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Monash University

Archival Documents: Providing Accountability Through Recordkeeping

edited by Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward

In 1989 at the Australian Society of Archivists conference in Hobart, Terry Eastwood concluded a comparison between Canadian and Australian archival development with the speculation that archivists in both countries might yet 'stand up against formidable obstacles in the way of realizing archives as arsenals of democratic accountability and continuity'.

Since Eastwood made that special challenge the collapse of the Westminster tradition of accountability in Australia has been examined at the highest levels of political inquiry. Australians are losing their capacity to manage recorded information as an authoritative resource. Archivists and records managers cannot afford not to stand up.

In the first half of 1992, the Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records at Monash University instituted a series of post-graduate seminars to explore the relationship between recordkeeping and accountability. This volume is one of the products of that exploration. It draws its inspiration from the unifying concept of the archival document, defined by its transactionality and contextuality.

Its pages contain Eastwood's 1989 paper, a further account of the historical context in Australia, a dissection of the Australian recordkeeping crisis itself, an explanation of archival data management for organizational accountability, explorations of how to institutionalize the nature of the archival document into society's fabric, and thoughts on the role of archivists and records managers within our electronic future. These papers are supported by a series of case studies of a parallel recordkeeping crisis in Britain in the late eighteenth century, the archivist's own accountability for the disposal of Commonwealth Government records, attitudes to recorded information in the print media and the importance of recordkeeping to psychiatric institutions, administrative law, the Auditor-General in Victoria, and the Australian banking industry.

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Price: \$30.00 (Aus). Overseas purchasers \$30.00 (US). Both prices include postage — airmail for overseas.

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Orders to: Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria 3168.