REVIEWS

Edited by Glenda Acland

The International Perspective. Keeping Archives, second edition.

The second edition of *Keeping Archives* published by D. W. Thorpe in association with the Australian Society of Archivists Inc, was launched on 7 May 1993. The first edition of *Keeping Archives* edited by Ann Pederson, was published in 1987 and has become a standard professional reference and student text internationally. It was awarded a Society of American Archivists Certificate of Commendation in 1988.

How does the international English-reading community view this second edition of *Keeping Archives?* Featured below are three expert opinions: from Richard Cox, School of Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh, USA, and editor of *The American Archivist;* from Terry Cook, noted archival writer of the National Archives of Canada; and from Sarah Tyacke, Keeper, UK Public Record Office.

Judith Ellis, editor, *Keeping Archives, second edition.* Port Melbourne, Australia. D. W. Thorpe in association with the Australian Society of Archivists Inc, 1993, 491 pp. ISBN 1875589 15 5. $28 ASA branches, RRP A$40 (available from: in Australia, D. W. Thorpe, 18 Salmon St, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207; New Zealand, Thorpe in Wellington; United States, R. R. Bowker, 121 Chanlon St, New Providence, New Jersey 07974; Canada, Butterworths Canada, 75 Clegg Rd, Markham, Ontario 43R 9Y6; UK/Europe, Bowker-Saur Ltd, 60 Grosvenor St, London, WIX 8DA).

A NORTH AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Introduction: The North American Perspective Defined

The purpose of my review of this revision of *Keeping Archives* is to provide a perspective on this volume from the North American archival community and, more specifically, as a North American archival educator. A few preliminary words are in order about the nature of this perspective, especially as it affects my review of *Keeping Archives.* At the outset, I believe it is important to state that the new edition of *Keeping Archives* is a fine contribution to archival literature and the corpus of primers on archival science and administration.

The North American archival community is not a monolithic group. Canadians seem more oriented, in their professional writings and activities, to issues of archival theory and the relationship of principles and methods to archival practice. Archivists in the United States give the appearance of being more pragmatic and schismatic than their northern colleagues.

At the least, archivists in the United States are mixed in their orientation to historical manuscripts and archives, making their community both more complex and chaotic. These differences can also be seen in the fact that in the United States there has been a steady stream of production of basic archival manuals — Schellenberg (1956, 1965), Duckett (1975), the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Basic Manual Series (1977-85), Bradsher (1988), and the SAA Archival Fundamentals Series (1990-present) — while no general volume has been written by a Canadian archivist except Couture's *Life of a Document;* instead, our Canadian colleagues have recently issued two collections of essays focused on archival theory and history (Craig, ed., 1992 and Nesmith, ed., 1993).

Writing from the perspective of a North American archival educator is even more problematic. As a group there are perhaps a dozen full-time educators on our continent and all have received their appointments since the early 1980s. In the United States, where there still is no full master's degree (although there is a current proposal before SAA's membership to endorse the degree as the standard educational guideline), educators are working (and struggling) to build credibility within the archival community. While a suitable foundation for graduate studies is being built, there are still the persistent debates about the content of archival education, the schools where such programs should be housed, and the relationship between such education and practice. In Canada, where there has been a master's degree program since 1981, graduate education is more established, better respected, and perceived as more vital to the archival profession. In the United States there are still strong sentiments that entry into the archival profession should be non-exclusive and that many forms of educational preparation are

appropriate for practising archivists. The development of an individual certification program within the past few years is emblematic of such sentiments.

All of these comments are a way to say that the revision of *Keeping Archives* will have many receptions in the North American archival community. For some, it will be a welcome alternative, handy one-volume introduction to archival practice to be placed alongside similar volumes. For others, *Keeping Archives* will be just another basic reference, less important than the journals of archival science or the professional conferences where new ideas are introduced and older concepts challenged or defended. For a large group whose members bought the first edition, the publication may be less eagerly sought; when the original *Keeping Archives* appeared the SAA *Basic Manual Series* was in need of updating and significant revision, whereas now there is a current set of basic volumes. For the much smaller group of archival educators, *Keeping Archives* will be scrutinised as a potential reference for beginning archivists and archival students. In my review I have tried to consider this revised publication as such a reference and to place it in context of an expanding (rapidly so) archival literature.

Keeping Archives as an Introduction to Archives and as a Basic Reference

As an introductory, basic reference, *Keeping Archives* is excellent as was its predecessor. It covers the full range of archival functions, provides numerous examples and illustrations, includes pointers to other literature and sources of assistance, and does everything one would expect in a basic volume. For North American archivists, there will be little problem with the reliance on Australian examples; the authors and editor have made a sincere effort to include examples from other nations and, besides, there are many similarities between the context of archival practice in Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Strengthening *Keeping Archives* as a basic reference to archives are a few characteristics lacking from other similar volumes. First, nearly every author has made an effort to discuss areas of change and debate within the profession about theory, methodology, and practice. Barbara Reed's chapter on 'Appraisal and Disposal' is the best in this regard in *Keeping Archives,* considering new approaches, describing debates and controversies, and pointing to new work that is needed. This strength of *Keeping Archives* nicely balances one of the main weaknesses of the SAA's new *Archival Fundamentals Series* — its efforts to write as if there is consensus about all aspects of archival work. On the other hand, Canadian archivists accustomed to the lively

debate within *Archivaria* may be disappointed that the new edition does not go far enough in this regard.

A second strength is its mix of practical and theoretical aspects of archival science. Sue McKemmish's introductory chapter does an excellent job of introducing readers to what archives are and what archivists do and in providing the framework of a theoretical base for archival practice. Her emphasis on evidence as the focus of archival work and the rejection of Schellenbergian concepts in favour of Jenkinsonian precepts will be useful for North American archival educators in introducing students to such issues and debates. Most of the other chapters in *Keeping Archives* likewise consider such concerns. Ann Pederson's interesting contribution on 'Created and Compiled Documentation Programs' does an excellent job of demonstrating how such programs differ from standard archival work while revealing their potential importance for archival operations. This chapter provides grist for the mill of continuing debate about oral history and other means to accumulate or create documentary sources in North American archival circles; some will, of course, see the serious discussion of such topics as out of the scope of (or even heretical to) archival science, but I think it is wise for us to both strengthen our primary knowledge base and to keep our minds open to alternative or related approaches.

Finally, *Keeping Archives* is well-designed as a reference for archival practice. It can be read profitably both cover to cover and examined selectively for information about particular aspects of archival work. This is precisely what individuals desire from such a reference. For myself, *Keeping Archives* is easier to use than the individual items in the SAA *Archival Fundamentals Series* or other comparable works such as that edited by James Gregory Bradsher. The design of the volume, its use of illustrations and charts, and other similar aspects lend to its enhanced useability.

Keeping Archives as a Contribution to Archival Literature

In the past few years there has been an explosion in the publication of archival literature. In North America alone we have seen the publication of a number of new monographs that are intended to be more than basic references — Bearman (1989), Boles (1991), Cox (1990 and 1992), Samuels (1992), McNeil (1992) and Nesmith, ed. (1993) as examples — but are striving to contribute to specific debates or to make contributions in particular archival functions. While it may be unfair to review *Keeping Archives* in this vein, it is necessary to consider how it reflects current thinking and writing. Part of such a critical assessment also relates to this volume's utility as an introductory reference to archival science.

The structure of *Keeping Archives,* while generally quite useful as a handy reference work, minimises its contribution to more recent archival writing. A couple of examples will suffice to indicate what I am suggesting here. The chapter by David Roberts on 'Managing Records in Special Formats', while useful in its description of the challenges posed by such recordkeeping systems as those that are electronic, still somehow suggests that electronic records are 'special'. In fact, they are not, except to archivists who continue to struggle with them. Electronic recordkeeping and information systems have been integrated into every aspect of modern society and its institutions. As such, each chapter should have considered the records produced by such technology and a separate chapter should have been eliminated. The artificial separation of chapters on accessioning from appraisal and arrangement and description (and such artificiality is evident in several other places as well) also reveals a lack of currency with new archival writing. I do not think this is a reflection of what Australian archivists do not know, but that it is instead a reflection of how difficult it is to produce a single volume penned by different authors on the topic of archival theory, methodology, and practice.

The content of *Keeping Archives* also reveals some problems in considering its place in the broader archival literature. Ross Harvey's chapter on 'Preservation' is good in its own right, but it fails to reflect some of the continuing discontent with basic definitions and purposes of preservation. I think there is building sentiment to redefine the nature and purpose of preservation, reflected in articles by James O'Toole and David Bearman, but this chapter opted to make a fairly straightforward presentation on the topic. Moreover, in all of the chapters and their assigned topics, there is the tendency not to discuss the needs for more systematic research. For example, to discuss the matter of the study of the use of archives in a single paragraph (p. 304) is both to miss a major point about its importance to all our work and a significant matter of debate and discussion in North American and international archival communities. Moreover, we lack studies about the nature and effectiveness of archival work in every aspect, and it would have been useful to include more discussion about this and other similar matters.

These weaknesses do not detract from the importance of *Keeping Archives* as a contribution to recent archival literature. While for North Americans it can be conveniently placed on the bookshelf next to Bradsher, Dearstyne, and the various volumes of the SAA *Archival Fundamentals Series,* it will not be used as a source for current thinking, debate, and research about any particular archival function. Individuals interested in these matters will turn to *Archivaria, The American Archivist,* and *Archives and Manuscripts* and the increasing number of monographs on archival science.

Conclusion: *Keeping Archives* as an Expression of National Archival Practice

The Australian Society of Archivists should be proud of its latest achievement in the revision of *Keeping Archives.* It is a superb expression of the nature and maturity of archival work in Australia, although there are so many similarities to North American archives that many in this continent will not even consider *Keeping Archives* as a mirror of Australian archival practice and theory. This volume will also be used worldwide as a basic introductory work to archival science and its application in archival programs. It is especially important for North American archivists to have access to writings which reflect other national perspectives on and attitudes about archival work, since archivists here tend to view their professional community as all inclusive and as the norm for archival endeavours.

Now I urge my Australian colleagues to turn their attention to producing readers on particular archival topics, issues, and controversies and to conducting and disseminating research on basic archival work and principles. I think Canadians, Americans, and Australians should declare a moratorium on the production of basic volumes for the remainder of this decade. Instead, over the final years of this century we should produce research on such matters as the use of archives, the nature of successful archival programs, the development of standards in all areas, and the formulation of more precise measurements for the effectiveness of archival work in appraisal, preservation, and the like. Then, and only then, should we endeavour to write a new volume on archival work. On the other hand, this is the perspective of a North American, particularly a United States, archival educator. Others may have a different and better view on works such as *Keeping Archives.* And I will not argue too strenuously that such publications are not important or necessary.

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'DOWN UNDER' COMES OUT ON TOP

This is the most useful book on archival issues published in the English-speaking world. Every archivist in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and the rest of the English-speaking Commonwealth should have a copy on his or her desk. Indeed, the book deserves not only very wide distribution such as I hope my comments help to generate, but also extensive translation for non-English-reading archivists.

The second edition of *Keeping Archives,* destined inevitably to be known as *Keeping Archives II,* updates and considerably expands the

original 1987 edition. Edited this time by Judith Ellis instead of Ann Pederson, *Keeping Archives II* consists of fourteen chapters and a very useful glossary. Entirely new chapters relate to preservation, legal responsibilities and issues, and managing records in new media, as well as an opening chapter introducing archives, archival theory, and archival programs. However, all the other chapters have been extensively reworked, and the bibliographies and endnotes — as well as the arguments — for each chapter are surprisingly up-to-date. (Articles published in later 1992 are cited in a book appearing in the second quarter of 1993, which must represent some kind of speed record in archival monograph publishing!) For these reasons, those readers owning the original *Keeping Archives* are still well advised to purchase the new volume, for the changes are significant and sometimes substantial.

What follows, as the Reviews Editor of *Archives and Manuscripts* requested, are my impressions of *Keeping Archives II* as an outsider and Canadian, rather than a formal book review. As virtually all Australian archivists reading this journal have or will have (or should have!) a copy of the book by now, there seems little point in summarising the chapters one by one, weighing their strengths and weaknesses, and attempting to glean the nature of Australian archivy as a result. Every reader of this journal can do that better than I can. It also permits me to avoid offending any author either by taking issue with specific arguments or by not doing so! The book is simply too rich for that kind of micro-level approach.

The chapters in *Keeping Archives II* are the work of twelve authors, including two teams, and some authors appear more than once. The first impression striking any reader will certainly be how well the chapters knit together into a unified book. This was aided, I feel sure, by the theoretical groundwork laid out by Sue McKemmish in the fine introductory chapter, the concepts to which the authors repeatedly and rightly refer, and by some evident hard editing and transitory 'bridging' paragraphs added by the editors. This internal unity and interconnected arguments give *Keeping Archives II* its strength over the other main contender to cover the entire spectrum of archival theory and practice, the Society of American Archivists' seven-volume *Archival Fundamentals Series,* although archivists would be advised to own both.

The second impression striking this reader was how difficult it is to characterise *Keeping Archives II.* It is clearly designed as a textbook, an all-in-one basic guide to help archivists develop strategies and procedures for their daily practice on the job. For the same reason, it will give archival studies students everywhere a good exposure to the essential processes and activities all archivists face. Yet *Keeping Archives II* is at the same time a scholarly monograph, advancing new

ideas, new concepts, new paradigms even, found more normally in cutting-edge journal articles rather than in how-to textbooks. A major strength of the book is this theoretical underpinning; authors repeatedly, from preservation to legal issues to public relations, return to first principles about the nature of the record and the archival essence of contextuality. In fact, *Keeping Archives II* is a blend of theory and practice that works. It also adds as well a wealth of information on how to administer an archives, down to the procedures to follow in staffing positions and running employment competitions. It is important to note that in its conceptual formulations and many citations Australians are very aware of the best archival work outside their own country, especially in Canadian and American archival journals, and the authors integrate these international perspectives with their home-grown realities to produce an interesting mix. As a Canadian, I will confess to a sense of pride in seeing so many references to *Archivaria* and other Canadian archival writing, mixed with no little shame over how infrequently Australian work has been cited in Canadian (and American) archival scholarship. The far-off Australians seem a good deal less isolationist than their North American colleagues! If *Keeping Archives II* helps to break down that barrier, and in so doing draws world attention to *Archives and Manuscripts* and other Australian thinking, it will have accomplished an important and needed work.

My third impression is the excellent layout and design of the book. Like its predecessor, as well as its 1991 cousin, *Keeping Data* (edited by Barbara Reed and David Roberts, both double authors in *Keeping Archives II*) which I have noticed favourably elsewhere, *Keeping Archives II* is replete with photographs, tables, charts, lists, point-format summaries of leading arguments or procedural steps, and boxed quotations and other asides. The large number of examples and case studies are particularly revealing, in virtually every chapter. The authors seem brimming with ideas and enthusiasm. Whether it is articulating the uses of archives as a societal benefit, ideas for exhibitions, principal ethical concerns for archivists, or oral history guidelines, to mention but a few, there is continually something fresh in these lists or examples, presented with a richness and texture that constantly made me think, 'Gee, I wish I had thought of that!' Although I have been an archivist for eighteen years, and not entirely asleep during that period, I found arguments, examples, and procedural steps on virtually every page that will enhance my own work in archives and that of my staff. And in terms of layout, I must remark that I find the carefully non-sexist language and seemingly deliberate and frequent use of female examples/ names by the authors, divided almost evenly between women and men, to be as refreshing as it is still, sadly, unusual. On a negative layout point, the index is barely adequate for a book of this detail; a very helpful discussion on compactus shelving,

indeed shelving in general, for example, will not be found in the index, nor is the detailed table of contents any use for someone wanting to look up this item.

As a Canadian I would have liked to know more about Australian archival history, development, and key thinkers. While a good analysis of the types of archives in the Australian landscape is presented — centralised government, in-house, private records, and combined (or 'total archives' in Canadian theory, a comparative point missed by the authors) — I did not get a sense of the historical reasons for the present state of the Australian system. I was surprised to see Jenkinson and Schellenberg mentioned in the text and quoted extensively, but Peter Scott neither mentioned (aside from bibliographic references) not indexed — the one Australian archivist who is cited around the world and whose ideas are undergoing a renaissance in North America in the age of finding aid automation and intense debates about archival arrangement and descriptive standards. I was disappointed to see the signal Australian contribution to world archival theory — the series system and especially the formal CRS concept — described but in passing in the text (and left *de facto* undefined save for the reader digging around in the fruitful *Glossary*). It is clear in the chapters on arrangement and description and finding aids in *Keeping Archives II,* however, that those in North America working on descriptive standards, and especially on defining the archival fonds as a replacement for the cumbersome record group, have certain misconceptions about Scott's legacy and the Australian system. The series system may be its name, but the notion that Australian descriptive practice is unduly minimalist in ignoring the wider context of creation 'above' the series level, or inter-series, is simply wrong. The description of the twin separate but interconnected streams of agency history or biographical note on the one hand and the series description on the other, permits a richer reconstruction of provenance than many practices followed or proposed in North America. It is too bad that this major Australian contribution to archival theory — to which the world remains ignorant of developments since Scott's articles (and manual listings) of many years ago — is presented in passing almost as simply good practice to follow (which it surely is), and not also within the broader theoretical context and debates concerning description in and outside Australia.

I think, too, that a central theoretical confusion needs to be addressed at several points in the book. Adopting in the first chapter an explicit Jenkinsonian over a Schellenbergian perspective in terms of defining an archival record, the authors seem to overlook that Schellenberg's emphasis on informational value implies a much broader casting of the archival net; records are not just Jenkinson's evidence of the acts and transactions of organised activity, but a wider

range of materials that reflect the broad societal memory of the past, of our collective heritage. And this is precisely what the rest of *Keeping Archives II* adopts: in discussing documentation strategies and oral and video histories sympathetically, for example, other authors are firmly in the Schellenberg camp. Indeed, a strident neo-Jenkinsonian in Canada (not me!) would assert that they are unarchival. Similarly, some of the new Canadian and German appraisal paradigms are presented positively in the excellent chapter on appraisal, but then are left hanging and not integrated with, or more properly reconciled with, more traditional (and, in my view, seriously flawed) appraisal concepts. In these areas, perhaps authors were keeping to a safer middle ground between the old and the new, and it is true that these issues are constantly evolving into more sophisticated formulations. But then that is part of the challenge and excitement of being an archivist.

Being an archivist in any context will be greatly enriched and instructed by *Keeping Archives II*. It codifies much good practice, offers sensible advice and guidance on virtually every archival issue imaginable, and stimulates and challenges at the level of concepts, ethics, and responsibilities. The Australian Society of Archivists is to be congratulated heartily on the production of this significant work. I recommend it unreservedly.

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ARCHIVES IN TRANSITION

This is a refreshingly sensible book. It is full of insights and practical advice on how to proceed as an archivist, whether as a singleton or part of a larger archival section, whether in-house, or for a government or a public department, or as a collecting archives. As the second edition of a successful text published six years ago, this work attempts to bring the novice archivist up-to-date and offers the practising archivist some useful hints on ways to deal with the problems now emerging for archivists: many of these are not amenable to traditional archival solutions and indeed are often the result of the changing environment in which we find ourselves.

Although this work is centred on the Australian experience much of what is advocated is of relevance to the rest of the world: in particular the discussion of appraisal and disposal techniques; the need for archivists to be actively involved at the beginning of the creation of some records; the disputes as to when a record is worth preserving especially in electronic form; the consideration of MARC and other ways of describing archives, series and items in context; the emphasis

on the importance of functionality in organisations, rather than on administrative units which change so fast; in the collecting archives context the need for self-discipline in considering where a particular archive might go, rather than an automatic acquisitive reaction towards the archive oneself.

Throughout the chapters, which are arranged in a logical order and signposted clearly, including further reading lists and references between chapters, the central view of archives as containing the records of continuing value which reflect and are part of the social and organisational activity of the country, community, or organisation comes through. The tension between those archives which wait until records have been received and those that are pro-active during the current record stage runs through the accounts, with the balance generally coming down on the more pro-active approach. This is a tendency now being reinforced by the perceived necessity to influence at the systems development stage the electronic document and information systems being developed in government and in private businesses.

To consider the chapters' contributions in more detail, *Getting started* points out the need for a clear archives policy or program, in which priorities are explicit, and that it is essential to recognise that looking after archives requires a commitment of resources on a continuing basis. This is of course common sense but some authorities seem to have difficulty in recognising this fact and put archives at risk. The theory and practice of program planning and monitoring is well described, but more discussion on the circumstances of archives from year to year, and how to maintain a sense of continuity and achievement under these fast-changing conditions, would have been even more helpful. Archival life does not run to even the best laid plans and archivists' plans must be flexible enough to include options and 'what if' scenarios. The overview of preservation which includes discussion of disaster planning, new media, and building considerations is wide ranging and would certainly provide newcomers with enough good advice to establish a preservation program.

Although the legal contribution is addressed to the Australian archivist, there is much to interest those of us elsewhere. The case is made for the archivist to have the widest possible knowledge of the legislation affecting archives, not merely that for archives specifically, but the implications of Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts as well as of commercial, copyright, and data protection laws. Recent legislation, in the writer's view, has had the effect of creating an awareness of the need to control information resources with integrity and continuity rather than risk embarrassing revelations of missing or altered documentation. This need to maintain an information trail and the historical context of the activity, has improved an awareness for the

need for accountability. The Privacy Act has, however, allowed individuals to have items removed from their records or their records to be amended. It will be interesting to see how the integrity of the records can be preserved in this circumstance; and, more generally, whether over the course of time what the Americans call the 'chiller effect', or the seeming reluctance of some record creators to consign their thoughts or records of their actions to posterity when their actions could be challenged sooner rather than later, will affect the archives and thus the history of events. On the electronic front the likelihood is that the admissibility of electronic records as evidence in courts of law will again alter views of them as records worthy of preservation.

Some of the greatest challenges to the archivist come in the appraisal and disposal areas and the handbook does not avoid grasping various nettles. The view that electronic mail is transient and thus not necessary to keep is disputed on the grounds that it is the importance of the communication and of the communicators involved in the events which counts, not the means of communication. Other issues raised are the need to discuss with systems people and with the record creators themselves the preservation of records of continuing value as early as possible in the process if mistakes are not to be made, that reappraisal of records may be necessary, that risk analysis of not keeping records may now be a necessary activity for archivists, and that the emphasis on accountability for the reliability of recordkeeping is now pre-eminent.

With these new activities, as yet to be fully worked-out, have come the notions of non-custodial archives to manage electronic archives; this is a distributed archives based on the need to preserve specialised databases and media such as sound and film, together with the means for the public to access them over time. This requires not just the technical ability to store them and refresh them, but to be able to interpret them, to manipulate them, even interact with them. In some countries, as apparently in Australia, the vision of a distributed archives controlled by standards of preservation and access and with suitable 'meta-data' can be viewed as a natural development of previous practice, but in others this solution will require a profound reassessment of how archives should be run. While it may have been possible to watch with interest this debate from the sidelines when paper and microform were the bread and butter of the archivist's world, this is fast changing and mechanisms for dealing with electronic documents and information on a large scale are coming into play, often irrespective of the requirements of the archives, and without proper consideration given to this matter.

As these changes take place in the media involved, in the legal framework, in the demands for accountability both in the management of archives and in the reliability of the record and in a host of other

professional matters, archivists have need of this handbook to go through this period of great transition and uncertainty, with confidence.

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Keeper
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Publications

Dagmar Parer and Ron Terry, editors, *Managing Electronic Records: Papers from a Workshop on Managing Electronic Records of Archival Value held on 30 October 1992.* Australian Council of Archives Inc and Australian Society of Archivists Inc, 1993, 148 pp. ISBN 0 642 1964X. $20 (available from Australian Society of Archivists Inc, PO Box 83, O'Connor, ACT 2601).

This volume carries forward the Australian discussion of electronic records management issues from the 1990 workshop on *Keeping Data.*[1] The one-day conference on which this bound typescript reports, was the occasion for the presenting to thirty representatives of the archival profession the consensus that Australian Archives had reached about its own practices, policies and procedures for the management of the electronic record. These guidelines, first issued in draft in May 1992, call for appraising applications, ignoring systems containing no records of permanent value and controlling the data of those systems containing records likely to be of permanent value. They also call for providing only passive access to records until the guidelines are fully implemented at which point active access will be provided by and through the creating agency. Eventually it is envisioned that access will be provided over network facilities to which Australian Archives will provide directory services.

The conference itself was organised around the three themes of appraisal, data control and access. Each paper was presented by Australian Archives staff or consultants and was followed by a discussion which is summarised. Dagmar Parer opened the conference with a paper on the characteristics of electronic records (technology dependence, ease of loss and manipulability, media instability and hardware obsolescence) that led to the formulation of special guidelines for their management. Then she introduced the framework developed by Australian Archives. Her discussion is appropriate for presentation to agency management but archivists will need to understand a good deal more than she explains about electronic records in order to contribute to agency debates over tactics.

In the appraisal section, Greg O'Shea reviews the historical genesis of the electronic records appraisal guidelines within Australian

Archives and why the most recent guidelines apply to systems with and without electronic components, effectively ignoring format in favour of a focus on business applications and transactions. The examples in his article however, like those throughout the publication, reflect a focus on informational values in databases rather than evidential values in applications. The article is followed by a reprint of Australian Archives guidelines on disposal and appraisal (pp. 27-67). I found the disposal guideline by Greg O'Shea generally useful, but was surprised by the contention that the guidelines would be equally applicable to new or existing systems which contradicts the more reasonable assertion by Rob Smith-Roberts (p. 76) that 'generally it is expected that only NEW systems will be subjected to appraisal' (emphasis in the original).

The appraisal guidelines prepared by Margot Kerley advocated not keeping electronic records when their paper output equivalents were being retained as in word processing documents. In my view this is getting it backwards since the electronic equivalents are both cheaper to keep and easier to retrieve, but no explanation of this Australian Archives position was advanced. The other two categories of records recognised by these guidelines — transactions processing data and research data — are almost certainly too limited a repertoire and miss the most important records of the agency which are products of decision support and management analysis and presentation systems. The appraisal guidelines correctly recognise that 'like conventional paper records, the archival value of electronic records can only be determined by relating the records to the context of activities which generate them' (section 6.3, p. 48), but nevertheless takes the outdated view that electronic records are largely of informational value because evidential records will tend to exist in paper form. As a consequence it makes the dangerous assertion that 'electronic records therefore are unlikely to warrant permanent retention as the sole source of evidence of agency operations'. As the example of a completed authority for the Department of Veterans' Affairs demonstrates, this approach results in permanent retention of various categories of applications (inputs) such as for war graves and benefits, case files for health services and indexes for records management and controlled correspondence. It is probable that none of these 'records' provides evidence of agency functioning or decision processes and that few would have been candidates for permanent retention in a paper environment. In what way then can we say, as O'Shea does, the format should play no role in retention decisions?

I agree that the best method for effecting control over electronic records is data management, but the meaning attributed to the concept by the authors of the second major section of this volume, makes it unlikely that their vehicle will carry the required load. The lead article

by Rob Smith-Roberts, *Saving the Important Bits for Later: Data Management Principles and Metadata,* reveals the problem. Seeking an easily understood set of management principles, Australian Archives adopted five motherhood statements ('know your data', 'share your data', 'maintain your data's accuracy', 'secure your data', and 'preserve your valuable data'). Knowing your data requires agencies to make logical systems documentation which is a useful first step in identifying records and the extension of this principle in subsequent discussion acknowledges that 'the appropriate point for Australian Archives involvement is where the data requirement has been agreed upon but before the detailed specification of the system has commenced.'

Unfortunately, the other principles also focus on data rather than assuming that the first principle has led us from data to records and therefore emphasising the integrity, security and preservation of records. The discussion which follows focuses on each principle about data and distracts attention from what we really need data management for, e.g. to control records. It leads agency management and information technology staff to believe that application of these principles to data will support creation, maintenance and access to records, which it will not.

The difficulty which Rob Smith-Roberts had in retaining a focus on the record as the purpose of archival data management is reflected in the remarks made by Diana McPhetres and summarised by Dagmar Parer regarding the experience of the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs which is one of six Commonwealth agencies participating in the project. McPhetres described her agency's data management policies as including one which is usually implemented in an essentially anti-evidential fashion; 'The Department will nominate Databases of Record for each data item or data grouping' (p. 89). McPhetres confirmed the anti-evidential attitude by emphasising that 'the business requirements of the Department . . . were that data from individual databases needed to be linked and cross matched to operate within a whole system' in part to overcome an historical 'weakness', that 'the Department developed a number of databases in the 1980s to correspond to its business functions' (p. 90). The fact that the data management strategy needed to result in definition of records, not just 'hold information about every system, every program, every piece of data' (p. 92) was missed, even in the explicit discussion of the problems involved in defining an electronic record (pp. 93-4).

In the final paper of this series, Brenda McConchie discussed the 1991 report of the Electronic Data Management Sub-Committee of the Information Exchange Steering Committee, *Finding Information Needles in Government Haystacks*[2] and its forthcoming guidelines for the management of electronic documents in the Australian Public

Service. The proposal she advances here, and in her recent report *Management of Electronic Documents in the Australian Public Service*[3], that personal, workgroup and corporate documents are of different orders of importance, is a crude but useful basis for extending the notion that different business functions define different business boundaries across which the flow of communications creates a record. I hope discussion of the underlying principle leads to the refinement of the simple tripartite distinction.

In the final section of the volume, Stephen Ellis and Keith Parrott discuss Guidelines 4-6 regarding access to electronic records as proposed by Australian Archives. Ellis defines the terms of the discussion clearly in his proposition that 'what determines whether a particular preservation strategy will be successful is its relationship to the principal cause of deterioration of the record at all three levels, i.e. object, code and context' (p. 103). It is less clear how this serves as an explanation of why Australian Archives will only provide passive access to objects (medium formats containing data) until adequately funded to preserve software independence and capture contextual data. Although the logic and economics of the position are well defended, the policy nevertheless has a bit of what Americans call the 'close the monument' character to it — if the bluff is truly called, are we really prepared to watch all electronic records become unretrievable.

Parrott has the enviable task of being able to discuss the way things should work rather than being confined like his colleagues by the way they do. He explores how distributed custody, central directory management and internetworking will ultimately deliver access to electronic records from any connected terminal with permission but without archivists having to maintain reference rooms or storehouses. He provides an account of the reasons, technical and economic, why today this is believed to be a more effective means of providing access than centralised data storage away from the agency that created (and therefore could migrate) the record. Although he does not pay adequate attention to the issue of software independence which is the critical factor in determining whether agency management will contribute to continuing access, the general discussion of standards and metadata management practices is a good summary of published discussions by Charles Dollar and this author.

As the Select Bibliography for January 1990-April 1993 (pp. 123-148) makes clear, the authors have availed themselves of a substantial portion of the literature in reaching their conclusions. Internal debate and hired consultants have helped them to formulate tentative policies which have sound principles at their core. In the next few years these principles will, no doubt, be honed by experience into an implementable policy. Hopefully Australian Archives will continue to

contribute to the world's archival literature on electronic records management strategies by publishing regular, and equally frank, discussions of its intentions, the problems it encounters, and the solutions it tests. *Managing Electronic Records* is a welcome contribution to the body of front line reports that are now beginning to inform best practices in electronic recordkeeping.

David Bearman
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ENDNOTES

1. 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 Inc and Australian Society of Archivists Inc, Sydney, 1991.
2. Information Exchange Steering Committee, *Finding Information Needles in Government Haystacks: A Report on Electronic Document Management in Australian Government Agencies,* AGPS, Canberra, 1991.
3. Information Exchange Steering Committee, *Management of Electronic Documents in the Australian Public Service,* AGPS, Canberra, 1993.

Charles Dollar, author, **Odo Bucci,** editor, *Archival Theory and Information Technologies: The Impact of Information Technologies on Archival Principles and Methods.* Ancona. University of Macerata, 1992. 117 pp. (available from Sales Officer, Il Lavoro Editoriale, Via G. Tommasi, 15-Ancona, Italy).

This study is the result of a meeting of European and North American specialists in archives and information technology which was organised by the author, the University of Macerata and the Italian State Archives and held at Macerata over a week in May 1991. Major objectives of the meeting were to review the implications of new information technologies for archival principles and practices and to reach a consensus on them, particularly in relation to those that might require modification of principles and practice and to develop recommendations for the archival profession. Among the specialists were a number of names familiar to Australian readers of archival literature, including Charles Dollar himself, David Bearman, Cynthia Durance and Luciana Duranti. Thus the author aims 'to provide a systematic assessment of this issue and to offer recommendations and guidelines for the international community of archivists who already are or soon will be dealing with records produced by new information technologies.'

The study comprises five chapters and five appendices. The first chapter is a review of information technology trends, including brief discussion of such developments as digital imaging, enterprise and end-user computing, expert systems, object oriented computing,

optical storage media, digital networks, interoperability and integrated functionality. The second chapter discusses three 'technological imperatives', that is, market driven changes in the technological environment which inevitably affect archives and archivists: the changing form of documents in electronic systems, including virtual documents and hypermedia; the changing methods of work, including organisational decentralisation and horizontal communications within organisations; and the change of technology itself, particularly its instability. The third chapter discusses the concept of record, especially in the absence of a physical entity, and the principle of provenance, where computer systems are linked widely within and between organisations. The fourth chapter discusses the non-custodial model and the archival functions of appraisal, arrangement and description, reference and preservation of electronic records. The fifth chapter comprises recommendations for the archival community in issue areas identified in the earlier parts of the study. The study is completed by five appendices: a glossary of relevant technical and archival terms; an explanation of geographic information systems; a discussion of how electronic documents are created; a description of international standards relating to electronic records; and a bibliography.

One of Dollar's achievements in this study has been to absorb and produce a consensus view of the impact of information technologies on two different archival traditions. That the result is so homogenous may indicate that the differences between the European and North American traditions are not as pronounced as is often supposed, but it undoubtedly also reflects the quality of participation in the specialists' meeting. Equally important is his achievement in producing a clear and concise account of a dynamic and complex area of archives work. The developments in information technology and the technological imperatives have been carefully chosen and there is little in this area that is unnecessary or irrelevant to archivists' concerns. The recommendations deserve close attention from the ASA and other professional bodies, archival institutions and educators, in addition to individual archivists and records managers. At the very least, they could provide a sound starting point for developing an Australian consensus approach to managing electronic records.

While the author's aim is to assess the impact of information technologies on archival principles and practices, the study represents probably the most concise and comprehensive statement currently available of the modern approach to the management of electronic records, an approach characterised by an emphasis on the evidential nature of records as documentation of business transactions, a non-custodial model of storage and access, appraisal based on business

functions and carried out at the design stage of the systems development life cycle, continuing rather than permanent value, intellectual control through metadata and an information resource dictionary, preservation as facilitating access over time and across technologies, technical standards as a means of ensuring preservation and access, and a primarily regulatory and facilitative role for archivists and archival authorities.

This approach is being rapidly developed and refined. Thus one fundamental insight that not all electronic information systems are recordkeeping systems, highlighted by David Bearman[1] is only hinted at in this study. Hence the appraisal recommendations in the study assume that computer systems do not indeed make records. This insight and its implications, starting with the need for archivists and records managers to make recordkeeping systems out of electronic information systems where those systems are used for carrying out transactions of business significance, is likely to be crucial for determining archival strategies for electronic records management in the next few years. Nor is the potential for losing much of the context of electronic records of continuing value through changing functionality in the wake of successive migrations, making it impossible to recreate the original functionality, discussed in the study. This issue will have a major effect on the nature of the evidence represented by electronic records and how that evidence can be demonstrated in practice. Some issues of particular concern for Australian archivists receive less attention than one might have liked. For example, in the discussion of the non-custodial model, Dollar raises the notion of an 'archives of last resort' only where organisations are unwilling to continue to bear the cost of maintaining and migrating electronic records. Administrative change can produce situations where functions cease to exist, a problem recognised in the Australian Archives' draft Electronic Records Management Guideline Five,[2] with implications for the basis of assessing the records' continuing value.

Moreover a study of this size is unable to discuss in much detail how to put the recommendations into practice, where so much work in any case remains to be done. This must be left to other studies, such as the work of David Bearman and his colleagues on functional requirements for recordkeeping systems and of the Australian Archives in developing data management principles which support electronic recordkeeping.[3]

I found this study both stimulating and frustrating: stimulating because every paragraph seems to exude implications which deserve further study and discussion; and frustrating for the same reason. Consequently this study can only be a starting point for anyone wanting to pursue the subject in depth. As an introduction to the modern approach to electronic records management and as a

thoughtful and concise discussion of the ways in which information technology affects the theory and practice of archives work, this study is of great value.

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ENDNOTES

1. David Bearman, 'Record Keeping Systems', in forthcoming *Archivaria*, no. 36.
2. Dagmar Parer and Ron Terry, *Managing Electronic Records: Papers from a Workshop on Managing Electronic Records of Archival Value, held on 30 October 1992*, Australian Council of Archives Inc and Australian Society of Archivists Inc, 1993.
3. ibid.

Sue McKemmish and **Frank Upward,** editors, *Archival Documents: Providing Accountability Through Recordkeeping.* Monash Occasional Papers in Librarianship, Recordkeeping and Bibliography, No. 3. Melbourne. Ancora Press, 1993. 247 pp. ISBN 0-86862-017-3. $30 (including postage) (available from Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria 3168).

In the first half of 1992, the Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records at Monash University conducted a series of seminars exploring the relationship between recordkeeping and accountability. This volume has resulted from that series of seminars. The volume is not, however, simply the papers presented at those seminars. While it is unclear to me which papers were originally presented at the seminars and which were written subsequently, and perhaps specifically for this volume, that does not matter. What does matter is that here is a thought provoking analysis of the nexus between accountability and recordkeeping and the role of archivists.

The volume is divided into four sections, each of which commences with an introduction, by the editors, of between one and a half and four pages in length. A general introduction by the editors is also provided. Overall the volume has too much to say for me to encapsulate here, but I will try to summarise some of the subject matter.

The first section is titled **Democratic Accountability and Continuity: Vision and Reality.** This section contains four papers. Sue McKemmish's paper, *Recordkeeping, Accountability and Continuity: The Australian Reality* explores the use of recordkeeping in supporting accountability mechanisms, and she traces several notable instances of corporate and public accountability being placed in jeopardy by failure to observe acceptable standards of recordkeeping. She argues for the

need to institutionalise a role for the 'archival document' (I will return to this term later) in society's evolving organisational forms and accountability mechanisms. This paper sets the framework for this volume, but the inspiration lies in the second paper, which is a reprint of Terry Eastwood's *Reflections on the Development of Archives in Canada and Australia,* which he gave at the ASA's conference in Hobart in June 1989 and was published in the proceedings of that conference. In the third paper, *Institutionalizing the Archival Document: Some Theoretical Perspectives on Terry Eastwood's Challenge,* Frank Upward seeks to widen our views of recordkeeping and suggests that the archival profession must interact with other information management professions to ensure that archival expertise in contextuality and transactionality permeates all aspects of information storage. The last paper in this section, *Accountability for the Disposal of Commonwealth Records and the Preservation of its Archival Resources* is by Livia Iacovino and is presented in two parts. Part I, 'The Context', discusses notions of accountability and the role, as defined by its legislative context, of the Australian Archives. Part II, 'The Disposal Practices of Australian Archives' is a case study of the role played by the Australian Archives as an accountability mechanism within the Commonwealth, but Iacovino also explores the accountability of Australian Archives in performing this role.

The second section of the volume, **The Recordkeeping-Accountability Nexus: Some Case Studies** comprises five papers: Fiona Ross, *Archival Documents, Accountability and Continuity: Recordkeeping in Victoria's Psychiatric Institutions;* Jim Rundle, *Public Records as Arsenals of Accountability in Great Britain: An Eighteenth Century Case Study;* Marion Renehan, *Unassailable Evidence: The Nexus Between Recordkeeping and Public Sector Accountability;* Margaret Burns, *Recordkeeping and the Victorian Administrative Appeals Tribunal;* and Trevor Hart, *Accountability and Recordkeeping in the Australian Banking System: A Case Study of the Martin Report.* One conclusion this reviewer reached from reading the four studies of modern recordkeeping-accountabilty issues is that even though some investigative bodies have expressed the importance of quality recordkeeping practices to their work in investigating accountability, they have not caused the creation of an effective regulatory environment.

The third section, **Spiriting An Understanding . . .** highlights some of the difficulties in taking up Eastwood's challenge to archivists 'to spirit an understanding of the idea of archives as arsenals of democratic accountability and continuity'. Charlie Farrugia's paper, *Print Media Perspectives on Recordkeeping,* uses a number of cases in the print media dealing with, for the most part, recordkeeping failures (wilful and otherwise) and concludes that, while the print media will exploit

such cases, it cannot be relied upon to campaign for change. Colin Smith's paper, *A Hitch-hiker's Guide to Australian Archival History,* is a somewhat rambling potted history of developments in the management of archives and the archival profession over the last fifty years, to which is added his 'reflections' and 'a short history of the document'.

The final section, **A Simple Shared Goal for Postcustodial Archivists and Records Managers,** also contains two papers. David Bearman's paper, *Archival Data Management to Achieve Organisational Accountability for Electronic Records* looks at the problems posed for archivists and records managers when faced with the need to provide organisational accountability through records in electronic form. He lays out the problem, sets out appropriate functional requirements and tactics for achieving them, discusses the management of the risks involved, and concludes that the traditional archival principles are of even greater importance in the electronic environment. The chief difference he highlights is that, with electronic systems, some appraisal of the records will have to be done at the time of system design. This paper is followed by another from Frank Upward, *The Significance of Bearman's 'Simple Shared Goal' for Australian Records Managers,* in which he reviews the recent history of records management, the failure of the life cycle concept to prepare archivists and records managers for the electronic age, the similarities between electronic recordkeeping and older registry-style 'pre-action' management of records, and how Bearman has provided us anew with a structural principle to enable us to cope.

This volume is required reading for all real archivists, that is those responsible (and accountable) for the archives of their institution (and here I use the word 'archives' as defined in the recent SAA *Glossary*). It contains lessons for us all, warnings of work we have to do if we are to achieve our aims, and messages of hope. We must unceasingly push the message that archives are arsenals of accountability and must be protected and preserved in the interests of a democratic society. We must understand that our basic principles will stand up to and support the electronic age, but we must convince our information partners, administrators, and users that this is so.

My congratulations to the Monash team for organising the seminars and producing this volume — but then, of course, that is one of the purposes of academia — not only to teach, but to research and inform the profession. It is a shame, however, that it has taken so long to reach publication. David Bearman's paper, in particular, although still valid, does not represent the latest evolution in his work in this area.

And now to my one 'gripe' — why it is necessary to invent a new term? The **General Introduction** commences with the sentence: 'The archival document can be conceptualised as recorded information

arising out of transactions'. Sounds very like a definition of 'records' or 'archives' to me. Why invent a new term just because others have debased the old? Why not take back and reinvigorate the terminology that has been used over the centuries?

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Tom Nesmith, editor, **Terry Cook,** executive editor, *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance.* Metuchen, NJ. Society of American Archivists and Association of Canadian Archivists in association with Scarecrow Press Inc, 1993. 513 pp. ISBN 0 8108 2660 7. US$59.50 (available from Scarecrow Press Inc, PO Box 4167, Metuchen, NJ 08840, USA.)

Australian archivists might once have revered Jenkinson, and then Schellenberg, but the visit of Dr W. Kaye Lamb in 1973 and the appearance of the first issue of *Archivaria* in 1975 were our first inklings that there was a third way. Since then, the renown of Canadian archivists and archival studies has been cemented — a combination of thirty-five more issues of *Archivaria,* the legendary generosity of the PAC and later the NAC with publications and hospitality, and the visits to Australia by Jane Nokes, Jim Burant, Joan Schwartz, Terry Eastwood, Cynthia Durance, Hugh Taylor and now Terry Cook. This familiarity has bred the opposite of contempt, an impression reinforced by other forms of interaction — working visits by Australian archivists, Bob Sharman's *Archivaria* article on the Lamb report, the regular appearance of Canadian professional literature in our review pages, the appearance last year of *The Archival Imagination* and the presence of a good contingent of Australians at the ICA and ACA (Association of Canadian Archivists) conferences in Montreal last year.

Though Canadian archivists' reputation hardly needs consolidating, we now have Tom Nesmith's selection of 'the greatest hits', to use Ann Pederson's apt phrase. The twenty-three articles are reproduced from journals, primarily *Archivaria,* where they first appeared over the past eighteen years, and cover aspects of four broad categories: archival history, the nature of archives and archival work, analysis of archival records and media, and archival practice. Nesmith's excellent introductory essay, the only new piece of writing, readily sets the scene, and addresses the rediscovery of provenance in both Canada and the US, though only Canadian writing is reproduced. He explains why the rediscovery can be seen as the linking sub-theme throughout, and then discusses each article in turn. These include many which quickly became classics — Luciana Duranti on records managers, Hugh Taylor

on information ecology, paradigm shifts, etc. Terry Cook on the information-knowledge nexus, Terry Eastwood on education, and Jay Atherton on the records continuum.

In a sense, the fact that this is a collection makes its assessment a special challenge. The necessary space to discuss intelligently or take issue with its individual contributions is not available, even if the reviewer were equal to the task. As for the selection as a whole, regardless of how truly representative it is, it indicates for me not so much a rediscovery of provenance but evidence of a profession at the peak of health, one not embarrassed to claim it is a scholarly profession based on ideas and theory. Knowing how archival development occurred and occurs; understanding the ever constant, ever changing nature of records, their media and recordkeeping systems; exploring how best to educate their creators, managers and custodians for a role in communicating the record to users: these are what they believe should be studied and debated, and they have done so with skill and enthusiasm.

The combative nature of many of the articles gives added appeal to their reading. Duranti's sketch of the history of the records manager in society is done so to point a moral. Smith, Cook and Birrell lock horns over 'total archives'. Other pieces by Cook, Birrell and Burant also make a point beyond mere description of non textual media. Eastwood's article on education is aimed squarely at those in the US who have denied archival thought has a genuine theoretical base and denied too that an independent university course is necessary for the education of archivists. Bailey argues that traditional concepts and principles remain relevant for electronic records. Atherton targets the outmoded life cycle concept. And underpinning chapters by Dodds, Nesmith, Cook, Taylor and even by Russell is the famed archives-history debate triggered by George Bolotenko in 1983, chapters which attempt to answer what is the nature of archival work and what knowledge and skills the archivist must have, including abilities in the realm of historical studies.

For all this, the volume has its puzzles. The first is the decision (of the editor? the publisher?) not to include the bibliographical details of the articles in any convenient or consistent place. There is no separate listing as an appendix, for example, nor does the information appear with the list of contributors. Yet even just the date of publication is an important aid to understanding. Knowing for example when Jay Atherton argued against the life cycle and for the continuum is relevant. Given the prevalence and nature of electronic systems today, it is possible now that he would not use a four stage notion at all. (Some Australians even believe the whole idea of stages, in cycles or continuums, is flawed.) Oddly, certain articles are properly cited in the notes supporting the editor's introduction, while others are named in

this introduction but are not cited in the notes. Similarly, in the notes following some of the reprinted articles, where references are made to articles also reprinted elsewhere in the volume, the editor has added a cross reference to this effect, but not consistently (e.g. omissions on pp. 60, 150, 295 and 455). One can eventually identify the provenance of most of the reprinted articles, though one or two articles, e.g. Duranti's, I could find cited nowhere.

Given the quality and quantity of work from which the editor drew, he admits there were difficult selection decisions to make, but even so, virtually all seem to admirably illustrate his themes. The exception is the puzzling inclusion of Terry Cook's article 'A Reconstruction of the World: George R. Parkin's British Empire Map of 1893' (pp. 325-337), which we learnt in an endnote thirty-four pages earlier originally appeared in a 1984 issue of *Cartographica.* Neither this article's scholarly content, covering the historical and political background of the publication of a very famous and influential map, nor the competence of the author, are being questioned. My problem is simply that the subject of the article, i.e. the map, is a publication, not a record or part of a record or even an 'archival document'. Cassell & Co. published 1000 copies of the jolly thing in 1893, and it is the published map which is discussed. Yet this is termed a 'cartographic record'! Similar extremely flexible definitions have been employed by some Canadian archivists when discussing photographs, paintings, cartoons, etc, to the point where we might as well discuss the merits of 'total libraries'. Of the two other articles on media, that by Jim Burant (pp. 339-360) correctly assumes the results of military artists' work to be records. But the other, by Andrew Birrell et al. (pp. 361-390) on amateur photography, failed to settle my doubts about the status of material described in the article.

The final puzzle concerns the absence of any French Canadian article in the selection. Tom Nesmith admits that the volume is confined to the intellectual development of the English-speaking Canadian archival profession. He states frankly, on the Acknowledgments page, 'Unfortunately, except in the area of descriptive standards development, there has been little interaction between archivists in Quebec and those in the rest of Canada. It has been impossible to correct this failing here'. Little interaction indeed: of the book's 901 endnotes, fewer than a dozen refer to French archival literature, and it is mostly of European origin. That accepted, we must also conclude that there has never been anything of exceptional standard on any of the book's four themes in *Archives,* the journal of the Association des Archivistes du Quebec. It seems a country's archival studies have their context and provenance too.

Beyond its convenience as a reader and the importance of its contents, the worth of this collection ultimately derives from the

insights, ideas and comparisons it stimulates and inspires. With the imminent appearance of an Australian reader, one is tempted to speculate about what might be revealed by a comparison of ours, though more narrowly focused, with the Canadian volume. The ACA was established, and *Archivaria* began appearing, in 1975, the same year the ASA was formed. Taking our two journals, of which similar numbers have since appeared, suffice it to say that our debates and concerns largely have been different, and the quality and rigour of our research effort a considerable contrast. And such an impression — it is no more than that — takes into account the fact that we have had the benefit of three university based graduate courses in archives, the first operating seven or eight years before Terry Eastwood's got under way in Vancouver. We will continue to need to look to the land of maple syrup, Carol Shields and Rogers' chocolates, and Nesmith's reader shows how profitable this will be.

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Frank Boles in association with **Julie Marks Young,** *Archival Appraisal.* New York. Neal-Schuman Publishers Inc, 1991. 108 pp. ISBN 1 55570 064 0. US$39.95 (available from Neal-Schuman Publishers Inc, 100 Varick St, New York, NY 10013, USA).

Archival Appraisal is the result of a two-year survey of records appraisal practices at fourteen archival institutions across the United States. It is not designed to be an appraisal manual but rather aims to 'improve the practice of records selection among archivists by creating a better understanding of the methodology underlying selection'.

The survey coordinators have attempted to make an empirical study of selection decision-making by isolating and classifying the record values and other factors which archivists employ when selecting records for long term retention. They have attached a quantification system to the resultant 'taxonomy' of values and experimented with a method of scoring in order to determine their retention status.

The book, which is essentially a study report, begins with an overview of twentieth century (largely American) appraisal thinking and literature. The writers highlight the convergence of thought which has occurred in the 1980s between the European archival tradition and American archivists such as F. Gerald Ham, Helen Samuels and others. However they believe that these developments have lacked a systematic examination of appraisal practice. The study of practice which follows concentrates on specific records selection decision-making, or what has been termed micro-appraisal, rather than broad

documentation policy. The writers acknowledge that this is their purpose and affirm the need to have an institutional collection policy or mission statement, yet the structure of their survey does not allow for the influence of any such overriding philosophy which determines how an institution will document society.

The study used three clusters of elements, or modules, in order to describe the selection decision-making process: the value of information, the costs of retention and the implications of the selection decision. Within these modules there are thirty-eight appraisal factors, grouped together into clusters and subclusters. Participating archivists were asked to appraise in the course of their normal duties and then to compare the results with the decisions they would have made had they used their usual selection procedures. The study also sought to gauge participants' opinions about the validity of the system design.

It came as a relief to me to read that most participants found that the quantification system did not work as a selection tool (even though it did force them to think more critically than usual about the decision-making process). The project coordinators identified several reasons for this (including the failure to factor in institutional collection policies). Some of these may have been resolved by redesigning the quantification system, yet the writers conclude that a much more sophisticated mathematical system would be needed to reflect the complexities and subjectivities which are part of the selection decision.

They stop short of concluding that a mathematical system for evaluating records is impossible and presumably in the world of expert systems it is not. Assuming that an empirical records selection system is possible and desirable, this study demonstrates that our profession has a long way to go before we have reached the common understanding of the nature of the record and the purpose of appraisal which an empirical system presupposes. Particularly when examining the value of information module, the writers employ an understanding of records and archives which may be of use in a manuscript library but which is inadequate for institutional and government archives where appraisal needs to begin with an examination of function, transaction and records systems.

Perhaps those who undertook this study are to be applauded for their bold approach to the issue of appraisal. However the results of the complex exercise are disappointing and the study's conclusions do not add greatly to the understanding which I think most Australian archivists would have of the task of appraisal.

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Murielle Doyle and **André Frénière,** *The preparation of records management handbooks for government agencies: a RAMP study.* Paris. UNESCO. General Information Programme and UNISIST, 1991. PGI — 91/WS/18. 41 pp. (available from UNESCO, Division des services d'Information, 7 Place de Fontenay, 757 Paris, France).

This publication is intended to give general guidance for the preparation and use of records management handbooks for government agencies. It is written in a clear and direct style although some of the terminology used will be unfamiliar to Australian archivists. The handbook was prepared by Murielle Doyle, head of Government Agencies Services at the National Archives of Quebec and André Frénière, Director of Records Management at the Ministry of Finance, Quebec. Not surprisingly, the publication has a somewhat Gallic flavour in the use of terminology. The term 'conservation' schedule is used for example where we might say 'retention' schedule. In general however, the study is well-written and easy to comprehend.

The authors acknowledge in the foreword that a centralised management model, where the directives issued by the central body are binding, has been assumed in this study. Indeed, the approach may be considered quite authoritarian in many respects. This model may not fit the reality too well in government agencies in Australia. However, the advice can usually be adapted for use in a situation where the central body plays only a consultative role and does no more than lay down guidelines.

The study contains sections on what makes a handbook successful, the context in which it must be prepared, and the development of separate policies for the management of current, semi-current and non-current records. It specifically excludes the management of archives which are defined as being records of permanent value which have reached the non-current stage. This separation of 'records' from 'archives' will not sit comfortably with some archivists.

The authors outline some standard directives and discuss how records are classified, and the development of schedules and procedures to control retention and disposal. There are also useful sections on the protection of vital records, the management of forms, report management, and the management of correspondence and mail.

The authors take a very traditional view of a records management program which they define as,

> integrated measures for the creation, organisation, processing, retrieval and selective storage of information (p. 1).

Although there are references to electronic records in the body of the text and more specifically in the final one page section on the management of electronic records, clearly this publication is written

principally for the management of paper based records. The reality today is that government agencies are likely to be using a mix of totally manual systems, totally automated systems, and systems which include paper, microform and electronic elements. The records manager and archivist need to develop policies and procedures to cope with all eventualities. For those managing principally paper based records, this will be a useful publication. However, it will have limited value for those managing largely or wholly electronic systems. For example, there is no discussion of the policies and procedures which would be required in developing a records retention schedule specifically for electronic records.

The section on protection of privacy is also of limited value and reflects a view which most archivists do not share.

> Personal data may not be used for purposes other than those for which it was first collected. It should be destroyed as soon as this purpose has been served, in accordance with procedures that safeguard its confidentiality (p. 30).
>
> [Personal data is defined as] data relating to an individual and enabling him or her to be clearly identified (p. 29).

If this directive were to be carried out literally, vast quantities of records of enduring value would not survive. The authors then qualify their comment with the following highly ambiguous statement:

> Personal information used for research is excepted, provided that it is used subject to measures safeguarding its confidentiality (p. 30).

The study recommends that a handbook should provide advice on procedures for recycling. However, no mention is made of the need to provide advice on the use of archival quality papers and materials for records of long-term value.

Reading this publication would be a good place to start for anyone who is about to prepare a records management handbook for a government agency dealing mainly with traditional paper based systems. However, where electronic records are involved, it does not provide adequate guidance and would need to be supplemented with other reading.

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State Archivist
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Frank Rogers, compiler, *Archives New Zealand 4: Directory of archives and manuscript repositories in New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Tokelau, Tonga, and Western Samoa.* Plimmerton, New Zealand. Archives Press, 1992. 73 pp. ISBN 0 9597777 4 1. NZ$30.00 plus postage (available from Archives Press, 43 Gordon Rd, Plimmerton, New Zealand).

This publication is designed to complement the more extensive *National register of archives and manuscript repositories in New Zealand.* Compiled by one person, Frank Rogers is to be complimented on preparing a most comprehensive guide to repositories in his region for researchers as well as for archivists and depositors.

The *Directory* opens with an explanatory introduction which leads the reader into the publication. Some assumptions in the **Introduction** could be clarified. A newcomer to New Zealand is not likely to know what regions New Zealand regional government areas comprise. It is possible these regions could be confused with the historical provinces which do not match exactly. A map showing the locations of these regions would have been helpful, as would a map situating the islands covered by the *Directory.* This is followed by a 'Researchers' Courtesy Code', a helpful clear guide to potential clients of archives. It is a welcome reminder that restrictions and limitations exist, and that archives do not just float in the 'ether'. Next is a list of 'institutions not included'. However, the latter code and list, combined with the general tone of the introduction, do give the *Directory* a slightly authoritarian stance. For example, although the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington refused the request for information about its archives an entry was included regardless in the *Directory.*

The questionnaire sent to participants is not reprinted and this leaves the reader wondering how some categories of information were solicited and if information was edited. Participants had the opportunity to proofread their entries, which is a major advantage that larger directories do not often enjoy.

The organisation of the *Directory* is straightforward and easy to follow. My one criticism here is that regional areas are not listed alphabetically in the main body of the text. The regions are listed flowing geographically from North to South. This assumes quite an in-depth knowledge of the country that even residents may not have.

There are 'three indexes in the back: **Index of Repositories; Classified Indexes of Repositories;** and **General Index to Collections.** These indexes should give access to the contents at a general level. The last index, a subject index, suffers the fate of most subject indexes in that it is difficult to be absolutely thorough without being massive. I looked up 'secondary education' and found the reference on the second try under 'education, secondary'. My view is that a subject index can be helpful, but it risks being accepted as the definitive authority, which it is not.

Categories of information for each repository are consistent, clear and easy to follow. Most respondents seem to have given very comprehensive information for all categories. This was not our experience in compiling the ASA Directory. One category included is

'Route', and is not, in my view, entirely necessary. Services are assumed to be universal, which is not always the case. Guides and Publications to each repository are listed under a 'See' heading, a title that could have been improved upon to say, something like 'Guides and Publications'.

The layout of the *Directory* is clear but could have been improved with more variation in print size, density and layout.

There are 194 entries in this publication. It appears to be a very comprehensive coverage and my New Zealand colleagues assure me there are no major omissions.

Overall this volume is a very welcome addition to the archival family of guides. Congratulations to Frank Rogers and all who were involved in the production of such a great effort.

Susan Burnstein
ASA Directory Committee, 1990-1992

Douglas Stein, *American Maritime Documents, 1776-1860.* Mystic Connecticut. Mystic Seaport Museum, 1992. 158 pp. ISBN 0 913372 62 5. US$20.00 (available from Publications Department, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Connecticut 06355-0990, USA.)

This comprehensive 'dictionary' illustrates and describes more than one hundred types of maritime documents in common use in American shipping in the period 1776-1860. Coverage is of the business of shipping and commerce; naval history is not included. Documents described include not only those most familiar to students and researchers of maritime history such as log books, passenger lists and shipping registers, but also bills of lading, manifests, various licences, certificates and forms, port rules and regulations, shipbuilding agreements and contracts, and letters of marque.

Document types are arranged alphabetically. The succinct descriptions of each include physical format (size, colour, decorations and print features), history, significance, relevance, and how and why it was used, and by whom. All variations and developments within a document type are described and illustrated by at least one clear photograph of a typical document of its kind. For example, included under Marine Insurance is a policy of 1828; a note of protest of 1847; a survey certificate of 1850; a surveyor's notice of fees, New York 1859 and a bottomry bond of 1859. The value of these documents as research sources for information about the current values of ships and cargoes, and how various forces affected the safety of American shipping are pointed out by the author. From just a glance at the full

page or actual size photographs of documents the historian will also see the research value of incidental information contained in the documents, such as the marginal notation on the 1810 Entry of Baggage permit for Mrs Robards arriving from France. It records that her three trunks contained false bottoms in which were hidden dutiable goods.

The clean layout and print, a direct writing style that is easy to understand, substantial captions and the generous size and number of illustrations make the book very easy to use. The reader can quickly recognise each document type and identify its relevance. There is no index, the contents pages being adequate enough guides to the subsequent alphabetic arrangement. An appendix on American Shipping Laws 1789-1860 is thoughtfully included. A list of museums, libraries and archives that hold such document collections would have been useful too, even if only a select list.

The author, a long experienced curator of over 500 000 manuscripts at Mystic Seaport Museum's G. W. Blunt White Library, is eminently qualified to compile such a book. His previous book, *A Guide to the Manuscript Collection of the G. W. Blunt White Library* works very well in conjunction with this publication.

The relevance of this publication to historians researching Australian maritime history is somewhat limited. Those interested in Australia's whaling history, which was predominantly influenced by American whaleships and whalers, will find it a valuable source of information, especially the Whalemen's Shipping Paper and the Sea Letters, which were proof of nationality and guarantee of passage for vessels sailing in the South Seas. It will certainly be useful to researchers with a serious interest in American maritime history, or of general maritime history. In the bringing together of these maritime documents the author provides the researcher with an overview of the dynamics of a shipping industry, and gives some insight into the organisational structure of the various agencies of shipping — customs, quarantine, marine insurance, marine societies and certifying associations. He also provides maritime researchers with an invaluable checklist for similar documents in archives anywhere in the world, for any nation. It would be wonderful if all museums and libraries could published similar reference books.

Ross Shardlow
Marine artist and marine historian
President of the Maritime Heritage Association

Barbara Shardlow
Librarian and researcher
Secretary of the Maritime Heritage Association

Margaret Phillips, compiler, *Public Record Office, Admiralty Records. Australian Joint Copying Project, Handbook, Part 7, second edition.* Canberra. National Library of Australia, 1993. 92 pp. ISBN 0 642 10588 X. $15.00 (available from the National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT 2600).

The Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) began microfilming material relating to Australia held by the Public Record Office in London in 1948. Since then thousands of classes and collections of Australian, New Zealand and Pacific records held in hundreds of institutions, organisations and homes in Britain and Ireland have been microfilmed and described. Over 9500 reels of microfilmed records dating from 1560 to 1975 have been produced. To date, ten parts of the AJCP *Handbook* have been published. The *Handbook* is a descriptive catalogue of the contents of the microfilms.

Part 7 of the *Handbook* contains class and piece lists for the Admiralty Records of the Public Record Office. The records are divided into twenty-five classes, the largest being the correspondence of the Admiralty and Secretariat. Other classes include ship registers, log books, ships' musters, payment of Marines, Medical Departments correspondence (including surgeons on convict ships), Navy Board records relating to the voyages of James Cook and the establishment of NSW, Transport Department records relating to provision of transport for troops and convicts, Station records relating to the defence of the Australian Pacific Region; an inviting list indeed, for the researcher/historian.

Each entry is given a brief description, a date, location number on the reel and the reel number itself. The informativeness of the descriptions varies considerably. For example, 'Reel 5947, piece 765, 1836-1842, forty-five, Papers on formation of establishment at Pt. Essington' is typical of a detailed description that enables the researcher to quickly comprehend the content of the record and rapidly access the information. However, most descriptions seem to be minimal, merely giving statements describing the type of record but not its actual contents, e.g. 'Recorded letters', 'Colonial Office', 'Offices: Foreign', or 'Minutes'. The professional archivist or researcher will be able to interpret these listings, but the general researcher may well be left bewildered.

The range of information on shipping is comprehensive. It covers not only naval shipping but also convict transport, emigrant ships, whaling and exploration vessels. Records for individual ships include captains', masters' and ships' logs, select journals, medical journals, musters, registers, returns, certificates and specific correspondence. As the handbook arrangement is by reel number, ship names are not always listed alphabetically, and many of the ships also appear in different classes. An index of ship names would have been very useful to

researchers. The preface outlining the history of the AJCP is informative and the explanations of how to use the handbook and how and where to access the microfilms are very clear. The introduction gives a very interesting overview of the history and organisational structure of the Lords of the Admiralty.

Having just reviewed Stein's *American Maritime Documents 1776-1860,* comparison was inevitable, even though one is a dictionary of non-Australian document types and the other is a list of actual documents pertaining to Australia. Stein's detailed descriptions of types of documents and their contents gives the researcher a very clear understanding of the sort of information documents are likely to contain, and hence their relevance to the researcher's purpose. It would have been useful to have included more detailed explanations of the various classes of documents in the Admiralty records listed in this handbook. Illustrated examples would also have helped identification, and made the book look less intimidating for the general reader/researcher. But costs are no doubt a crucial component of the Library's publishing program, and the key intent of the handbook has been well fulfilled at an exceptionally reasonable price.

AJCP *Handbook* Part 7 is an essential research tool for all historians, genealogists and students of Australian history and maritime history. Every library catering for serious researchers should have a complete set of the AJCP *Handbook.*

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Australian Archives, *Images of Early Canberra: Photographs from the Mildenhall Collection in the custody of Australian Archives.* Canberra. Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993. 104 pp. ISBN 0 644 25851 9. $14.95 (available from Australian Government Publishing Service, GPO Box 84, Canberra, ACT 2601, and Australian Government Bookshops Australia-wide).

Because Canberra is a contrived city, many people — especially those who have never been there — have an opinion it is a soulless place. The eighty photographs put together by Australian Archives from the William James Mildenhall Collection do not dispel that perception. The building of early Canberra was a stop-start affair, interrupted first by World War I, then the Depression, so continuity is not always

evident. Australian Archives has done its best to provide some links by choosing photographs by broad topics.

There are many photographs of buildings in a flat, barren landscape, with little or no feeling for the energies that must have gone into turning much of the detailed Griffin plan into reality. It would have helped readers — especially those who have not visited Canberra — if there were occasional updates of some of the first suburbs and buildings still standing. There is great room to make some comparisons.

Mildenhall obviously took full advantage of his position as an official and unofficial recorder of the development of the national capital. From 1921 to 1930, he worked with the Federal Capital Commission, the body then responsible for construction within and the administration of the Australian Capital Territory. He left 7700 glass plate negatives which now make up the collection in his name (held at the Mitchell Repository of Australian Archives; contact prints are also available).

Perhaps the compilers of this publication could have considered them a bit longer to include more of the ingredient that *has* given Canberra a soul — the people who helped build it. The images collected around the construction of the 'temporary' Parliament House are more lively, even if peopled by the 'ghosts' (see illustration) that often show up in glass plate photography. For those who think politicians lived pampered lives in Canberra, there is a revealing photograph taken in the Prime Minister's offices in 1927. The bedroom was a single iron-framed bed, and little else, set up in the anteroom. A copy of that photograph now hangs in the corridor outside the

Construction of Parliament House with the 'ghosts' that show up in glass plate photos. Photo: Australian Archives Mildenhall Collection, CRS A3560, item 1464.

PM's upgraded suite in old Parliament House. Then again, out at Yarralumla, circa 1929, the Government drivers are doing what folklore says they do best — lining up beside their cars waiting for their elected masters to re-emerge from a never-ending meeting. The photograph should raise a smile.

Another evocative photograph is of five women working at their comptometers in an office of the Federal Capital Commission. Quite rightly, there's an explanation that a comptometer is an early calculating machine. But *what* were they calculating, I wonder? And how many women, and public servants generally, were there in Canberra at that time? A few of those details would help. The Foreword says there is a deliberate absence of accompanying text to allow Mildenhall's 'strong images . . . to speak for themselves'. Perhaps Australian Archives could go through his collection again for a companion volume about the ordinary people who set the foundations for Canberra as a living city.

A final comment. There is no photograph of Mildenhall, although there is a cheeky picture of one of his contemporaries *trying* to take a photograph of him at the opening of the Telopea School. It is not important, but it would have been appropriate if the compilers had included a photograph of one of the people who has given us such a broad picture of what Canberra, as a city, has become.

Greg Wells
Writer
Former Canberra journalist

Brian Fletcher, *Australian History in New South Wales, 1888-1938.* Kensington, NSW. New South Wales University Press, 1993. 228 pp. ISBN 0 86840 269 9. $24.95 (available from New South Wales University Press, PO Box 1, Kensington, NSW 2033).

Brian Fletcher needs no introduction to most of us. The Bicentennial Professor of Australian History at the University of Sydney, he has published numerous articles, and is the author, or editor, of eight books on Australian history. His most recent offering is *Australian History in New South Wales 1888-1938,* which forms part of the Modern History Series, published in conjunction with the School of History at the University of New South Wales.

One might wonder whether there is a need for another book devoted to Australian history as a field of study and research given the surfeit of written material, generated over the years, with a historiographical content. Fletcher's book, however, differs from its predecessors; in his **Introduction,** Fletcher explains that his study seeks to redress the imbalance that has characterised treatments of the development of historiography in New South Wales.

This imbalance stems from several factors: while contributors to the wealth of historiographical material have concentrated on the work of leading historians and on specific themes and broad trends, less consideration has been given to the contributions of 'amateur' historians and to what Fletcher calls the regional picture. This book is a positive step towards correcting the imbalance. Fletcher focuses on New South Wales, the oldest region of white settlement, and concentrates on the period 1888 to 1938.

The significance of these dates is immediately obvious, 1888 being the centenary of white settlement, and 1938 to sesquicentenary. Celebrations were held to commemorate both occasions, drawing community attention to the past. Fletcher investigates the heightening of interest in history which occurred during this period, and the factors which aroused this new interest. He cites such things as a growing sense of national consciousness and sentiment, the adoption of a national flag and the impact of federal institutions on the lives and attitudes of the population as contributing to this growing interest in history. In New South Wales, Fletcher goes on to suggest that a sense of pride in its achievements and the fact that it was unique (because it was the area of the first white settlement) fuelled this interest.

A significant manifestation of this interest was the involvement of 'amateur' historians. Previous historiographical studies have, while acknowledging the presence of such people, focused heavily on the work of academic historians. Fletcher suggests that the rôle of 'amateur' historians has never been adequately evaluated, and seeks to redress this by examining their contributions and place them in their true context.

Fletcher also looks at a number of developments which had an impact on the study of history between 1888 and 1938. Among these were: the establishment of historical societies, beginning with the Australian (later Royal Australian) Historical Society; the funding by state and federal governments of the publication of historical records; the introduction of Australian History as a subject for study, first in primary schools, then high schools and then University; the production of Australian history textbooks for use in schools; and the construction of the building to house the Mitchell and Dixson libraries in Sydney. Each of these developments warrants, and receives from Fletcher, consideration.

Australian History in New South Wales 1888-1938 is a very readable piece of work. Fletcher breaks his work into nine chapters, each dealing with a particular issue, including **The Formation and Work of Historical Societies** (Chapter 3), **Australian History at School and University** (Chapter 5), and **Writers of Australian History** (Chapter 6). This approach makes the book very easy to digest. I did find myself experiencing a sense of *déjà vu* occasionally, as some information was

repeated in more than one chapter. This is, however, a very minor criticism of a book which I found both very interesting and easy to read. As a student of local history I found the book's regional focus particularly interesting. Regardless of one's particular interest, however, I commend this book to anyone with an interest in Australian history.

Tracy Bradford
Archivist
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Don Wright, *Looking Back: A History of the University of Newcastle.* Newcastle. University of Newcastle, 1992. 256 pp. ISBN 0 7259 0734 7. $39.95 (available from Information and Public Relations Unit, University of Newcastle, Callaghan, NSW 2308).

As a graduate of Newcastle University I found Don Wright's history both fascinating and illuminating. It is also very readable (although such a judgement might be thought dubious coming from one who enjoys reading both classical metaphysics and the occasional law report). Nevertheless its worth is not confined to the partisan or casual reader: the work is far from superficial and does not concentrate on those aspects likely to appeal only to those who have a connection with the institution. It is also an impeccably referenced work, and the **Endnotes** reveal the scholarship one is entitled to expect from a professional historian.

They also reveal extensive use of archival sources, principally those of the University of Newcastle Archives although other archives and the private papers of various individuals are also cited frequently. This reminds me that, at least in the early 1980s, the Department of History and the University Archivist, Denis Rowe, cooperated closely to encourage senior undergraduate students to undertake local history projects concentrating on the use of archival and other primary source material. The results of such projects were then, I believe, themselves deposited in the archives. I imagine that Newcastle is not alone in this, but it seemed (and seems) to me to be a worthwhile initiative.

But back to the book. The strength of the book seems to me to lie in the careful tracing of the development of the institution itself. To that end the major emphases are the period of the University's birth and early development, and two other periods of major change and struggle: the early-to-mid 1970s (with the rapid growth in funding of universities and its equally rapid decline, and the move of the University to its new campus) and the mid-to-late 1980s (with the amalgamation with the Newcastle CAE-Teachers College as we knew it).

With regard to the foundation and early history of the University

College and the struggle for autonomy, I was particularly interested to read of a vigorous struggle between the proponents of opposing views of the nature of a university: those championing an institution primarily dedicated to the traditional university disciplines, research and the pursuit of 'pure knowledge', versus those who saw it as one driven primarily by the needs of industry and vocational training. Little changes it seems.

As a former student I also enjoyed the anecdotes about the people, a number of whom I knew, and the events that took place around the time I was a student. However, the anecdotal material is tantalising rather than satisfying, giving the feeling that there is a much bigger story without providing a clear idea of what that story might be. Having said that, I also acknowledge that the book is already about 200 pages long and that the anecdotes which would enthral me would bore others beyond endurance.

However, one criticism I would make is that the book often gives the impression of being overly sympathetic and of painting a picture which seems too uniformly positive. There are some delightfully wry observations on various issues and people — especially on the university hierarchy and bureaucracy, but I was nevertheless left feeling that the author had glossed over many of the tensions and struggles that my own experiences of working in large bureaucracies tell me must exist.

But perhaps the most useful summings up of the work appear in the author's acknowledgments:

> The historian, used to writing for professional colleagues, must seek to meet the needs of a much more varied readership.

and in the Chancellor's Foreword:

> This history does not attempt to cover in detail the University's academic and research work, or to deal with the many lives which have been enriched or affected by their connection to the University . . . It is a history of the central structure of the University.

As one whose life has been enriched by my connection with the University, especially its Philosophy staff and my fellow students, this book has given me a much deeper appreciation of the forces and personalities which shaped the institution which I experienced, and of which I am now even more proud. In that sense the book will be attractive to those personally associated with the University. However, Don Wright's professionalism also ensures that the book will be a valuable resource for those who wish to study the development of university education in Australia.

Greg Kerr
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Reports

Western Australia, *Report of the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government.* 1992. Seven volumes. $98.45 including postage (available from State Print, 22 Station Street, Wembley, WA 6014).

The Royal Commission was set up in November 1990 to inquire into cases of corrupt, illegal and improper conduct associated with the business dealings of the Labor State government, which had come to be known as 'WA Inc.' and to symbolise for many the corporate excesses of the 1980s and their effect on a venal government:

> Some say it was simply the smell of money in the streets of Perth in the 1980s that led Brian Burke and his West Australian government off the rails. Easy money was floating up and down the city's business district, creating a corporate culture which eventually seduced the ambitious Labor government. (*The Weekend Australian,* 24-25 Oct. 1992.)

Part I of the Commission's *Report* details in six volumes the results of its investigations of what *The Weekend Australian* referred to as the 'favour-buying, slush funds and crippling abuse of public finances' that characterised the business dealings of WA Inc.

However the single volume Part II containing its findings and recommendations eschews the explanations favoured by the media that the 'fast-buck atmosphere' was the root cause of the corruption. Rather the Commission pointed to fundamental weaknesses in the Westminster system of government operating in WA — and in Australia generally — a situation conducive to the abuse of power by executive governments:

> Individually, the matters upon which we have reported reveal serious weaknesses and deficiencies in our system of government. Together, they disclose fundamental weaknesses in the present capacity of our institutions of government, including Parliament, to exact that degree of openness, accountability and integrity necessary to ensure that the executive fulfils its basic responsibility to serve the public interest. (*Report,* Part II, p. 1.8.)

The Commission concludes that a 'systematic reappraisal' of government institutions and an integrated program of reforms are necessary. Its findings reach beyond the particular abuses in WA to touch on concerns about accountability which echo those experienced elsewhere, e.g. by the Fitzgerald Inquiry into government corruption in Queensland and the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission established to implement its findings, by the Independent Commission Against Corruption in NSW, a 1991 inquiry into the Victorian Parliament, and by members of the federal and state judiciary.

Of special interest to archivists and records managers are the Commission's findings and recommendations on recordkeeping. For

along with its saga of corrupt, illegal and improper behaviour, the Commission chronicles associated recordkeeping practices, ranging from illegal destruction, to failure to make and keep records of crucial transactions, and the removal of public records by retiring officials, practices which 'strike at the roots of responsible government' (*Report,* Part II, p. 4.6). The most spectacular examples involved the systematic removal and destruction of papers from departmental files by Premier Burke's personal staff in the weeks before his retirement and the lack of recordkeeping by Cabinet itself:

> Pervading all of this period [1983-1989] was a clear disregard of the formal cabinet procedures . . . Nowhere was this more apparent than in the attitude taken to recordkeeping. In some crucial meetings of Cabinet in late 1987 and 1988, for example, no record ever appears to have come into existence, no agenda, no submissions, no recorded decisions. (*Report,* Part II, p. 4.4.)

The Commission was particularly concerned with poor or non-existent recordkeeping in so far as it was symptomatic of a disregard for the formal procedures and processes that provide safeguards against systemic corruption. The Commission found that the processes of decision-making were often 'shrouded in secrecy' as reasons for decisions were not documented, and that the absence of effective public record, 'the first defence against concealment and deception', significantly hindered its own inquiries. (*Report,* Part II, p. 1.6 and 1.7.)

The Commissioners clearly recognised that organisational *and* recordkeeping cultures need to be changed if accountability in public administration is to be achieved. The legal and administrative changes they recommended therefore aimed in part to provide an environment conducive to integrity in political and administrative processes. They included the strengthening of traditional accountability mechanisms such as Parliament and the Auditor-General, FOI legislation, the introduction of new appeal bodies and watchdogs, including an Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Ombudsman, Commissioner for Public Sector Standards, and Commissioner for Investigation of Corruption and Improper Conduct. The establishment of a separate and independent archives authority in place of the State Archives, currently still subordinated to the State Library, was seen as a crucial and integral part of the machinery necessary to ensure the Commission on Government, a body to be established to implement the proposed legislative and administrative reforms, inquire into the terms of the legislation needed to establish a separate and independent archival authority. The Commissioners referred to the need for a standard-setting power relating to record creation, maintenance and retention, but particularly emphasising creation. They also recommend inspectorial powers, as well as linkages through an advisory body and consultative processes between the archival authority, the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, a representative of the Supreme Court, and the Information Commissioner (who is to be responsible for FOI).

Their concern with the evidentiary qualities of records and their role in fostering integrity in public administration is most evident in relation to the conduct of Cabinet:

> Foremost amongst these recommendations is the preparation and preservation of an adequate and accurate record of matters which have been the subject of cabinet decision. (*Report,* Part II, p. 1.2.)

To ensure that appropriate recordkeeping standards are adhered to by Cabinet, the Commissioners recommended that the Auditor-General be given access as of right to Cabinet records, and that the archival authority be empowered to monitor compliance with standards for records creation, maintenance and retention by Cabinet, with deficiencies to be a matter of report to Parliament.

It remains to be seen whether the recommendations of the Commissioners will be implemented in ways which achieve their objectives. However they have made a significant contribution to the public records debate by drawing attention to the relationship between organisational and recordkeeping cultures, highlighting the need for integrated accountability machinery while identifying the archival authority as an essential part of such machinery, and proposing that there should be formal links between the archival authority and other accountability players. Their emphasis on the processes of records creation and the responsibilities of the archival authority in this front-end activity is salutary:

> Proper record keeping serves two purposes. First, it is a prerequisite to effective accountability. Without it, critical scrutiny by the Parliament, the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman can be blunted. Secondly, records themselves form an integral part of the historical memory of the State itself. A record keeping regime which does not address both of these requirements is inadequate. However, our particular concern is with the first of these purposes. The record creation, maintenance and retention practices of government and its agencies are matters for which ministers and chief executive officers bear a particular responsibility. These matters, doubtless, are ones for which those officials are to be held accountable in their management of their portfolios, departments and agencies. But overall responsibility for records cannot be left with these officials. A separate body should be entrusted with the general oversight of public records, equipped with powers adequate to the purpose. (*Report,* Part II, p. 4.6.)

Given that in the case of WA Inc., the officials who failed in their recordkeeping responsibilities included the Premier and his Cabinet, the most powerful executive officers in the State, it is unfortunate that the Commission did not explore further the issue of what might in such circumstances constitute for the archival authority 'powers adequate to the purpose'.

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Independent Commission Against Corruption, *Report on Unauthorised Release of Government Information*, August 1992. 3 vols. ISBN 0 7305 9924 8 (available from Commission Secretary, ICAC, GPO Box 500, Sydney, NSW 2001).

In 1990, the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) started to investigate what proved to be the tip of an iceberg — the circumstances in which NSW police documents came to be in the hands of private inquiry agent, Stephen James.

Over the course of a two-year investigation, under the direction of ICAC Assistant Commissioner the Hon. Adrian Roden QC, ICAC uncovered:

> . . . a massive illicit trade in government information . . . conducted with apparent disregard for privacy considerations, and a disturbing indifference to concepts of integrity and propriety (Vol. 1, p. 3).

Information from police, motor vehicle registration, driver's licence, electricity supply, social security, Telecom, Australia Post, taxation and Medicare records was traded via information brokers and retailers in private enquiry agencies (themselves often former police officers) who distributed it to insurance companies, banks and other financial institutions.

Part III of the report, contained in volumes two and three, presents an extraordinary 1021-page chronicle of the details of the illicit trade. The list of those involved includes some of Australia's leading banks and insurance companies — among them the ANZ Banking Group, Commonwealth Bank, Esanda, GIO, the National Australia Bank, NRMA Insurance, and Westpac Banking Corporation. The report makes it abundantly clear that these organisations' obtaining information by illegal means was officially endorsed policy. It became equally clear during the course of the investigations that in a number of government agencies, foremost among them the NSW Police, the trade in information was part of an entrenched organisational culture.

In general the ICAC inquiry found that there were no consistent government policies to identify what information should be made available, and what should be treated as confidential, and inadequate means of providing quick, easy and cheap access to the former, as well as poor protection and security for the latter. In some cases arrangements made for the authorised exchange of confidential information were subverted by uncontrolled networks of unofficial contacts who became known as members of the 'Information Exchange Club'. These findings, together with a summary of the course of the investigation, discussion of general issues and principles (including attitudes towards the Commission, the role of private investigators in the trade, the end users of the information, the involvement of public officials and authorities, the strengths and weaknesses of relevant

legislation, and the right to privacy), and the Commission's recommendations are contained in Parts I and II of the report in Volume One.

The recommendations cover the need for government-wide information policies dealing with the competing demands of privacy and access, provision for the timely and effective release of publicly available information, and better control of protected information. In general these recommendations are stated in broad terms with issues to do with their implementation not explored. The recommendations also propose legislative reform to create a criminal offence of unauthorised dealing in protected government information via the amendment of the *Data Protection Bill 1992*, provide greater consistency in the laws relating to government information, define protected information as a prohibited commodity, overhaul the laws governing the licensing and practice of private investigators, revise the law relating to the criminal liability of corporations, and amend bribery and corruption laws. ICAC also named 250 people or organisations who had engaged in corrupt conduct with respect to the information trade or contributed to it. As has become the norm with such reports, the Commission commented on the way in which its investigations were impeded by poor or non-existent records and illegal destructions.

In other investigations, ICAC and Commissioner Ian Temby in particular have demonstrated awareness of the need for responsible recordkeeping, and its links to accountability — if not the mindfulness of the WA Inc. Royal Commissioners of the not so coincidental coexistence of systemic corruption and poor recordkeeping. The following passage from Temby's *Report on Investigation into the Use of Informers* (January 1993) demonstrates the point:

> As was noted in Chapter 11, many files are kept poorly by Corrective Services . . .
> Poor file-keeping was also encountered in the Police Service . . . In these circumstances it seems necessary to go back to basics. As stated in the preceding chapter, a file is a collection of documents, related to a particular subject matter, and held and accessed according to a known protocol. Typically documents will be held in order of date. It should be possible to read a file through and obtain a history of an operational matter, and the general picture of a policy question.
> Files so understood are useless unless they are complete, and their integrity is sacrosanct. (Vol. 1, p. 113.)

Unfortunately, such a basic understanding does not inform the report under review. Rather it is the concept of information as a free-floating, contextless resource that dominates. Indeed one of the Commission's key recommendations involves regarding protected government information as:

> a prohibited commodity, like proscribed drugs or stolen goods. It should be an offence, not only for public officials to release it, but for others to buy or sell or otherwise deal in or handle it, or to disseminate it in any other way. (Vol. 1, p. 171.)

Moreover, in its discussions of privacy, the ICAC report, like the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988*, deals with **rights-in-data**, rather than the potentially more powerful concept of **rights-in-records**. It would seem to this not disinterested reviewer that the lack of attention to the corporate culture and infrastructure issues represented in the abundant evidence of poor recordkeeping regimes implicit in the Commission's findings is a significant weakness.

Although the implications of the findings for information handling practices in Commonwealth agencies were subsequently investigated by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs as part of its inquiry into the protection of confidential personal and commercial information (the report of which is not yet available), another key issue raised by the report's findings concerns the ability of bodies such as ICAC whose jurisdiction is limited by state, public/private sector or national boundaries to address adequately issues which cross such jurisdictional boundaries (and inevitably in the global village information and recordkeeping issues will).

Yet again the archival and records management profession is challenged by this report to find ways to share its understandings of the significance of recordkeeping to society, the need to develop a greater awareness, within the profession and beyond, of the requirements of recordkeeping, particularly in relation to electronic information systems, and the relevance of such an awareness to finding solutions to some of the critical 'information' problems identified in the ICAC report.

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Department of Social Security and the Data-Matching Agency, *Data-Matching Program (Assistance and Tax): Report on Progress, October 1992.* Canberra. Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992. ISBN 0 644 25488 2. 127 pp. (available from Australian Government Publishing Service, GPO Box 84, Canberra, ACT 2601).

In the 1990-1991 Budget it was announced that recipients of financial assistance from the Commonwealth would have to provide their tax file number (TFN) in order to benefit. In addition a data-

matching program would be initiated between agencies providing assistance and the Australian Taxation Office. What resulted was the *Data-Matching Program (Assistance and Tax) Act 1990*, which received Royal assent on 23 January 1991. This Act provided for the establishment of the Data-Matching Agency, positioned within the Department of Social Security, to maintain the program which commenced in January 1991. This published report details the relevant activities that followed.

A key issue to emerge at approximately this time was the widely held belief that the tax file number was assuming a surrogate role for the now dead 'Australia Card'. In order to address such community concerns, the issues surrounding the draft legislation covering the provision of the tax file number and the data-matching program were placed before public hearings on the legislation conducted by the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs. Apart from the concern about the 'Australia Card' issue, submissions also requested assurances that there would not be any central database of personal information created by data-matching. This assurance was built into the legislation. In the report on the Data-Matching Program the Department states:

> The concerns expressed at those hearings were addressed by the Government in the drafting of the legislation. Strict standards of privacy were built into the Act and the Privacy Commissioner was charged with responsibility for monitoring compliance. The Privacy Commissioner was also given the responsibility for producing the guidelines which form a Schedule to the Act.[1]

Leaving every other consideration aside, it would be commonly agreed that this Act contains some of the most stringent provisions for the security of information ever mandated. It must be remembered that the Department first undertook data-matching in the 1970s. In addition to the Data-Matching Program itself, the Department conducts regular matches with agencies such as the Australian Taxation Office, the Department of Immigration, Local Government, and Ethnic Affairs, insurance agencies, the Health Insurance Commission, the Australian Electoral Commission, State Departments of Corrective Services, Land Titles Offices, and the Child Support Agency. The report states, in relation to these activities, that:

> The Department has always sought to conduct its data-matching exercises in a way which respected individual privacy and the principles of natural justice. Recently it has agreed to comply with guidelines established by the Privacy Commissioner to cover general data-matching activities in Commonwealth administration.[2]

The care and diligence devoted to the Data-Matching Program are testimony to the increasing sensitivity of government to the privacy restrictions necessary in a western liberal democracy. Despite this

awareness, it is certain that the influence of inquiries such as that conducted by the Independent Commission Against Corruption into unauthorised release of government information can only be positive in their influence on accountable authority. Indeed their role may be instrumental, especially if similar care is to be extended to other programs. In the meantime, the initial sunset clause inserted in the 1990 data-matching legislation, due to take effect on 21 January 1993, has been extended to 22 January 1994, when a review will be conducted to determine what future the Program has. In addition the Department of Social Security and the Data-Matching Agency will be issuing a further progress report during October 1993.

The report should be of interest to the profession, in that it highlights the role of privacy emerging in government activity and additionally outlines the environment in which it will most likely materialise in future, not specifically, but by example.

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1. Department of Social Security and the Data-Matching Agency, *Data-Matching Program (Assistance and Tax): Report on Progress, October 1992*, p. 6.
2. ibid., p. vii.

Disposal Schedules

State Records and Information Policy. *General Disposal Schedules for State Government Authorities in South Australia.* Adelaide, 1993.
Archives Authority of New South Wales *General Records Disposal Schedule — Personnel Records.* Sydney, 1992.

Schedules provide the centrepiece for any comprehensive disposal program. Without them all disposal is, by definition, ad hoc. It is therefore very encouraging to see that state archives offices are continuing to develop and issue general disposal schedules. Disposal scheduling is occasionally seen as a somewhat boring and irrelevant gesture to an impossible dream. There is a fear that we have no chance of achieving comprehensive coverage of the records of a large institution, let alone those of the entire public sector. However no successful alternative strategies have emerged and increasing demands for accountability mean that we must continue to refine our current procedures. South Australian State Records and the NSW Archives Office have produced the most recent examples of this process.

The South Australian *General Disposal Schedules* has been issued as a single publication but it is actually five distinct schedules:

Accounting, Staff and Establishment, Motor Transport, Administrative, and Contract and Purchase records. Only the index is fully integrated, but all the schedules have been issued for a ten-year period, and the introductions are substantially the same in each schedule. The new schedules in part replace existing authorities but they provide much greater coverage and represent a major extension of scheduling procedures in that state. The Archives Office of NSW *General Records Disposal Schedule* is exclusively for personnel records and it replaces Part 3 of their 1985 GDS.

The South Australian document has been issued in a hard-cover three-ring folder and the indexing refers to specific disposal schedule and class numbers. This arrangement facilitates updating, amendment, or agency annotation. The AONSW publications have traditionally been issued as soft-cover bound volumes with the disposal class descriptions set out in landscape format. It is a straightforward and manageable document and the style and format will be familiar to its major users.

The NSW schedule is structured very much along the lines of the subject areas identified in their own keyword thesaurus of terms. The linkage between the widely used keyword classification system and the Schedule's class descriptions is an advantage not shared by other states. Records management procedures can more easily be integrated with disposal programs and detailed access to disposal classes can be gained from the thesaurus. To assist users the GDS also includes a brief three page index to major headings.

It is of course impossible to make any comprehensive comparison of specific disposal decisions but it may be of interest to compare the treatment of a number of particular issues which are common to both publications. The retention of personnel files provides an example that is important in all general schedules. NSW has continued the practice of selecting files of 'VIPs': staff files of employees who reach a particular level in the service or who 'achieve some standing in research or in other specialised activities' are to be transferred, without any culling, for permanent retention. SA also requires the identification of senior public servants and 'eminent scientists, artists or persons' but takes a different tack with the selection of permanent records. None of the basic personal files are to be retained longer than seventy-five years but the schedule identifies 'personal correspondence on work related matters prepared and received by prominent persons' as a separate class for permanent retention. The archives which are retained by these contrasting procedures will be significantly different and both will involve complex problems of identification and management.

The SA schedule also contains an interesting refinement of the classification of temporary records on personal files. It divides the

records into only two classes; one for 'essential' documentation which must be kept for seventy-five years, and the other for 'facilitative' documentation which is retained for seven years. The class description lists the major records in each and the scope note expands the definition.

Electronic records have long been seen as a potential threat to established archive practices. It is now widely recognised by archivists, if no-one else, that we must be involved in the design stage of computer systems in order to establish accountability for the long-term management of the records in machines. The process and functional analysis that is fundamental to the development of disposal schedules suggest that they are an adaptable management procedure which is ideally suited for this transition. The introductions to both schedules have recognised this problem and emphasise that they cover records in electronic formats. SA gives more detailed directions at this level: different long-term retention strategies are listed and the normal administrative practices disposal instructions cover word processing and spreadsheet records. The NSW schedule frequently refers to 'the computer equivalent' in the class descriptions. In the case of personal history details the manual cards are scheduled separately from the computerised record. The treatment of the computerised format is an example of disposal scheduling moving towards regulation of the creation of electronic records: the class description provides a list of the personal information 'that is required for permanent retention'.

A continuing problem with disposal schedules is the difficulty in regulating the resulting destruction program. The NSW procedures have always been laissez faire in this respect. Essentially the destruction is authorised by the schedule but the agency is not required to document whether or not this delegation has been exercised. The new schedule does not change this policy. In South Australia there is also no reporting mechanism but the agencies are directed to ensure their control records are updated with details of disposal actions. Other jurisdictions are more prescriptive, for example, Tasmania requires agencies to maintain a summary register of destructions, in Victoria notification is required after a disposal action, and the Australian Archives requires notification of intention and completion of destructions.

The publication of the NSW and SA general schedules is an important indication that archives offices are prepared to tackle the hard issues. During the 1980s we experienced an 'accountability holiday' and a significant shift towards self management, decentralisation and computerisation. The continued evolution and implementation of the principles of a 'GDS' will be an important factor in determining how successful this change can be managed by public record offices. The principles of disposal schedules have

become established in records and archives theory, but it is their effective implementation that is critical for archivists who face the daily realities of exercising the responsibility for the disposal of state records on a whole-of-government basis.

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Conferences and Seminars

Responsible Record-Keeping: Future Directions in Accountability. Annual Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists Inc. Melbourne, 18-19 June 1993.

From Sir Edward Woodward's opening address, through Bob Sharman's stimulating keynote speech and the papers delivered over the two days, to 'Mr Trivia's' dinner entertainment, I found much of interest during the ASA Conference in Melbourne. An archives conference that did not use fellow professionals as the speakers was a new approach for me and the question is — was it successful? The theme of the conference, **Responsible Recordkeeping: Future Directions in Accountability**, perhaps dictated the approach taken, in that it implied an investigation into how records are used in order to assess whether current recordskeeping practices are responsible; it certainly provided an opportunity to subject archivists to the viewpoints of different professionals and in the end the conference was as interesting as much for this glimpse of ourselves as others see us as for the content of the papers.

Was it successful? There are probably as many answers to that question as there were attendees. Not all the presentations worked for me but some have remained vivid. Sir Edward's address for his telling view of what would appeal to archivists and for his comments about the papers of commissions of inquiry; Bob Sharman's development around the theme of the 'hollow crown'; Stuart Littlemore's accomplished dissertation on what appears as the public record on Australian television (surely the impression I now have of the news content seen in Australia each evening is erroneous?); Kristin Leece's comments about electronic records left a deep impression on me.

Sir Edward Woodward, Chancellor of the University of Melbourne since 1990 following a distinguished career in the legal profession, which included being a Judge of the Commonwealth Industrial Court, a Judge of the Supreme Courts of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory and a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, has also served as a Royal Commissioner into Aboriginal Land Rights. As he talked about the Gallipoli diary he had found in a house

renovation and the tragic burning of some letters from an elderly relative he seemed to be firmly placing archivists among dusty papers, people whose total focus was towards a past which might, but probably did not, have relevance for today. He placed little value on the drafts of Royal Commission reports considering that in the end it was only the final report that was important and that material discarded from earlier versions could only be misleading.

Bob Sharman, well-known to many for his work with the Tasmanian and Queensland State Archives, and the State Libraries of South and Western Australia, for his editorship of *Archives and Manuscripts* and his involvement with the LAA and the ASA, spoke strongly of the need for effective recordkeeping and placed the archivist clearly in the forefront of ensuring that citizens have better access to the documentary evidence of events in the past.

Kristin Leece, of Mallesons Stephen Jaques, brought into particular relief the problems that can be associated with transferring paper records to a totally computer-based system while Stuart Littlemore, QC and a writer and presenter of ABC television's 'Media Watch', brought new meaning to the old adage, not everything you read is true, through his expert presentations of some 'factual' news items which could be shown to be anything but.

The papers provided the substance of the conference; but for me a conference is always more than the papers presented. Above all else the conference was a success for me because of the opportunity it provided to talk with other archivists. Their friendliness and willingness to share their experiences and to enquire after New Zealand practices was greatly appreciated.

A word too about the organisation of the conference. Apart from some difficulties I had in convincing The Meeting Planners that it takes a good week for a letter to reach New Zealand and some consequent hotel confusion, I found the conference flowed well. The usual difficulties in keeping speakers to time did occur and perhaps the need for stricter control and how to handle this diplomatically could be examined for the next conference. But this is a perennial problem and overall the organisers are to be commended for their efforts.

Conferences are always a bit hit and miss — you can never decide in advance how much or little you will gain from attendance. To have to put up an argument to cross the Tasman makes it that much more difficult to attend. However, on the basis of this, my first ASA Conference, I consider I gained enough, in a variety of ways, to be able to push for attendance in the future by myself or members of my staff.

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Records Management and Computers. Longman Professional Conference. Sydney. 3-4 June 1993.

Records Management and Computers was a two-day seminar/workshop organised by Longman Professional in Sydney 3-4 June 1993. The venue was superb, Manly Pacific Hotel, with wonderful views of Manly Beach and beyond, and plenty of seafood restaurants in close proximity. As they say seven miles away from Sydney and a thousand miles from care. Over a two-day period those present were provided with plenty of reasons to care as technology imposes additional capabilities, demands, responses and requirements from the records management and archives profession.

The number of attendees (forty-four plus speakers) was disappointing. It may have been a result of either a high registration fee, or the fact that two seminars had been held the previous week in Sydney on 'Records Management and Technology'. The forty-four attendees represented the records management, archives, and computer professions.

The keynote address by David Bearman *Before Creation: Positioning Organisations for Managing the Electronic Record* was stimulating and thought provoking and provided a prelude for his workshop later in the day. Bearman emphasised the necessity of establishing records management as a strategic issue within the organisation and the necessity of convincing senior management that the corporate memory is a corporate issue, a resource and a weapon for accountability. This is easier said than done and the speaker reminded us that in our work with information technology professionals we must 'bring something to the table', for example, we must identify what structural information we want included.

The concept of 'records' being all of the documents that you may have used in a particular transaction was raised and discussed as was evidence and the three properties of evidence — content, structure, and context. Bearman also outlined methods of securing the support of senior management — moving resources from less productive areas with low returns, and the use of allies involved in the areas of FOI, privacy, administrative security, legal, courts, and regulations.

Stephen Bedford in presenting a paper on EDI outlined a case study of the introduction of EDI in the NSW public sector — Supply line and School line. It was disappointing that the examination of issues such as disposal, the means of capturing a transaction when records system boundaries have been expanded outside the organisation and other legal concerns were not more fully explored.

Concurrent workshops were held: *Data Management Practices for Records Administration* conducted by David Bearman and *Disposal of Electronic Records* conducted by Steve Stuckey. David Bearman

explored the concept of functional requirements of recordkeeping systems developed to provide guidance for the management of electronic recordkeeping systems, and outlined current research in the USA in this area. He emphasised the need to establish what it is that recordkeeping requires of systems. What are functional requirements of records? We need to create records to protect the continuity of operations, and ensure access, privacy and auditability. While not attending the workshop *Disposal of Electronic Records,* I know reports from participants indicated that it was a practical exploration of the issues involved in disposal of electronic records. Case studies were used to illustrate the processes and issues involved in the appraisal of electronic records. At the conclusion of the workshops a discussion of common issues was held. Invariably this does not work and this was no exception. As there was no mechanism for reports on each workshop participants needed to have attended both workshops to identify common issues.

Susan Oliver of the Australian Commission for the Future outlined future scenarios for information technology and the increasingly important but often overlooked ability to manage information. Susan suggested that the potential for the future was to be able to 'use technologies to enable us to do things we have never thought of before, or never before been able to do'. A frightening thought indeed.

Julie Cameron in addressing the topic of *Data Privacy and Other Ethical Issues* highlighted a number of issues familiar to archivists, i.e. the implications of the Privacy Act and the potential of electronic databases to undermine individual privacy. These issues have already been raised and discussed in a number of forums. Once again the implication was that, other than destruction of records, there is no mechanism to prevent breaches of privacy.

Fiona Balfour presented a practical and informative paper on the business case for new systems — buying or building. The insight into the decision-making process was particularly useful for persons who have been associated with in-house development of administrative systems or are ever likely to be, especially when the business application is one for which there is well-developed commercial software. When do you decide to buy rather than build and how do you justify buying rather than building especially when the IT professionals are recommending building?

There were two papers presented on office systems. The first, presented by David Bearman, at short notice when the original speaker withdrew, covered design, development and implementation of office systems. The second paper presented by Elaine Eccleston covered ongoing management of the system and data. There was an emphasis in this presentation on the desired qualifications of office systems managers, the level of corporate support, and the need for ongoing

evaluation and communication. Elaine certainly made those present question the assumption that records managers would assume the role of office systems managers, and if we did not have the necessary skills to do so, what was our future as a profession?

Geoff Barrow in *Disaster Recovery Planning* for computer systems commented on the commonality between a disaster recovery plan and a vital records program. He outlined the ten steps to developing a disaster recovery plan, plus preventative measures that can be utilised to reduce risks. The ten-step process outlined would be familiar to archivists/records managers who have been involved in the development of disaster plans for paper records.

The final session was based on the concept of a debate. A facilitator posed questions to a panel of speakers with the intention that discussion and/or debate would ensue following their response. Unfortunately, this did not really work — panel members rarely challenged a view as presented and with little audience participation the session fell flat.

While individual papers were challenging, thought-provoking and informative, a couple of papers unfortunately concentrated only on registry systems and were not broad enough in scope and application. The seminar as a whole lacked a coherent theme. The broad title **Records Management and Computers** covered a wide range of areas but no theme linked these areas together except that it was records managers or computer professionals speaking or listening to papers on aspects of technology.

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Events

Open Day. Public Record Office, Victoria. Laverton Repository. Sunday 4 April 1993.

On Sunday 4 April 1993 the Public Record Office of Victoria held an Open Day at its Laverton Repository as part of the Victorian Heritage Festival. The purpose of the day was to provide the public, including the uninitiated and curious, with an insight into the purposes and physical detail of the state's archival authority.

The program of activities was centred on a series of displays and complementary talks. There were also some stalls which were mounted by groups from outside the organisation. To cater for the large number of visitors some of the talks were presented for a second time later in the day. The activities of the day were:

1 *A Most Unique Ruffian* — an exhibition of documents and a presentation based on the story of the notorious 19th century criminal, Frederick Bayley Deeming
2 *On the Public Record: From Despatches to Faxes* — an exhibition of selected documents from one hundred and fifty years of Victorian archives
3 *Behind the Scenes* — talks and tours. Talks on Family History, Immigration and Criminal Records. Stalls run by history and genealogy groups — Genealogical Society of Victoria, Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies, Australasian Association of Genealogists and Record Agents, Railway Researchers, Macbeth Genealogical Books and the Central Highland Historical Association
4 Panel of experts for consultation on research projects.

The program of talks included the following:

1 *Immigration Records and Indexes* — Don Grant
2 *How to Start Your Family History at the Public Record Office* — Faye Guthrie
3 *A Most Unique Ruffian: The Story of Frederick Bayley Deeming* — Marion Renehan and Fiona Ross
4 *So You Think You've Looked Everywhere: Unexpected Sources for Family History and Other Research* — Charlie Farrugia.

The talks were presented in a most professional way by a group of people all of whom are very well known for their activities in historical research. All were presented in a room which was well lit and otherwise very suitable for the task at hand. Attention to detail regarding the room was very much in evidence including the transmitting microphone used by the speakers. Far from the thin treble sound that usually emanates from such devices, the sound was full, clear and set to an appropriate volume level.

The talk given by Don Grant was extremely popular which is no surprise given his vast experience in helping family historians. He was knowledgeable yet very easy to listen to. He handled questions in a way that answered the individual queries and yet informed the whole audience. He was not tempted by 'red herrings' and at every opportunity he used questions to inform his audience about the subject of Immigration Records and Indexes.

Fay Guthrie's talk on starting your family history at the PRO was very well pitched at people who were using the resources for the first time or were not too sure about the next step. Basic rules were reinforced without resorting to repetitive preaching and the use of lateral thinking in researching family records was very well illustrated. Some emphasis was given to using records that went beyond the basic collection of name and dates. Such emphasis is most important as it helps the researcher to set the historical and social history scenes in context.

The talk given by Marion Renehan and Fiona Ross on Frederick Bayley Deeming was by any measure the highlight of the day. This was a complex case study presented in a concise and logical way. It was so well presented and illustrated that the change of presenter during the talk was almost seamless which is probably a measure of a most cohesive approach to the subject matter. From a family historian's point of view the talk gave a most useful insight into using records like the criminal trial records. From the point of view of the curious it was carefully chosen and presented to titillate and maintain interest and yet never infringed on whatever dignity this notorious man possessed.

Charlie Farrugia's presentation was a very well illustrated talk about how to get the most out of using the holdings of the PRO. He made particular reference to unexpected sources which can often be found by the judicious use of the finding aids and by remembering that government departments often change names and function in all sorts of unusual ways throughout their history.

The displays which were set up in the main search room were of a very high standard. The documents relating to the Deeming case were once again a highlight and the exhibition of selected documents illustrating the breadth of the holdings of the PRO was excellent. The stands set up by the visiting organisations complemented the in-house displays very well and offered the visitor the opportunity of purchasing publications of interest or asking questions of the representatives of those groups. PRO staff were also on hand in the search room to answer questions and to distribute directions and handout material as required. The only improvement that might be made on future open days could be to ensure the provision of a wider range of refreshments.

The self-guided tour of the repository was another highlight particularly for those who have often wondered what it was like out there where the electric cart goes. At each stop, well-informed staff were available to describe the particular function being demonstrated. Of particular note was the description of what happens to a public record when it arrives and the process it goes through prior to appearing on the seemingly endless shelving and in the catalogue in the search room. It was an excellent idea to include a visit to the vault where some of the priceless material is kept.

If the aim of the open day was to appeal to both the seasoned researcher and the curious first-time visitor then the day was most successful. The attendance was considerable and a steady stream of visitors continued to arrive throughout the day. The talks demonstrated the level of expertise of the staff, the vastness of the holdings, and the important role that the organisation has to play now and in the future. Congratulations are due to all concerned.

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