggests that archivists should not only identify the type of electronic records they are dealing with but also that 'we must know a lot about the programs designed to turn data into information', in order to access and understand the information contained in them.

Many of the points made by Lindy Saul are reiterated by Judith Ellis in her paper *Gathering Information About Computer-based Records in the Private Sector*. This paper focuses on the techniques used to gather the information, rather than the ways of collating the information and emphasises the need for simplicity when communicating with the professionals involved in the appraisal process. The different reasons for appraisal and the effect of these reasons on the information gathered is discussed which leads into a description of the techniques used for information gathering for the appraisal of computer-based systems. These are illustrated by a case study of the creation of a records disposal schedule, a vital records procedure and a disaster recovery plan for a hypothetical company.

The following paper, presented by Stephen Bedford, is entitled *Case Studies in Large Government Institutions* and begins by giving the background to the Archives Office of New South Wales activities in the appraisal of electronic records and the newly developed Task Force on Machine-Readable Records. The case studies themselves were selected for their ability to display the different issues involved with the appraisal of electronic records. The first study, 'Youth and Community Services Child At Risk Notifications' was chosen as it 'deals with the interrelationship of computer-based and paper-based records and the flow of information through a system' (p. 65), the second, 'Gathering Information About Machine-Readable Records' features current methods used by the Archives Office of NSW to collect

information to assist in appraisal decisions, while the third, 'Personnel Records at the NSW Electricity Commission' highlights 'communications techniques and the need to find appropriate people in agencies in order to obtain information for the appraisal of machine-readable records' (p. 69). The background to each case is clearly stated and discussed and is completed by an 'update' of related events that occurred after the initial decision or activity was completed.

Appraising computer-based records

This section was opened by Greg O'Shea, who discussed *The Australian Archives' Procedures for Appraising Electronic Records*, a procedure which has evolved and will continue to evolve through use and increased knowledge of databases. The methodology in question has five phases — the gathering of information, the technical analysis of the information, the analysis of the data contained in the system, the data flow in the system and the development of disposal classes — which is well illustrated by a flow chart.

The methodology outlined in Greg O'Shea's paper is illustrated by Michael Hoyle's paper *Case Study: Cash Transaction Reports Agency*, which was a pilot project for the application for the previously discussed Electronic Records Appraisal Procedure when applied to a new and state-of-the-art database. The background to the agency, computer system and the application of the methodology are all discussed but the most valuable part of the case study appears when the issues that arose from the project were addressed. Some of these issues included the uncertainty of the future complete use of the system and the timing of the involvement of appraisal in the system creation and development process.

Two Victorian Case Studies, by Sue McKemmish, present the view that 'elaborate techniques are not always necessarily required when appraising all electronic recordkeeping systems' (p. 68). This view is based on the premise that appraisal decisions should be made using value added criteria, as well as the desirability and the feasibility of retaining the records in their electronic form. If they do not meet this value added criteria, it may be necessary to store them in 'more traditional media' (p. 87). Two case studies are then used to illustrate this point — the electronic records of the Transport Accident Commission and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board. The value added criteria forces the appraiser to identify the 'archival output', test it to see if the value of the output is added to by its electronic storage and to recommend the correct storage media, whether electronic or hard copy.

Steve Stuckey gives the final case study in the section, *The Good Oil for Australia*, and deals with the appraisal of petroleum data created during the exploration for oil in Australian waters. The background to

the necessary retention of these records is well explained, as is the continued use of the data. What is of particular interest is the discussion of the need to appraise the data and the methods used. This highlights the need for the conversion of the data from analogue to digital tape and the retention of the reports and interpretive data generated each time the tape is re-run. The resulting Disposal Authority itself raises the issues of the actual disposal of the tapes (they can be given away to the private sector) and the fact that the authority has not yet been used in the first two years since it was issued. The exercise not only raised many issues including the importance of support data and the need to review the disposal authority but also emphasised the fact that the activity had increased communications between the industry and the government and also increased understanding of the need to retain information for reasons other than economic ones.

Reflections

Frank Upward is the first to reflect on the *Challenges to Traditional Archival Theory* and focuses on the belief that technology will reinforce and clarify our archival ideals — which can best be exemplified in the closer integration of archival and records management programs. He illustrates this by discussing the inaccuracies of the concept of the 'record life cycle', the concept of the archival document, the social importance of good recordkeeping and changes to the infrastructure of recordkeeping. Changes to appraisal techniques are also discussed and particular emphasis is given to a more global philosophy which 'apprais[es] the records creator before the records' (p. 107). The author completes his paper by suggesting that the global philosophy will not only be the way for the archivist/records manager to keep up with the implications of recordkeeping, but will provide a method of destroying any 'unhealthy fantasies . . . festering away in the minds of some big brothers and perhaps even a few big sisters' (p. 108).

Michael Saclier, in *Plus Ça Change . . .* or *Forward to the Past* or *Sir Hilary Triumphant*, intends to provoke the reader/listener by raising a number of points relating to the 'challenges posed by the existence and nature of machine readable records of traditional theory and practice on a broader plane' (p. 109). Some of these issues include the notion that problems with computer-based records are an extension of the problems with all records and the secondary view that the problems don't lie with the records, rather with the people that use them. Two other interesting points raised include the drift away from the Jenkinsonian ideal of evidential value toward informational and research value and the need for the archivist/records manager to have more control over disposal in the more personalised systems, such as PCs.

Glenda Acland's paper *Archivist — Keeper, Undertaker or Auditor: The Challenge for Traditional Archival Theory and Practice* concludes the final section and the publication by stressing the need for the archivist to become 'a proactive operator within the overall corporate operation' (p. 115). This is a reaction against the traditional image of the passive and accepting archivist and suggests that the retention of evidential material should be facilitated by the philosophy that 'management of current records is simply the first stage in archival methodology' (p. 116). This places emphasis on the continuing rather than permanent value of the record with a shifting toward moral rather than physical defence (i.e. intellectual control).

As a whole, these papers have not only fulfilled their requirement to 'break down some of the barriers and to share ideas' but have also provided some of the solutions to what cannot be denied is a problem of increasing complexity. As these speakers were drawn from the major archival employer groups in Australia today (i.e. business, federal government, state government, local government and universities) as well as academic opinion, the collation of their views give the Australian archival scene somewhere to progress from — even if only to create a relatively unified approach to a very complex problem.

As an inexperienced archivist, I found the papers to be full of concepts that I had only begun to explore and would recommend anyone with any interest in the field to read them — either for expansion of knowledge or an update on how the rest of Australia is coping with one of the most important developments in archival thought to date.

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Richard J. Cox, *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States*. Metuchen, NJ and London. The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990. 347 pp. ISBN 0 8108 2338 1. $US37.50 (available from Scarecrow Press Inc., PO Box 4167, Metuchen, NJ 08840, USA).

This is a compilation by Richard Cox of a number of essays he has written (in one case co-authored) over the past decade. It shared the Society of American Archivists' Waldo Gifford Leland Prize in 1991, which is awarded for writing of superior excellence and usefulness in the field of archival history, theory or practice. Most of these essays have been published before, in a variety of journals including *The American Archivist*, the *Newsletter* of the Organisation of American Historians, *Provenance, Midwestern Archivist, Journal of the American Society for Information Science, Libraries and Culture, The Public*

Historian, Journal of Library Administration, and in a couple of reports: *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States* and *Re-Thinking the Library in the Information Age: Issues in Library Research; Proposals for the 1990s.* Some of the essays have been reprinted as they were originally published, others have been revised and updated.

In his introduction, Cox makes it quite plain that these essays 'are not an effort to present a comprehensive portrait of the archival profession in the 1980s, but rather one archivist's view of his profession in recent times and his hopes for that profession for the future'. In the essays, he addresses the nature of professions, and focuses on a number of fundamental aspects of the archival community as a profession, particularly planning, leadership, education, research, and writing. He looks at the value of archival history and examines the relationship between archivists and other professions, especially public historians, and librarians and other information professionals. In several of the essays he highlights areas he feels the profession and the archival community must address, for example (in the first chapter):

> The general public must be better informed of the value and relevancy of knowledge of the past AND why historical records are essential for this to occur . . . There must be greater resources for improving the preservation and management of historical records . . . The historical community must be united in order to become an effective advocate for the proper management of our documentary heritage . . . The archival profession must strengthen itself to improve the management of America's historical records . . . Records creators must be convinced of their basic responsibility to preserve and manage, for the good of their own organizations and the public, their records possessing historical value . . . The growth of archival repositories must be better planned in light of the severely limited resources available for the management of the American documentary heritage . . . Archivists must abandon their institutional parochialism and work on cooperative records projects such as state and regional documentation strategies.

He also highlights issues that archivists must address and resolve if they seriously consider their status as a profession:

> Archivists need to define and promote the social utility of historical records, regardless of format . . . In promoting the social utility of archives, archivists and others must be careful to stress the importance of individual archivists in accomplishing the archival mission . . . Archivists need to develop a stronger national voice for archival issues and concerns . . . Archivists should strengthen their educational foundation, theory, and public profile by forming full masters-level archival administration programs . . . Archivists should develop systems for individual certification and institutional accreditation in order to support their education and broader mission in society . . . Archivists should not limit their quest for increased professionalism by dwelling on

their small numbers, but should concentrate instead on their potential for employment.

In an interesting twist, he argues that archivists must practise what they preach:

> Archival history is extremely important for addressing the contemporary concerns and issues of the archival profession ... Archival history is an important tool to be used in institutional self-evaluation and planning, activities that have become very important to the archival profession ... Archival history could be used to develop a body of case studies that would facilitate a better understanding of the life cycle of cultural institutions such as archives ... Archival history is an excellent means of introduction for graduate students preparing to be archivists ... Archival history is a gateway through which to examine some fundamental questions about the nature of records and information . . . Finally, archival history can provide an outlet for the scholarly interests of individual archivists.

Statements such as these might appear to be simple 'motherhood statements', but it is essential that we are reminded of such basic truths from time to time. Most of us, working archivists, are usually so overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the tasks facing us on a daily basis that it is very easy to lose sight of our general direction. Having to fight harder for our precious resources makes it even easier for us to lapse into parochialism. People like Richard Cox are essential for reminding us where we should be going.

What is the relevance of this book in Australia? Indeed, I might ask what is its relevance outside the United States? One of my two criticisms of this book would be its narrow focus — mind you, the title does warn the reader that its focus is *American*. More attention to European and other archival traditions, theories and practices, even if only for the purpose of comparison, would make this a more interesting and relevant work. As an outsider, I might worry that without such comparisons how could one tell how far American (US) thinking was deviating from other thinking (as it happens I don't think it is). However, that then leads me to wonder whether Americans generally care much about international trends — no cultural cringe here.

However (as a recently expatriated Australian archivist), I do think that this book is relevant — archives in Australia face most of the issues facing their American colleagues. We can and must take advantage of the work done by American archivists in addressing the issues of the moment. Not having access to the same sources of funds for research and other projects, we must take advantage of research done elsewhere and apply that which seems appropriate to our own circumstances, although we need to take account of our differing institutional and organisational arrangements — we have no equivalent of the National Endowment for the Humanities or of the

National Historical Publications and Records Commission. We must also encourage more research and writing in our own academic institutions.

This book prompts a valuable and timely re-think.

My second criticism is minor — why is the book so unattractively presented? It looks like something from the 'fifties. Surely at this price something more attractive and easier on the eye would have been possible.

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Australian Society of Archivists, Incorporated, *Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., Hobart, 2-6 June 1989.* Australian Society of Archivists, no date. 124 pp. ISBN 0 947219 02 1. $15.50 (available from Australian Society of Archivists, PO Box 83, O'Connor, ACT 2601).

Hobart is a place I seem destined never to visit. In mid-1989 I was in Canada so it was with great interest that I read the long-awaited papers of the ASA's 7th Biennial Conference, released in time for the 8th Conference in June 1991. An unassuming publication of 124 pages, the Conference *Papers and Proceedings* carries no specific title, a reflection that this was a conference without a specific theme. Nevertheless some twenty-four speakers are featured providing a variety of views on a wide range of archival topics in the form of twenty-six separate presentations.

The *Opening Address* by Senator the Hon. Michael Tate, Minister for Justice and a Senator for Tasmania was brief and unremarkable, followed by outgoing President Peter Crush's 'state of the profession' address to the assembly — a useful record of activities, achievements and aspirations. It is in the Presidential Address that the first of many 'typos' in this publication appear. Crush refers to an item from 'IN THE AGORA' in *Archives and Manuscripts* which in Tasmanian has become 'AURORA'. Other 'typos' are perhaps more obvious e.g. in Colin Smith's eccentric yet interesting lament on the CSIRO Archives (pages 74 and 75) 'rppaoch', 'rmeove', 'rpecisely', 'appearesd' and 'wold'.

The papers then unfold on a variety of topics of archival interest: *Access and Confidentiality* presented from Commonwealth experience by Jim Stokes and by Kenneth Smith from the University of Sydney Archives; *Marketing the Archives; The Trade in Records*, singled out in the Opening Address as of interest to Senator Tate and to my knowledge the first time openly discussed at an ASA Conference by

Peter Biskup, 'J. Moore-Robinson, a trader in records', Tony Marshall, 'The Market in Manuscripts' and Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, 'The trade in records — some ethical considerations'; *Science Archives: Automating Archives* with two Australian Archives speakers, followed by Mark Brogan on 'Archival strategies for DBMS', and Susan Woodburn discussing the MARC AMC format; the *Bicentenary*'s aftermath.

Bob Sharman's meaty treatise *More Muddle Than Melodrama: Lifting the Lid on Government Secrecy in Two States* makes pertinent comments for those of us who, some two and a half years later are having our first skirmishes in the FOI arena and is a salutary reminder of how quickly the political powerbrokers can change our working environment. In June 1989 FOI existed in Australia in only two jurisdictions — the Commonwealth and Victoria — and like Sharman for Western Australia most Queenslanders at that stage would not have expected to see such legislation in operation in their state 'this century'. (Both WA and Queensland are expected to have FOI legislation enacted in 1992.)

Canadian guest speaker, Terry Eastwood, of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, takes a more specific look at public rights of access to information in his account of the growth of the right of access in Canada culminating with the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act in the early 1980s and their effect on public archives programs and resources. He discusses the reality of the so-called 'chilling effect' or the view that open access provisions have an adverse effect on administrators and the quality of records produced.

As a major benefit of the new access regime, however, Eastwood sees a speeding up of 'the process of collapsing the distinction we invented in the twentieth century between records and archives, which after all are one and the same thing', and exhorts archivists to secure their rightful place in information brokerage, a view with which currently some Australian archivists, unlike this reviewer, might still have continuing difficulty.

Other papers of particular interest to me were those entitled *Archives and Manuscripts*. Peter Crush takes a literary exploration of the relationship and distinctions between the terms 'archives' and 'manuscripts', which while interesting to a theorist, nevertheless left me disappointed as no authoritative solution is reached or espoused on what is undoubtedly a vexacious yet pertinent issue to the archival profession. Chris Hurley follows on the same topic declaring from the outset 'This is not a technical paper', and concluding after a range of comments mostly of the personal reflection genre that the topic 'needs to come up again at a future conference'. I agree. It hasn't. It should.

(Or perhaps it is the type of issue best referred to a committee, in sound 'Sir Humphrey' style!)

Michael Piggott's paper *Schellenberg and the Study of Australian Archival History* has the implicit subtitle of 'The Australian Archival Identity' and is clearly the work of an enthusiast. I feel I am a better Australian archivist for reading some more on Schellenberg and have been prompted to ask the author for more details from his extensive study of this topic. I was also amused by the preciousness of some of Schellenberg's attitudes both professional and personal. In his letter to a family friend Schellenberg notes that Sir Hilary Jenkinson, 'wrote a book that is not only unreadable but that has given the Australians a wrong start in their archival work'. Yet Piggott discovered, as I did myself from interviewing Ian Maclean, that Schellenberg had never actually read Jenkinson! Nor it would seem, as is to be expected given his American experience, had Schellenberg ever seen an actual registry, in the European tradition and as translated to Australian conditions, only read about such a fundamental recordkeeping element in Posner and others.

The papers conclude with Sigrid McCausland's presentation, *The future of the profession.* Her view is that while the very nature of our professional work as archivists makes us conscious of questions of the future we are not very good at taking the long view with respect to ourselves as a profession. A wide range of professional activities and concerns are then touched upon including revenue, employment, education, changing work programs, user relationships and image. The need for greater interaction with related professionals is examined and an exhortation to enunciate archival professional skills given.

The publication finishes with an untitled section giving the biographical details of the speakers, including two speakers, Clive Smith and Margy Burn, for whom no papers appear in the volume. Strangely for a publication entitled *Papers and Proceedings* there is no record of questions or discussion sessions which followed paper presentation, nor the usual list of registrants for the Conference.

This is a useful publication, of great value to those of us who were unable to attend the Biennial archival gathering in Australia and an important record of archival practice and progress in 1989. This was to be the last set of published papers of an ASA Conference following a Council decision, with the switch to annual conferences, not to publish separate proceedings, but rather to channel the best of papers presented through the refereed mechanisms of *Archives and Manuscripts.* While unfortunately we do not have a separate publication of the 1991 Sydney Conference, happily this decision has now been rescinded and from the 1922 Wagga Wagga Conference, the

Australian Society of Archivists will publish its annual conference papers in a separate volume.

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J. Eddis Linton, *Organising the Office Memory: The Theory and Practice of Records Management.* Centre for Information Studies Publications, University of Technology, Sydney, Kuring-gai Campus, no year of publication given, 256 pp. ISBN 0 949110 96 5; $40.00 (available from Centre for Information Studies Publications, University of Technology, Sydney, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007).

Records management is not the simple activity most texts make it appear to be. It can be diverse, complex and challenging, and is inextricably linked with the managerial, social, political and technological change of our times. Eddis Linton's book, *Organising the Office Memory*, will not increase the profile of records management by unlocking its potential. It does, however, have a significant advantage over many other texts on the market. Although it is an eccentric book, it is sufficiently representative of practical ideas on records management to make it worth studying for the strengths and weaknesses it reveals. It is truly a monument to Australian records management. Linton has played a significant role in the development of records management in Australia, starting in the 1950s with his involvement with the Business Archives Council. Some of his practical solutions have had a strong influence on others, particularly in New South Wales. The techniques he has developed, and promoted vigorously over many years, have always displayed inventiveness and ingenuity. He has also concerned himself with the question 'why', and has borrowed freely from other fields of activity.

The book starts well with a lively introduction that looks at records and recordkeeping programs from broad and useful perspectives — although, in common with other texts, it fails to indicate that, within a modern inter-disciplinary framework, it is a focus on transactional information that can provide scope for the further development of records management. From a reasonable base, the book goes on to provide practical advice and information on records practice and equipment.

It is at a conceptual level and that the book breaks down. Linton has a strange way of ordering his concepts which means that his insights and innovations appear to be both accidental and incidental, rather than part of the coherent framework he purports to be developing. Thus he starts off with a discussion of file housings, despite a

philosophy that sees this is a secondary consideration. Then, after a useful set of questions aimed at identifying records management problems, he prepares to assess the problems through a survey — but does he collect information on the functions, activities, or transactions of the organisation? Surely, these are key words in a consideration of 'Office Memory', but instead Linton recommends assembling a tape measure, a clip-board, and various other odds and ends and setting off on a study of file housings. For one who argues that records management is more than file management, Linton is disappointingly deficient in demonstrating how records can relate to the objectives of an organisation's activities, and at his most useful when dealing with filing. The same limited approach comes through in his chapters on classification and indexing which draw on library subject approaches, without showing any real awareness that records classing can be about building up stories of transactions or creating appropriate 'sets' of documentation. The key words are again missing from his 'keyword' approach.

The fact that the concepts in the book are dated is another disappointment, given that when forming his practical approaches Linton ranged across a number of fields of activity. The chapters on *classification, referencing,* and *indexing* draw on the Information Science of the 'sixties and early 'seventies, but do not address more recent explorations of the relevance, recall, and precision concepts. There are chapters on *flow charting* and *ergonomics*, areas which are usually ignored in other texts. So far, so good — but perhaps the centrepiece of the ergonomics chapter is a complicated diagram copyrighted in 1959, while the flow chart methodology is derived from the organisation and methods approaches of the same area. The *forms design* chapter does not deal with electronic forms or desk-top publishing. The brief section on *electronic mail* (page 214) fails to even distinguish between E-mail and cash transaction networks. Some passages on antiquated technologies may be of particular use to archivists.

Strategically, the book seems to be directed at the non-government sector. With the poor state of business records management in Australia, this book should have a large market. It offers a set range of responses which can improve the quality of filing in organisations which adopt them. This is not to be sneezed at. The techniques it recommends, however, are losing their viability in the face of change. Let us hope that those who pick up Linton's ideas can adapt them with the inventiveness and ingenuity Linton has displayed in the past, and can tie them in with the broader philosophies this book espouses, but fails to deliver in its details.

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Helen Doxford Harris and Gary Presland, *Cops and Robbers: A Guide to Researching 19th Century Police and Criminal Records in Victoria, Australia.* Nunawading. Harriland Press, 1990. 130 pp. ISBN 0 9593585 2 8. $12.50 (available from Harriland Press, PO Box 92, Forest Hill, Victoria 3131).

As a full-time consulting professional genealogist and radio broadcaster, I must say this book has a most appealing title. There is an air of excitement about it. All little boys wistfully dream of 'cops and robbers'! I certainly did. Imaginative chapter headings too, leave the reader in no doubt as to which section is which — such as 'Criminals Sought', 'Criminals Caught' and 'Criminals in Court'.

Cops and Robbers is one more of the increasing number of special interest guides for Australia's innumerable band of ancestor hunters (which recent estimates place at somewhere between 50,000 to 400,000 strong). If only we had such guides when I began searching twenty-five years ago.

The book helps us pursue both the villains and the victims, male and female. We learn there were no females among the 5600 members of the 19th century Victorian Police Force. But, there were plenty of deserted wives and female prisoners of the Crown.

Perhaps the primary achievement of the book is that it provides the 'mum and dad' users of Victoria's state archives with a friendly key to 'where is it?' in relation to their police and convict records. To the inexperienced user (which must be just about everyone) the fifty shelf kilometres of state archives in Victoria are a daunting prospect in which to find one vital sheet of paper about their ancestor.

In advising my clients and listeners on my talk-back shows around the country, I find frequently that it never occurs to hobby genealogists that occupational records, such as those of police, usually record place of birth, or native place of new recruits. Criminal records too tend to state this information, as well as the ship and port of arrival in Australia, if they were not born here. Birthplace information in particular, can be crucial to success or failure in tracking back a family line, especially as the Australian Government has adopted the unfortunate practice of shredding alternative sources such as pension records and census returns. This is not done in the United States or the British Isles.

Cops and Robbers discusses historical information sources at four major record centres — the Public Record Office, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria and Victoria Police Historical Unit. The period covered is 1836-1900.

The diversity and richness of police and criminal records in colonial Victoria is well illustrated throughout the book, with a wide range of examples cited. Even experienced and professional record users will

learn from this book. I did not know, for example, about 'Police Eleemosynary Schemes', such as the Police Widows and Orphan Relief Fund, established in Victoria in 1870.

My single disappointment in the book is that the *General Index* is rather cursory, and could be expanded to make the book more 'user friendly'. For example, there are no entries under 'Americans', 'Females', 'Deserted Wives', 'Missing Persons', 'Mug Shots', 'Pictures' or 'Photographs', and yet these subjects are covered in the text.

There are some excellent examples of photographs reproduced on pages xvi, 33, 81, 92 and 116. Photographs of the 'cops' are discussed on pages 12 and 105, and those of the 'robbers' on pages 92 and 115.

The authors don't mention 'Police Record Books' of the type that exist at the Archives Office of New South Wales for the 1870s, in which 'Police Mug Shots' are graphically recorded for the whole world to see. One such book is still in the possession of the Mudgee Historical Society. Another, which I saw at a Melbourne Antique Fair in July last year (i.e. 1991), contained some 288 'mug shots' of New South Wales convicts of the 1870s era, including, for example:

> No. 48 — Mary Ann Smith, alias the Woman in Black; native place — born at Lea; year of birth — 1826

Perhaps the compilers will discover similar books for Victoria in time to list them in their second edition?

I was quite delighted to find in the pages of *Cops and Robbers* four new references to Americans in Australia to add to the biographical register I am compiling of such people on behalf of the National Genealogical Society in Virginia. But, to find them, I had to scan the entire contents of the volume.

Convict chasing has become a popular pastime in this country over the past twenty years. Before that, they were a blot of shame on our colonial beginnings. Now we have a guide to 'locally captured convicts' as well as the 'imported' kind.

As far as I know, Victoria is the only Australian state or territory lucky enough to have a detailed published guide to its historical police and criminal records. Let us hope that the excellent work of Helen Harris and Gary Presland serves as a shining example to others to produce similar guides for other regions.

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Conferences

The Information Environment — Towards 2000. Records Management Association of Australia, 8th National Convention, Darwin, 16-18 September, 1991.

The three days were divided so that there were two and a half days of sessions and half a day to allow delegates to view the offerings of the seventeen trade displays. There were fourteen sessions — two of these were concurrent sessions — a total of sixteen papers were presented.

The Convention

The Convention opening, which is apparently a competitive activity for successive conference organising committees, was dramatic indeed — a set piece of desert scenery, complete with appropriate foliage, vivid backdrop, dry ice, and a very powerful, narrative piece of music depicting the Northern Territory's changes of season and mood.

Justice Muirhead, the Administrator of the Northern Territory, formally opened the Convention after this theatrical introduction. His brief comments included some stalwart promotion of the Territory and its contribution (and potential contribution) to Australia's economy, together with reflections on the changes, and their implications, wrought in recordkeeping in legal and judicial organisations and institutions in the course of his working life.

Under the umbrella theme, 'The Information Environment — Towards 2000', there were individual sessions devoted to the:

- effective use of technologies in information management;
- impact of technology on information management;
- law and its effect on information management;
- records and facilities protection — are we prepared in the event of a disaster;
- privacy versus access;
- public concern for the environment and its impact on the information manager;
- physical facilities and environmental requirements for the keeping and preservation of records;
- managing information and the cultural heritage;
- our multicultural society — its impact on information management;
- user requirements of information management;
- educating tomorrow's information manager;
- marketing your services;
- achieving more with less resources;
- role of tomorrow's information manager; and
- managing change.

Given its theme, and the session titles, the Convention should have had, and did have, much to interest archivists. Several of the speakers would have been familiar to members of the Society — Louise Anemaat, Kathryn Dan, Judith Ellis, Stephen Ellis, Chris Hurley and John Thompson — as would many of the delegates.

The title of the keynote address was identical to that of the Convention. It was delivered by Fred Diers, a distinguished North American practitioner and advocate. The presentation was a technical tour de force that almost rivalled the Convention opening. The address was delivered with an enormous amount of energy and, for the opening address of a conference, demanded a level of audience participation to which we may not be accustomed.

Fred Diers talked about the 'information quagmire' and the way in which managers are trying to pick their way through it (by adopting strategies of risk management and delegating control to functional work groups) and the attendant hazards for records managers. He identified the seven areas in which he believes successful information professionals of 2000 will have to be adept and outlined something of the technological set-up we can expect over the next decade. His view was that unless the information professional can answer, in a positive and constructive way, management's question 'How can I access complete and meaningful information on demand at the lowest possible cost' there is no role for us.

In some ways I was probably most disappointed by the content of Fred Diers' presentation. His address was technically awe inspiring (and reminiscent of a motivational session) but the content, while setting the scene for 2000, did not really equip the audience with any radically different ideas on how to successfully position itself over the next decade.

The sessions presented by Tony Poynton (*Effective Use of Technologies in Information Management*), Kathryn Dan (*The Impact of Technology on Information Management*), Peter White (*Educating Tomorrow's Information Manager*) and Chris Hurley (*Achieving More with Less Resources — Challenges and Opportunities*) were excellent, intellectually confronting sessions.

Two practical sessions which were very useful were those titled *Law and Its Effect On Information Management* (Tom Howe), and *User Requirements of Information Management — Will it be User Friendly?* (Barbara James and Pearl Ogden). The former outlined legal problems associated with the admissibility of records — an area of perennial concern mainly because of our lack of knowledge. The latter paper was prepared after consultation with a wide spectrum of researchers in archival institutions. While the paper did not raise any complaints or issues that would be new to us it was a salutary reminder of the divide

and the gaps that persist between the service and the demand, the institution and its staff and its clients. We may argue that our resources have not improved, therefore neither can our services — but surely our resources should not affect our ability to communicate.

The clearest messages derived from the Convention were:

- the lack of organisational visibility and authority of records managers and cognate groups remains a problem;

- we have not coped technically or strategically with the pace of technological change (we remain unprepared and unequipped to articulate a role and to claim it);

- there is a general acceptance that archivists, records managers and librarians do have interests in common and should work together — this harmony and cohesion appears to be at the expense of the new enemy the information technologists.

Convention proceedings

The proceedings of the Convention were published in November 1991 by, and are available from, the Records Management Association of Australia.

Delegates

There were just under 200 delegates and speakers to the Convention. There was representation from every Australian state and territory, three delegates from New Zealand and, of course, Fred Diers from the USA.

Social functions

The RMAA is punctilious about its social and catering arrangements — catered lunches, international food markets, the convention dinner on the lawn in front of the casino to watch the sunset, mayoral receptions etc. You want for neither food nor drink while in the hands of the RMAA. This must add to the general headache of organising the Convention (and to the cost of registration), however, it certainly means you have the opportunity to meet a wide cross section of the delegates.

Venue

The Beaufort Hotel was the venue for the conference (except for the opening sessions which were held in the Centre for Performing Arts which is contiguous with the Beaufort Hotel). From the perspective of a participant the Centre for Performing Arts was a luxurious venue, however, it could have been very daunting for the speakers. The Beaufort Hotel's convention facilities were somewhat more modest in

comparison but they worked very well. The only complaints I could level against the facilities are undoubtedly oft heard refrains:

- that when the large auditorium was divided into two to provide for concurrent sessions the bifurcated sections were not totally soundproof;
- that because the ante-room to the auditorium was occupied by the trade exhibits coffee and tea were served in the auditorium itself leading to some congestion; and
- that the circulation of air could have been brisker.

Conclusion

The Convention was thought provoking, thoroughly enjoyable, and provided ample opportunity for extending or consolidating professional contacts. Given the intellectual and practical confluence of archival and records management work I would have been interested in either more vigorous discussion during question time or panel sessions where both perspectives could have been explored. As a member of the audience I accept partial responsibility for the absence of the former. As a potential member of a future audience at both RMAA and ASA conferences I submit a request for the latter.

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Remember with Advantages: Oral History and the Recollection of Conflict. The 7th Biennial Conference of the Oral History Association of Australia. Brisbane, 20-22 September, 1991.

During three days in late September, the Queensland Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia hosted the 7th Biennial conference by the Brisbane River at St. John's College, the University of Queensland. The Conference entitled *Remember with Advantages: Oral History and the Recollection of Conflict* aimed to provide delegates with a forum for debating 'ethical and methodological issues; discussing and illustrating the innate human, dramatic and artistic value of the "interview"; and highlight[ing] community and academic concern for keeping the record straight'.

The conference was opened by Isobel Tarrago who is employed as the Strategic Planner for Aboriginals, Youth and Women in the Queensland Department of Employment, Education and Training. Her opening address emphasised the importance of 'oral history' both in the maintenance of Aboriginal identity and in the documentation of Aboriginal history. Tarrago's paper was well received by the audience

as it served to highlight some of the key issues for oral history practitioners: the problematic status of the spoken word in relation to the written word; and the democratising expectations placed on the practice of oral history in providing a voice for marginalised groups.

Victoria Barker's paper *Oral History, Spoken and Written* questioned the prioritisation within history of the written over the spoken. She argued that it is 'the perceived immediacy, impartiality and objectivity of the written document that leads certain historians to accord it a status above the spoken word of oral history, which, being memory-dependent and profoundly interpretive, is perceived to lack precisely these qualities'. Barker was making a direct reference to Patrick O'Farrell's landmark paper *Oral History: Facts and Fiction* (*Quadrant*, November 1979) in which he threw down the gauntlet to the then emerging Australian oral history movement. Barker's paper adds yet another dimension to the great oral history debate.

It is perhaps a tenet of faith that oral history, as opposed to mainstream history or in relation to the type of evidence available in official repositories, places (ordinary) people at the centre of events. A series of panel discussions and workshops looked at community based oral history projects and the development of that community's culture. We saw extracts from the play *Aftershocks* which is based on the 1989 Newcastle earthquake and makes use of the interviewee's words to provide speech for the actors; and from the Inala Community Theatre an extract from their production *No More* about family violence in Aboriginal and white society which uses the story-tellers as the actors. Community artists spoke about problems and skills associated with processes of researching and writing community oral histories and suggested strategies for ensuring that oral history projects, whatever their final format, remain manageable.

The use of oral history as a source of evidence about the past must invariably bring in the question of the way people remember. Alistair Thomson's paper *A Past You Can Live With: The Digger Memory and the Anzac Legend* looked at the way individuals compose memories, the conflicts within each person's remembering and contradictions between competing public versions of the same event. Janis Wilton (*Remembering Racism*) addressed the issue of 'selective remembering'. Wilton is currently interviewing descendants of early Chinese-Australian settlers in the New England area of New South Wales and has found that despite abundant evidence in written sources of racism against this community, racism and discrimination are not topics that people easily recall and nor do they necessarily wish these experiences recorded for prosperity. This poses a dilemma for the historian and requires sensitivity on the part of the interviewer balanced by the need to record accurately.

The conference was well organised and well attended. I would have liked to have seen a little more emphasis on the practicalities of managing an oral history project — from funding through to storage, deposit and access conditions. Perhaps the OHAA could look at publishing a series of information sheets for the novice oral historian (if they have not already done so). The majority of the papers read at the conference are published in number 13 of the *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* available from OHAA (SA), Institute Building, 122 Kintore Avenue, Adelaide 5000.

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Review of Archives Legislation, Electoral and Administrative Review Commission Public Seminar, Brisbane, 9 December 1991.

In Queensland at the present time, following the glare of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, the machinery of government is being gradually overhauled. The body empowered to investigate matters arising from the Fitzgerald Report is the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC). EARC has developed a protocol of conducting an investigation, releasing a discussion paper for comment, seeking submissions from interested parties, conducting a seminar and then preparing a report for consideration by the Parliamentary EARC Committee before the government decides what action it proposes to take.

It is against this background, that EARC, on its own initiative, commenced an inquiry into the Queensland *Libraries and Archives Act 1988.* Approximately 200 people attended the associated seminar. The format for the day was simple with two speakers for four sessions and an opportunity for the audience to ask questions between sessions. This provided a relaxed environment in which to ponder the many different issues being raised.

In opening the seminar EARC Chairman, Tom Sherman, commented upon how EARC had become interested in archives legislation. It was spawned by the discovery that the records relating to the 1985 Review of the Queensland electoral boundaries had been lost. Recognising the important links between good records management, proper records disposal procedures, sound public administration and accountability, a review was commenced.

Following the opening remarks, John Cross, Principal Archivist, Archives Office of NSW, spoke on *Legislative Developments in Archives.* In this wide ranging brief, time was spent recounting the history of archival theory and how that had been translated into legislation in the Australian context. Principal features have been the splitting of archives from libraries and the recognition of the relationship between archives and records management. In conclusion Cross commented upon the urgent need for legislation to come to grips with technology. The next speaker, Professor Geoffrey Bolton, History Department, the University of Queensland, gave a user's viewpoint on how archives need to cater for changing demands from users. He noted shifts away from political research into more social aspects of modern life, such as the home and workplace.

The Records Management Role of Archives was the confusing title given to what turned out to be an interesting paper presented by Susan Porter, Queensland Administrative Services Department. The interest in the paper lay in the perceptions advanced from a senior management perspective of what were considered to be the priorities for a state archival institution. Apart from the obvious, such as custodian of the state's history, a more modern picture was painted of an interventionist role in setting criteria for selecting records for custody, establishing standards for records management practices and introducing tighter controls over the disposal of records. The challenge for the archival authority is to develop an entrepreneurial spirit to achieve results.

Chris Hurley, Public Record Office Victoria, presented his paper on the topic *The Regulatory Role — Furthering Cultural and Administrative Purposes.* The paper questioned the assumption that the regulatory role often assumed by archival authorities under legislation is an appropriate use of power. While not arriving at any firm conclusions, the paper was a useful contribution to the debate on the role of sanctions in archival legislation.

The speakers following were Jim Stokes, Australian Archives, who covered methods developed to handle 'special case' records, Spencer Zifcak on *Intergrating Rights of Access To Public Records* and Dominic McGann, on *Applying The Models To Access Systems in Queensland.* This group of papers covered a range of issues associated with public access to records whether it be via archives or Freedom of Information legislation and the necessity for ensuring the compatibility of legislation covering similar areas.

In the final session Glenda Acland, University Archivist and Coordinator Records Management, the University of Queensland,

dealt with the topic of *Managing The Record Rather Than The Relic.** The paper suggested that an archives should not focus principally upon acquisition or custody and should not be treated as an information outlet. Rather, the emphasis should be upon 'the front-end procedures and operations' associated with managing the records through their continuum, a theme picked up by several other speakers during the day. If this can be achieved then significant advances can be made in overcoming some of the perpetual resource problems which occur in archival institutions. Lee McGregor, State Archivist, Queensland State Archives, spoke on *Transforming Ideals Into Reality in Queensland.* The paper concentrated upon the lack of resources provided to Queensland State Archives and presented a case for substantial increases if reforms of any significance are to be achieved. The paper was silent on the development of a vision for the future and did not question whether there were new methods which could be tried to overcome old problems.

So what was to be made of the day? It was interesting to hear a wide variety of topics presented by authoritative speakers. The format for the day was appropriate. The main disappointment was the lack of audience animation. With a substantial number of participants there should have been a wide diversity of views and opinions to generate discussion. This, unfortunately, was not the case resulting in topics not being explored or assumptions questioned. At the end of the day one was left satisfied but with the feeling that more could have been gained.

Philip Taylor
Records Manager
The University of Queensland

*Reproduced elsewhere in this issue.

Exhibitions

Freedom's on the wallaby: Facets of the Australian Labor Party, 1891-1991. Exhibition. National Library of Australia. 8 October 1991 to 31 January 1992.

Three impressive trade union banners fly in the foyer of the National Library to mark the centenary of the Australian Labor Party. They are eight-hour demonstration banners of the Operative Stonemasons' Society, the NSW Branch of the Federated Clothing Trades Union and

the Australasian Society of Engineers. Their commanding presence, together with the serried pennants of the affiliates of the NSW Labor Council, have a spectacular impact on visitors to the Library.

Entering the exhibition itself, an enormous illustration of women at work in the weaving room of the Geelong Woollen Mills, a reproduction of Tom Roberts' 'Shearing the Rams', rollicking folk songs of the shearing sheds and the University of Melbourne Archives' comprehensive display of Victorian trade union ribbons introduce the visitor by sound and sight to the industrial conditions of the late 19th century which gave impetus to the political aspirations of the Australian Labor movement.

The technique of the exhibition is to lead the eye of the visitor from the original documentary exhibits arranged in display cases to a dense textual commentary, together with additional facsimile material, mounted on boards behind the cases. The method of presentation is ambitious and demanding on the visitor, but enables an essay on the broad social history of the ALP not otherwise possible.

Thus, for example, original documents and publications of the 1880s and 1890s relating to the origins of the political labour movement are exhibited, such as the radical newspaper *Our Commonwealth* (Adelaide), December 1887, setting out the constitution of the Australian Socialist League; the photograph of the Unionist prisoners sentenced at Rockhampton in May 1891; a copy of *The Worker* (Brisbane) issued in the same month; the Mitchell Library's copy of Bertha McNamara's *Home Talk on Socialism* published in Tasmania in 1891 (a rare text not frequently referred to in the literature); and William Lane's flier on mateship from New Australia, Paraguay, Christmas, 1893.

These originals are supported and elaborated upon by various facsimile reproductions, including the title page and preface of the rule book of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union, 1887; the Shearers' Union Manifesto issued on 12 July 1890 as reprinted in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Strikes;* a photograph of a Queensland shearer's strike camp from the John Oxley Library; the illustration from the *Sydney Mail* of troopers charging the crowd at the Quay during the Great Maritime Strike; and photographic portraits of W. G. Spence, David Temple, Bertha McNamara and William Lane.

The accompanying text explicates the exhibits in the context of the industrial confrontation of the 1890s, referring to the previous occasionally successful parliamentary candidatures of representatives of labour, outlining the failure of the Maritime Strike of 1890 and the Shearers' Strike of 1891 and its immediate political consequences: the New Australia Association's retreat to Paraguay on the one hand, and the major electoral successes of political Labor organisations on the

other. 'Others, such as the young poet Henry Lawson', notes the commentary, almost as an aside, 'dreamed of rebellion':

> We'll make the tyrants feel the sting
> O' those that they should throttle;
> They needn't say the fault is ours
> If blood should stain the wattle.

It is, however, the milder first stanza of the poem, which makes the point as far as the formation of the ALP is concerned and from which the exhibition takes its title:

> An' Freedom's on the wallaby,
> Oh don't you hear'er cooey?
> She's just begun to boomerang,
> She'll knock the tyrants silly,
> She's going to light another fire
> And boil another billy.

In keeping with the democratic ethos of its subject, the exhibits include a strong selection of Branch records: the minute book of the Coonamble Labor Electoral League, 1891-1894, and records of the Fitzroy Branch, including a small banner, 1923-1928, both from the National Library's own holdings; and a private collection of records of the Hunters Hill Branch, 1940s-1950s, haphazardly arranged in and about the two small globite cases in which they were kept. Rodney Cavalier's comments, quoted in the commentary, may be taken as fair advice to collecting archival institutions: 'Unlike Britain ALP Branches have not acquired premises. They have no sense of place. They meet in rented premises in which another dozen organisations will meet before the ALP reassembles. Lacking space they could call their own, the branches have relied on voluntary officers to store and preserve the few records that have survived.'

A theme on the role of women in the Labor movement can be observed in the exhibits, although it is carefully noted that women's occupation of parliamentary seats and, in particular, ministries was slow to come about. The activities of the Brisbane Women's Union dating from 1890 are referred to and there is a photograph of the ALP Women's Convention held in Melbourne in 1912. Alice Henry's informative notes from her papers at the National Library on talks by women activists at a Trade Union Women's Dinner in Melbourne in 1925, are on display, as is material from Muriel Heagney's archives at the La Trobe Library, in particular an interesting document referring to her role in the anti-conscription campaign of 1916. A display case is devoted to Jesse Street's career in the Party, including her controversial resignation over the ALP's proscription of organisations affiliated with the Communist Party of Australia in 1949.

The photograph from the John Oxley Library of the first Labor government in the world, Queensland, 1899, is indicative of the major

theme of the exhibition which is the political history of the Party and of Labor in government. On exhibit are a fascinating range of documents which give a human face to that history. The difficulties of J. C. Watson's first Commonwealth Labor government, formed in April 1904, hampered by lack of an effective majority, are referred to in correspondence from Watson to Deakin. There is an anonymous proposal from the Andrew Fisher papers at the National Library which may have led to the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank in 1913. H. Campbell-Jones' letter to Andrew Fisher, 26 October 1914, congratulates him on being a 'sincere Britisher and British Imperialist'. With the conscription referendum pending, Billy Hughes announces his alliances in a letter to Fisher, dated October 1916: 'it is now apparent that there are elements in the Labor Party with which I have nothing in common'. W. G. Spence writes to Hughes, in January 1918, regarding the work of his 'secret service agent' spying on the IWW and enclosing as evidence of 'possible revolution' a leaflet entitled 'Anti-Conscription Army Songs' which includes 'Bump me into Parliament'. A social realist portrait of William Forgan Smith, Queensland Premier from 1932-1942, shows him holding the reins of Queensland's industries.

Taking the history beyond the Second World War, the exhibition continues to draw on a wide range of archival sources, including the Evatt papers held at the Flinders University Library, the DLP records from the La Trobe Library, B. A. Santamaria's papers and the ALP's own archives at the National Library. The focus of the more recent material is on the public face of the ALP. Some internal administrative records are exhibited, but they do not document any of the deeper mysteries of the Party, although the National Library's own initiative in this arena, the verbatim transcript of its recording of the Federal Executive meeting leading to its intervention in the Victorian Branch in 1970, is on display.

The exhibition is rich, not only in the written material exhibited, but also in its sound recordings and graphics. Selections from the graphics form the basis for a delightful essay in the semiotics of the Labor movement by Roger McDonald, *Reflecting Labor: images of myth and origin over 100 years,* published in conjunction with the exhibition. Also published, in leaflet form, in conjunction with the exhibition are a series of mainly biographical articles by Adrian Cunningham and Michael Richards. Michael Richards is the curator of the Exhibition.

Ewan Maidment
Senior Archivist
The Noel Butlin Archives Centre
Australian National University

Records of War Gallery. An exhibition at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Viewed January 1992.

Exhibitions are about access to whole collections as well as about telling a curator's version of a history, publicising an institution, attracting powerful people and corporate sponsors to gala openings, and showing off the 'treasures' that an institution has gathered over the years. This is increasingly being recognised in the exhibition policies of libraries and archives, and is a central discussion point in museum practice today. An effective exhibition is one that draws people in, including audiences new to the institution; one that exposes the history of a collection; and one that makes sense of its contents in ways that are relevant to audiences unskilled in the exhibition's subject matter and archival, library or museum practice, as well as to scholars and the rest of the curator's intellectual community. Archivists and librarians in Australia now have an interesting and generally successful example of how a museum goes about the display of library and archival material so as to meet these goals, as one of the country's major museums, the Australian War Memorial, has devised a permanent exhibition to introduce its Research Centre with its huge collection of the 'records of war'.

There are great problems with exhibiting manuscript material. Manuscripts are material objects of a particular kind. Along with books and printed material they have to be read to make sense; to display a closed book or a folded, unreadable manuscript denies its meaning, and turns to the object into an gagged artefact, forbidden the opportunity to define itself to the viewer/reader. I'm talking about books and manuscripts written in the lanugage of the viewer: some time ago, when I was set the task of devising an exhibition based on a collection of ancient palm-leaf manuscripts from Laos, written in a script which even few Loatians could read, I had to recognise that I was dealing with a different class of object from the typical manuscript in a modern Australian library setting. Mostly this is not the case.

But the ease with which most books or manuscripts in Australian collections can be read and thus apparently located within meaningful contexts is deceptive: that they can be read by any literate person does not necessarily mean that they are easily to be understood in their full or correct meaning. And it is difficult to display more than one or two pages: even that which can be read is generally only a tiny part of the whole. The challenge with such material is, thus, to give enough of the context in which it was produced and read (two separate processes) to allow the untutored reader to get beyond the apparent meanings of the collection of words that are manuscripts and books on display, to their original meanings, and thus to be true to them as sources. However the exhibition must at the same time not overdo the explanaton of context, for otherwise it runs the risk of not allowing the words on display to

speak for themselves. Further, this class of material is normally fragile and, in the case of manuscripts, usually unique, needing to be handled only infrequently and under supervision. The curatorial and design challenges in dealing with archival material in exhibitions are formidable.

Records of War is an unashamedly wordy exhibition, with long introductory captions and showcases crowded with original material. Substantial transcripts of letters and diary entries make passages that are difficult to read in the original very accessible, and the exhibition's organisation into short, punchy themes allows visitors to select however many bits of information they have time to absorb. The exhibition is refreshingly honest about the history of the collection, acknowledging that it was for many years not managed by people with archival or librarianship skills and therefore not widely used by nor accessible to the public. The themes explored are interesting, with a wide range of types of materials on view. Thus a case which explores the relevance of the Australian War Memorial collection to family historians by summoning the wealth of material relating to one soldier, from his appearance in an AIF nominal roll through to a map of the military cemetery where he was buried, will fascinate many of the Memorial's visitors. A recent acquisitions case, accompanied by a well-written leaflet entitled *Donating your records to the Australian War Memorial,* makes the collection development policy of the Printed and Written Records Section of the Memorial available. Parallel leaflets on photographic material and sound and film material, also displayed in this case, would be helpful. Other research themes explored at present are *embarkation for war, psychological warfare, war photography* and *the battles of Pozières and Long Tan.*

Design of the exhibition shows a strong awareness of the conservation needs of such material: light levels are low, the reasons for this are clearly explained, and nothing is displayed in a way that threatens it. My only criticism of this informative and well-written exhibiton is to do with its showcases. They are deep and have high, nearly flat bases: material at the back is difficult to read, especially for short people and those with sight difficulties. A visitor in a wheelchair would also get very little out of the exhibition. Cases are crowded, and it is sometimes difficult to tell which caption relates to which object. But in sum this exhibition is well worth a visit by anybody concerned with public access to archival and manuscript material.

Michael Richards
Exhibitions Curator
National Library of Australia

Videos

Australian Archives, *Starting Your Search: Finding Records at the Australian Archives.* Canberra. AGPS, 1991. Video recording, 10 minutes duration. $15 (available from the Director, Access/Client Services, Australian Archives, PO Box 34, Dickson, ACT 2602).

Although its title establishes the context in which this video can most usefully be viewed, my reaction to it was influenced by Maggie Shapley's (Assistant Director, Access/Client Services, Australian Archives) comments which accompanied the review copy. In particular Maggie said,

> ... so much to say and so little time to say it ... and
> The intention is to free reference officers from the continual repetition of their spiel to first-time users about how to find records. It would be most useful to researchers (both academic and hobby) starting a project requiring detailed research.

The video commences with an introduction to the Australian Archives and its national network of search rooms. This is followed by an introduction to, and explanation of, the elements 'agency', 'series', and 'item', and to the two databases, RINSE (Records Information Service) and ANGAM II (Australian National Guide to Archival Material). These two databases were briefly explained in an article by Bruce Arnold and Hilary Rowell in the May 1989 issue of *Archives and Manuscripts.*

Having provided the framework in which records are documented in the Australian Archives the tape provides an example of an enquirer researching the Brisbane Customs House. The particular benefits of the medium are used to good effect as the viewer accompanies the researcher through her examination of the Function Thesaurus (a feature of the search process to which I would give greater prominence in any future edition because of the link it provides for the novice between terms s/he knows and these new 'agencies') to identify the relevant Agency, her noting of the Agency registration number and entering it into RINSE which reveals the list of series, enabling her to select the series of interest to her. Reference to the availability of a departmental index which might assist the researcher is particularly well done. The final step of the search strategy, namely entering the series number into RINSE, either provides terminal access to a list of items or informs the researcher to request a hard copy of the list from which she can note the numbers of the items she wishes to see.

Reference is then made to ANGAM II to determine whether or not the item has been cleared for access. Users are warned of the possible lengths of delay involved in the access clearance process and are advised of the need to exercise patience should the item sought not yet

have been cleared. ANGAM II's keyword enquiry facility is also demonstrated as a possible short cut but its limitations due to incompleteness are explained.

A second and final example of a genealogical enquiry is provided using ANGAM II's keyword access to names but also informing the viewer of the publication *Relations in Records* which provides more detailed advice on conducting family history research in the Australian Archives.

The last minute or two of the tape informs the viewer that archives may not be borrowed but describes the record copying services available. Finally the viewer is encouraged to recognise this tape as a beginning and to enquire about the many other ways in which the resources of the Australian Archives may be revealed.

The video is visually very pleasing with the presenter's pleasant manner and delivery combining with her vibrant blue attire to provide an attractive contrast to the generally neutral colour of the surroundings. A good and frequent mix of images maintains a visual interest and illustrates the narrative well. It is no hardship to watch the tape several times, as is really necessary to acquire all of the detail available from both the visuals and sound. A 'prompt sheet' is currently being tested to assist viewers to remember what they have seen to keep the process in mind as they conduct their search.

There are combined TV/VCR units with headphones in each regional office of the Australian Archives for exclusive viewing of the video in public search rooms. The units have the facility to show the video non-stop or just on demand. The video is also available for loan free to groups of genealogists, students, local historians, and other service clubs and societies.

A professional aid which establishes a standard of quality that will be hard to follow as more of us use this medium to assist our clients.

Peter Crush
Principal Information Resources Officer
Corporation of the City of Adelaide

Canberra Archives. Sydney. Coastal Productions, 1991. Video recording, 30 minutes duration, limited edition. Not available for purchase. Copies available for loan. (Master copy to archival standard held by Australian Archives, NSW Branch.)

What did archivists working in the Australian Archives in Canberra in the 1970s think about the political climate of the day and their work environment? How did this group of, in the main, fairly young people spend their out-of-work hours and how does this reflect on the Canberra lifestyle of the day? No serious student of the Australian

archival profession should pass up the opportunity to see this unique video, copies of which are available for loan from Robert French.

This 1991 re-release video is a potpourri of material dating from the mid- to late-1970s and has a deceptively plain title. While definitely of the 'home-movie' genre, nevertheless it has much to offer as social comment as well as its contribution in the fields of both history and nostalgia. This version was a parting gesture 'for the record' of a certain Australian archivist before he departed for a post in Washington, and captures the best of a wide variety of material recorded over a number of years by an enthusiastic, talented and changing group of staff of the Australian Archives, Canberra. The driving force behind these productions commented recently, 'Some of us were thicker or thinner then and that's not just our hair'.

In the Beginning, produced by Samuel Goldwyn Smith and directed by Cecil B. de Cowling (clearly recognisable as pseudonyms for 'those in the know') is a delightful commentary on the propensity of the government of the day to change administrative arrangement orders for Commonwealth Departments or 'reshuffle' as it is generally known. The strong hymnal accompaniment is supported by clever scripting — 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with Malcolm and the word was reshuffle.' 'And the word came down from Nareen that life was not meant to be easy and Canberra departments were about to be reshuffled ... again'. A Minister and Department are joined in matrimony in a strange ceremony an 'estate for the procreation of agencies', and it is noted that reshuffling exists 'to guard against job satisfaction and security of tenure'. Filmed on City Hill in the heart of Canberra, on what was obviously a fine, summer but windy day, the cast enjoyed the frolic. Many familiar faces are there, some identified for posterity at the end, but viewers will have to be quick to identify others, like this reviewer, who chose to maintain a degree of anonymity for reasons long forgotten.

The same producer was responsible for the second item *Phantom of the Archives or Murder in Rue Parkes,* which is a strong, moody piece inset with an archival melodrama. It is essentially a tale of life in the Nation's Archives, particularly at the main facility of the day, the Nissen huts at Parkes. It features an innocent researcher attempting to locate the Archives, visiting it and then disappearing. Intrigue abounds as the melodrama unfolds its explanation of the downfall of the mad Senior Archivist, distinctive in a redlined opera cape. Intent on ravaging the sweet young region Victoria, the mad Senior Archivist and pet monster, the dreaded 'backlog', are finally sent packing by an angel of mercy who quickly grants instant 'conversion to the CRS' to a grateful Victoria.

Full use is made of the evocative setting of Parkes, the front security grille and darkened corridors successfully conjuring up an atmosphere

of terror, unknown to the regular inhabitants. Alas the researcher 'whose status has yet to be identified', was found murdered and a series of strange happenings occurred including, 'an access clearer bored to death in the ballroom', a 'most mysterious death in the map cabinet' (we always said that particular type was lethal), 'a graduate clerk crushed to death in a Type 1 box', and 'a typist poisoned by the coffee machine'. (I recall some strong opposition to the elimination of the tea lady and the introduction of a Cafe-Bar).

Following a light musical interlude with 'Three little ARO's are we', to a well known G&S tune, the producer added a new scene to the film some years later after the Parkes repository was abandoned and many of the cast moved onwards to new jobs and locations. The skeletal remains of shelving in the abandoned huts provided a provocative backdrop to the concluding words, 'These buildings may now seem deserted, *but* has the fiend really gone?'

Feeling slightly disturbed at this point the viewer is then lightened by a quick change of scene and tempo as the 'Archivettes', that well-known cheer-team from Christmas Party reviews, go through their breezy routine, recorded, as I recall, by special request for posterity. 'We'll be with you' they cry and indeed they are, whether boldly on the TV for those fortunate to see this video, or in the memories of many Australian Archives staff of the late 1970s wherever they are in Australia or the world. Archives, Ar-chives ... Yaaaa ... !

Glenda I. Acland
Ex-Australian Archives, 1970s

Briefly Noted

John Rickard and Peter Spearritt, editors, *Packaging the Past? Public Histories.* Melbourne. Australian Historical Studies, Melbourne University Press, 1991. 253 pp. ISBN 0 522 84458 8. $16.50. (Available from Melbourne University Press, 268 Drummond St, Carlton, Victoria 3053.)

Historians, whether practising within universities or outside them, are fully aware of a steady growth in the wing of the profession employed outside the Academy. Members of closely related professions may be less aware of the debate among historians engendered by this development. This special issue of *Australian Historical Studies* should help to demystify several aspects of the practice of history in the public domain; it also opens Australia's most prestigious history journal to the debate. *Australian Historical Studies*

has usually followed conventional history — publication of academic articles, fully referenced to the usual range of sources.

In their introductory articles, Rickard and Davison provide an explanation of the genesis of debate on the role of professional history practised outside universities. Davison's article examines the development of 'public history' in its various forms as it arose in other parts of the world. Rickard points out that academic history as we know it, is a comparatively recent development and the form of historical work now known as 'public history' is the traditional form. The recent strengthening of history in the community suggests that society and its interpreters may be negotiating a brave new marriage. Neither the editors or the contributors, however, arrive at a comprehensive definition of history outside the Academy. As Rickard suggests, the use of the term 'public history' implies that it is an alternative to a mythical discipline, 'private history'. As other essays in the volume indicate, practitioners in the community have had no greater success in defining this emerging wing of the discipline.

The essays are divided into a format which reflects the editor's perceptions that history in the community can be conveniently divided into three main categories. The first two sections examine *heritage,* or the employment of historians in producing background studies on various aspects of the built environment, and *museums and material culture,* the work of historians in establishing the socio-cultural context of collections and exhibitions. The usually controversial commissioned history, regarded by many 'academic' historians as thinly disguised hagiography, is consigned to the third category with teaching, the work of generalist consultants and an introduction to the professional associations which monitor standards of practice outside the Academy, establish scales of fees and assist in publicising the proper role of the historian in community studies.

This arrangement highlights public history's most obvious departure from academic history and the one which is most familiar to the keepers of archives. Heritage studies and the material culture field demand the incorporation of a much wider source base than is required in the traditional researching and writing history. For some public historians, photographs and artefacts are more relevant sources than written documents. This development recalls the once frequent academic prejudice against oral interviews. Oral history, however, crossed from the 'fringe' of historical scholarship to incorporation with conventional documentary sources in the research base; it is likely that photographs and artefacts will follow the same path, particularly as many of the new tertiary applied history courses include instruction on their use.

As Rickard and Davison point out, this volume does not aim for consistent presentation of either the public versus academic history

debate but does provide a useful glimpse of the developing variety of both historical scholarship and the presentation of the results of research. It should assist archivists to anticipate future research directions and to understand the incorporation of visual materials and cultural artefacts with documentary sources in the broadening field of historical research in Australian studies.

Helen Gregory
Consulting Historian
Brisbane

Robert Lawrie, *Guide to the Archives of Legislative Council of New South Wales, Part 3 of the Guide to the Archives of the New South Wales Parliament.* New South Wales Parliamentary Archives. 1991. ISBN 0 7305 8737 1 (available from Parliamentary Archives, Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney 2000).

Few Archives produce concise, published Guides to their holdings. The New South Wales Parliamentary Archives continues to expand its published series, reviewed in *Archives and Manuscripts* vol. 19 no. 1 (May 1991) pp. 89-91.

The *List of Series* and the excellent introduction comprise 70% of the book. A separate list of the series, with page references, appears on page 35. The remainder comprises the lists of Presidents and Clerks of the Legislative Council, Ushers of the Black Rod (of which there have been two women), a list of the publications relating to Parliament, and a very valuable two pages on the appropriate method of citation for the records of the Legislative Council. There is also a description of the Printed *Parliamentary Papers* and their indexes, and a list of all the Attempted and Actual Reconstructions of the Legislative Council.

The two quotations (J. S. Mill 1861 and E. G. Theodore re Queensland in 1921) and the How-to-Vote cards in the 1961 referendum illustrate the pervading theme of impending abolition of the Council. Theodore succeeded in Queensland, and J. T. Lang failed in New South Wales in 1926 and 1930 — both using the same tactic of swamping the Council with Labor appointees.

Ruth S. Kerr
Director (Actg), Publications and Resources
Queensland Parliamentary Library
Parliamentary Services Commission

National Library of Australia, *Australian Joint Copying Project Handbook, Part 9, Public Record Office, Personal Collections.* Canberra. National Library of Australia, 1991. ISBN 0 642 15413 9. $10.00 (available from National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600).

Part 9 of the *Australian Joint Copying Project Handbook* covers

personal collections in the Public Record Office in London which contain material falling within the AJCP's Australasian and Pacific scope of interest. All collections acquired by the PRO by gift, deposit or purchase are assigned to a special class: PRO 30. The AJCP has filmed two of these collections in their entirety; filming of seven others has been selective.

The personal collections covered by this guide consist of estrayed government documents, not the personal papers of their creators or owners. The subject matter and the date range of the nine collections vary enormously. The Hatton collection, one of the two filmed in its entirety, consists of Home Office estrays from the period 1779-1854. They mainly comprise petitions and letters relating to convicts' sentences. The papers of Sir Henry Stafford Northcote, also filmed in their entirety, relate to his period as Governor-General of Australia from 1904 to 1908.

The collections filmed selectively include the Pitt Papers (1766-1808) from which are included documents on the British settlement of Australia, the establishment of the southern whale fishery and British interests in South-East Asia and the Pacific and the Abbot Papers (1799-1801) which contain records about Irish convicts. The papers of four Secretaries of State for the Colonies (Lord John Russell, Edward Cardwell, Lord Granville and Lord Carnarvon) yield a wealth of information about events in Australia during the nineteenth century, about the imperial connection and about British interests and annexations in New Guinea and the Pacific. From the remaining collection, that of Sir Alan Anderson, the papers filmed relate to the shipment of Australian wheat to Britain during World War I and to Australian shipping, 1926-1929.

Technically, this guide is a worthy complement to its companion eight *Handbook* Parts. The depth of description varies from general to very specific and in level from collection to piece and to folio. The descriptions are arranged by collection and then by AJCP reel numbers; in all cases, filming has followed the original PRO sequence. A name, place and subject index with page references is included. The index is thorough but, as always, the archivist or researcher interested in the periods covered will profit from careful study of the descriptions themselves.

More generally, *Public Record Office: Personal Collections* is a convincing and timely reminder that the integrity and completeness of government records suffers primarily from the creators of the records themselves. Far from being impartial, the archivist has to be an activist in locating the estrayed record and in helping the researcher to put back the pieces in a meaningful way.

Baiba Berzins
Sydney

Frank Upward and Jean Whyte, editors, *Peopling a Profession: Papers from the Fourth Forum on Australian Library History. Monash University, 25 and 26 September 1989.* Ancora Press. Melbourne, 1991. 173 pp. ISBN 0 86862 014 9. $25 (available from Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria 3168).

This publication is a collection of papers presented at the Fourth Australian Library History Forum held in September 1989. These forums emphasise different aspects of library history. This one asked for papers dealing with the period 1900-1950 and with the contributions of individuals. In all there are twelve papers covering a wide variety of topics of interest to librarians and archivists.

The papers of most interest to me included *Australiana In Brisbane Between The Wars: A Fairy Tale For Grown Ups* by Peter Biskup. This outlined the early years of the Oxley Memorial Library (now John Oxley Library) and its relationship with the Historical Society of Queensland (now Royal Historical Society of Queensland). The personalities of those involved are also drawn out and make very interesting reading.

Jim Cleary's paper, *Women Librarians At The Public Library Of New South Wales* was also interesting for its insights into biographies of Margaret Windeyer and Ida Leeson. The careers of Nita Kibble and Maude Fitzhardinge are also discussed and their struggles against a male bureaucracy is amply highlighted.

The final paper that I would like to especially mention is *Association Amongst Archivists During The 1950s* by Frank Upward which covers the first half of the history of the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia. He states that issues of concern during this period included — what are archives, what does an archivist do, in what organisational structures can archivists operate what background should they have, how should they be trained and what career structure should they have?

Forty years later in the 1990s we appear to have the same concerns. Does this mean that there has been no progress or are we still moving towards the answers?

In his conclusion Upward states that the 1950s was a significant period in the development of archival practice and that the splits that occurred between libraries and archives were part of that development. He suggests that we are moving into a new phase where we will need to look at the unities within the professions and broaden our perspectives. Is the tide turning? Perhaps a future ASA conference could examine this issue?

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Deborah Breen, editor, *La Trobe Library Journal: The Conservation Issue.* Volume 12, Number 45, Autumn 1990. Friends of the State Library of Victoria. State Library of Victoria. 1991. $8 (available from Friends of the State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston St, Melbourne, Victoria 3000).

This particular issue of *La Trobe Library Journal* is devoted solely to the conservation of library collections and for the most part, was put together by the staff of the Conservation Department of the State Library of Victoria. It includes ten papers which cover a variety of aspects including treatment of specific items, environmental control, storage enclosures, care of books, preservation of photographic collections and of documents.

It is not necessary to have a background in conservation to comprehend the information provided. Many of the papers are written for the private collector, and as such offer information of more general and practical nature rather than technical detail.

The highlights include Jeavons Baillie's paper *Conservation: A Joint Effort* which outlines the historical development of the conservation profession, provides an explanation of the causes for the instability of modern paper, and how libraries deal with this and similar problems.

The history and treatment of two items are included. First the *Scriptores Historical Augustae,* an illuminated Florentine manuscript commissioned by Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1479, and second, the *Panorama of Early Melbourne,* a panoramic sketch dated 1841. Deborah Breen's paper describing the treatment of the panorama provides an informative insight into the reasons affecting the selection of a specific treatment.

Michael Lester's paper *The Care of Books* will be of practical benefit to most readers interested in correct handling, storage and maintenance of book collections. This paper is well written, concise and makes use of sub-headings which help the readers locate specific information readily.

While Jackie Millard's paper *Environmental Control and Good Housekeeping to Preserve Your Collection* does provide quite detailed information on how environmental factors promote deterioration, it outlines practical tips to minimise this damage, which can be implemented on a limited budget.

The journal concludes with a *Glossary of Terms,* a list of suppliers for small quantities of conservation materials, useful contacts and organisations, Guidelines for Commissioning Conservation Treatment for Cultural Objects and directions for the preparation of starch paste.

The collation of papers on such a wide variety of subjects into the

one publication makes this issue of the *La Trobe Journal* a useful reference tool.

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Paper To-day, Dust Tomorrow! A Practical Guide to the Use of Recycled and Archival Papers. Queensland State Archives, October 1991. 11 pp. plus insert. $10.00 (available from Queensland State Archives, PO Box 491, Annerley, Queensland 4103).

There is much discussion in the media nowadays about recycling everything and environmental issues generally. Recycling paper is a popular idea at the moment. However, it is causing great concern among archivists and paper conservators and it is our responsibility to alert records managers and creators of records to the importance of the most appropriate type of paper being used for particular purposes. This guide is an attempt by Queensland State Archives to meet this responsibility.

The guide is a very well presented and informative publication. It is printed on Recycle '100', shade Tabourie Green, and with its catchy title is an attractive booklet.

The guide includes several useful charts which show at a glance information on each type of paper. A separate ready reference guide to paper selection, designed for display on the office wall or notice board, is a good idea for quick and easy referral. It shows which paper, whether archival or recycled, should be used for various purposes. It would be helpful for examples of each category of paper to be included in the package so that people can relate to the different types, e.g. archival paper and 100% recycled paper.

A note of authority on the inside cover immediately establishes the credibility of the document. Definitions are clear and concise. However, there is an important note at the end of the definition of Archival Paper referring to a paper called 'Conservation' which is not archival. This note should be highlighted even more than it is here.

The introduction to the checklist, where advice is given on what paper to use for what record, should state very clearly that at this point when selecting a type of paper the life of the document is being determined, on the basis of the paper quality. The inclusion of the section on auxiliary materials is a good idea as it is not only paper quality which determines the life span of a record but also inks, adhesives, fasteners, etc.

Paper To-day, Dust Tomorrow! is a very practical, user-friendly

guide and the Queensland State Archives is to be commended for its publication.

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National Archives [NZ], *Family History at National Archives.* Wellington. Allen & Unwin, 1990. 149 pp. ISBN 0 04 614018 2. $NZ19.95 + $NZ10.00 postage and packaging (available from Records Management Branch, National Archives, PO Box 12050, Thorndon, Wellington, New Zealand).

Why has family history become such a favoured and time-consuming pastime for many people? Why is it the bane of we shopkeepers of the sources? This review does not question further human interest and curiosity in ourselves and forebears, but the book being reviewed does indeed hint at some of the answers.

Family History at National Archives is an attractive utilitarian, and very readable guide. It is divided into two parts. Part One *Beginning Family History* provides useful tips on family history research methods, registration of births, deaths and marriages in New Zealand, Maori registration, using local sources (libraries, cemeteries, schools etc) and the National Archives of New Zealand. Four house-keeping appendices at the end of the guide on systems and procedures at the National Archives, civil registration details, further reading suggestions, and useful addresses, and a glossary of archival terms support Part One.

Part Two *Topics for Research* is the nitty gritty of the guide. It outlines the main sources for family history at the National Archives under the following headings

    Whakapapa
    Getting here
    Women
    Life cycle
    Making a living
    Soldiering
    Troubles
    Ideas

Further subdivision of these topics are boldly headed and more explanatory. For example, the topic *Making a living* covers land holding, shipping and seamen, civilian government employees, and commercial affairs (including bankruptcy, publicans' licences, goldmining). The topic headed *Troubles* includes court and prison records, firemen and fires, mental health, friendly societies and

insurance papers. Other topics (e.g. *Getting here* and *Soldiering*) are given partial chronological treatment.

The numerous sub-division of certain topics, however, sometimes produces a somewhat fragmented effect which could be confusing to the lay reader. This is particularly so where they are liberally interspersed with 'boxed' paragraphs on access conditions, flow charts, photographs, and document reproductions. The problem is similar to that experienced by users of *Roll Call!: a guide to genealogical sources in the Australian War Memorial* (Canberra, 1986). On the other hand, the access 'boxes' are an excellent idea, a sort of combination of green and orange traffic lights (and a few red ones?).

The guide's predecessors, published in 1969 and 1984, and the work of many knowledgeable Archives' staff contributors are duly acknowledged. The contents list is detailed, but an index would have been better. Reference archivists and family historians alike may have occasion to regret the absence of specific series and accession numbers. But I like the guide, its attractive grey/blue marbled cover, friendly style and — especially — the general approach and structuring. One might say these have clearly survived a Tasman crossing. Welcome to a cousin of Australian Archives' *Relations in Records* (Canberra, 1988).

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